

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

KNOBBY OAK FARMS

True lovers of gentle, easy-calving Blondes!

*Written by Myrna Flesch,
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For Stephen (Steve) and Bernice Dmytriw, Christmas 1975 was a very happy occasion - they purchased and moved into their farm home and 80 acres of land where they still live today. Both had grown up on mixed farms in rural Manitoba and they wished to raise their family on a farm. In 1981, they added 100 acres of hayland 6 miles distant from the farmstead.



The Dmytriws purchased a few commercial cows and were using AI service. They were not using Blonde bulls at that time. They experienced severe calving difficulties and decided they had to make some changes. Steve Kovach of Maple Brook Ranch at Brandon came to their rescue. It was 1982 or 1983 when they purchased their first Blonde bull from him. That bull had a very good disposition and they were sold on Blondes when his calves started arriving. Since that time they have purchased bulls, heifers and cows. Today their herd comprises animals from Blue Diamond, Classic Blondes, Forty Acres, Kay Lee, Sundance, T4 Blondes and Triple C Blondes.

Their boys, Nathan (Anna), Tyson (Pamela) and Devin (Tracey) showed Blonde cattle all through their 4-H years. The boys belonged to the Rapid City 4-H Beef Club and showed their animals at the club level, at the interclub level in Neepawa and also at Brandon Winter Fair and Fall Fair. When doing feed records for 4-H projects, the boys discovered that Blondes were very feed efficient when compared to other breeds in the district.



Today, Steve and Bernice have 45 cows - some purebreds and some commercials. Because they do not have a large land base, they rent pastures - some as far as 17 miles from the home farm. They keep a Blonde bull in each pasture to ensure all the cows coming home in the fall are bred.

Like the rest of the cattlemen in Canada, when BSE hit in 2003 their operation changed considerably. They had a pen of yearlings ready for market and took a hit on their steers

but they were determined they would not sacrifice their heifers. Those heifers joined the herd but since they were not originally destined to stay, they were never tattooed or registered, even though they are all Blondes.

Today, Steve and Bernice calve out half of their cows in January and February. They have a pole barn that they can put the cows in, bedded with lots of wheat straw. They say many a time they have put a cow in only to have one calve outside instead - a familiar happening with all cattlemen, the wrong cow is in! The remainder of their cows are calved out in late August and into September. Bernice says those calves do not get as much attention - they check about three times a week or so and try to catch the little guys and gals to get tags and buttons onto them.

Steve has been an elementary school teacher for 36 years, while Bernice was a stay-at-home mom who calved out cows, did chores and taxied the boys to their activities. The boys are now grown, married and live within a four hour radius and often come home for weekends to help with some of the heavy work. Their sons own a few cows and still have some of their old pets that were 4-H animals. Their sons have no aspirations of farming but they do love the lifestyle they grew up in.



Bernice says they are slowing up a bit. She said the farm was originally to be a hobby, but somehow it grew out of shape.

Steve has served on the Man-Sask Blonde Association Board for the past 6 years. He is also the Blonde representative on the Board of the Manitoba Beef Cattle Performance Centre located at Douglas, Manitoba. This facility has 10 breeds represented and involves 4 or 5 meetings per year along with an open house in March and a sale in April. As a member of this Board, he has served on building, feed and activity committees along with volunteering time for weigh days, semen testing and ultrasound testing. Last year 17 Blonde Bulls were in the test. In this current season there are 13 Blondes in the Test Facility.

Knobby Oak's operators put up their own hay - mostly alfalfa - and grow about 20 acres of barley which they mill for the cattle. They supplement this with bull ration and grower pellets. Bernice mentioned they have a couple of 9 foot hay bines and that they bale with two balers making round bales 4 ft X 5 ft. Nathan, their oldest son, teaches school so he spends most of his summer helping hay. His wife helps by delivering meals to the fields.

Areas of their land that are not hayed or are slough areas are fenced and used as pasture.



Steve and Bernice showed cattle at the National in Brandon in 1999 with Devin on the halter - he was in Grade 12 that year. In December 2006, they again showed in the National at Neepawa with Tyson and wife Pamela helping out.

Several times, Knobby Oak have entered animals in the carcass competition at the Brandon Royal and in 2002

won Reserve Champion and subsequently that steer sold for \$3.65 a pound at the Fair Banquet. They received great scores for percentage cutability and size of ribeye.

Knobby Oak Farms came by its name quite naturally - there are many knobby (lumpy) oak trees on their property and hence the name. The Dmytriws state they are not a huge operation but they are true lovers of the gentle, easy-calving Blonde breed. They appreciate the lean carcasses and have many health-conscious folks who buy beef off the farm because of its tender and lean qualities.

Knobby Oak Farms is located 16 miles north of Brandon and 4½ miles east of Rapid City. Visitors are welcome.