

Canadian Blonde d'Aquitaine Association

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BREEDER PROFILE

The Canadian Blonde d'Aquitaine Association is pleased to offer this space to profile our breeder members. If your operation has been featured in a magazine or newspaper, please contact Myrna Flesch at westwind@telusplanet.net

BUTTERNUT BLONDES

The most important criteria is disposition!

Written by Myrna Flesch

Does your curiosity ever get the best of you? Mine did and so I asked Murphy Baker — “How did you come up with the name Butternut Blondes?” He replied there were Butternut trees on the farm his father was raised on in Buckingham, Quebec and when Murphy visited there when he was a child he had grown to love those particular trees — so much so that he has tried to grow them on his present farm. He says with limited success, but he does have some, hence the name Butternut Blondes. He went on to tell me they bear fruit similar in texture to a walnut — as *Paul Harvey* would say - and now you know the rest of the story!



Murphy tells me that he spent a good part of his time off farm working as a millwright and on his retirement in 1998 he had worked 39.7 years with General Motors. He bought 110 acres of land in 1987, joining the ranks of a hobby farmer, and built a house, shop and pole barns with the help of one of his sons.

He met Judy in 1992 and they were married in 1998 (this is a second marriage for both). Judy relates that she was an Administration Officer with a Bank and that she was given the Golden Handshake and has basically been helping with the cows since then.



As a writer, I asked the usual question — “How did you come to get into Blondes?” Murphy stated in 1989 he read an article written by Joyce Dowling of Doublejay Farms regarding her sale but felt he could not afford those “expensive” animals. He later went to a sale in Blackstock and bought his first Blonde bull — K-Mar Acres Jake 3W. He was so impressed with the calves the following year, he decided to buy more Blondes.

In 1992 he went to the Pick O’ The West Sale in Alberta and purchased some West Wind and Van Alta cattle. He states his current bull, Butternut Jingles, goes directly back to Shirley Bilton’s breeding program. Murphy said what impressed him most was that, “Shirley got in the ring and told exactly what to expect with each cow” and he said he was not disappointed with his purchases.

The Bakers have two sons — one (Shane) helps with the cattle and part of the year drives a cement pumper truck. The remainder of the year he works logging for firewood — a business Murphy started but has since turned over to Shane. Their second son is an Elevator Inspection Officer, living in Peterborough, Ontario and has never been involved with the farm. Judy and

Murphy state they have 85 cows — with a 50/50 split between the purebred and commercial animals — but their bull is always Blonde. Their commercial herd is made up basically of Red Angus, a breed they say crosses well with their Blonde bulls. They finish most of their own stockers and market their finished cattle at the auction mart in Cookstown, Ontario.

Murphy cuts and bales his own hay and they purchase corn and barley for finishing and straw for bedding. He rents additional property.

definite calving season starting in January and carrying on until March with the stragglers being calved out before haying starts.

Both state Dave McNevan and Laverne McGee were instrumental in getting them started into the show ring with their Blondes about four years ago. The Bakers stated they have enjoyed the shows for the camaraderie shown by the other breeders and also for the ability to meet many people at the fairs. I am told that at the International Plowing Match, if you visit the Beef Tent, Murphy will always attempt to sell you a raffle ticket! Judy and Murphy feel this is a good opportunity to advertise the cattle and exhibit their docile nature.



Murphy likes to AI about 30 - 40 cows every year. He believes in EPDs as a tool, but states they are only as reliable as the person who inputs them. He tries to match bloodlines for calving ease, milk production, and good feet and legs. The Bakers' most important criteria is disposition — neither want a rodeo! They believe their Blonde cattle sell themselves with their quiet dispositions and good cutability. Both believe that Blonde breeders must make "their word their bond, as you will only sell once if the quality is not there".

If you look at the Butternut Blonde registered herd, you will find that most of the animals currently shown bear the Butternut name, but look further and you will find incorporated in the pedigrees: Gelstar, Roseneath, Double W Blonde Lea, Blon Dell, Clare Elle and West Wind breeding programs. They also own animals from Brydown Farms, Cin-Lee Acres, Hanover Stock Farm and High Rock Blondes. At the National Sale in Neepawa, Murphy and Judy said they were at the sale to replace some older animals in their herd and they took home several young females from Forty Acre Blondes, Triple K Blondes and Blue Diamond Blondes.

Judy has a sideline business — that of raising and breeding registered border collies. They presently have three border collies that assist them with moving their cattle. Judy says "at our age neither can run" — hence their four-footed friends are very important. Murphy's major concern — the present age of the Blonde breeders — is going to be a factor in the survival of the breed. He is an avid supporter of 4-H and likes to encourage young folks interested in cattle to become Blonde breeders.

Murphy has served on the Ontario Board for the last four years as Secretary-Treasurer. Judy utilizes her skills doing the bookkeeping. They attended the Canadian Blonde Association Annual General Meeting in Neepawa, Manitoba in November 2006, and Murphy picked up another hat — that of a Director on the Canadian Board.