

Fresh start Paris Creek producers make it count

Beef hobby turns business

Key points

- Celebrate regional produce
- Direct marketing brings rewards
- Beware dangers of over-grazing

By **PAULA THOMPSON**

ADELAIDE Hills producer Leanne Vears' passion for livestock and agriculture is evident.

Leanne and her husband Ashley run a property at Paris Creek in the Adelaide Hills.

The couple moved to the area in 2009, after falling in love with the picturesque property situated at the top of a hill and on a clear day has views as far as Lake Alexandrina.

"The property already had cattle on it when we bought it, and it was a selling point for me because I've always loved and wanted to run cattle," Leanne said.

"We started out with 12 cows with calves at foot. We started out just wanting to be self-sufficient and we decided to do that by getting our cattle processed locally."

The Vears started by processing cattle for their own use, as well as giving some to their parents and offering them to family and friends.

"We decided it was so delicious and the flavour was so amazing that I'd offer some at my work," Leanne said.

"I put out a flyer in February 2010 that said 'Paris Creek Beef - sides of beef for sale'."

The feedback was so strong, Leanne decided to venture into online sales, setting up the website www.pariscreekbeef.com.au. The internet business started in late 2010.

"I spent nine months researching how to make the business work while still working a full-time job," she said.

"It was a long process, and I've been developing the site as I go along, just gradually building the business up."



TOP SPOT: Having enough feed is rarely an issue for Paris Creek farmer Leanne Vears, with the property located in the high-rainfall Adelaide Hills area.



FRESH DESIGN: Leanne Vears designed the Paris Creek Beef logo herself, to reflect her family's property, which has views to Lake Alexandrina.

Paris Creek Beef is dedicated to supplying premium quality 100 per cent grass-fed yearling beef.

Leanne says the cattle have never been given antibiotics, growth hormones or genetically modified feed. The meat is only processed once Paris Creek Beef receives an order, to ensure freshness.

Paris Creek Beef is processed by a local, licensed accredited butcher, dry aged for between 15 and 20 days and cut to customers' specifications.

Leanne says no substances are added to the meat to increase the weight or alter colours.

The producer has a strong interest in nutrition.

"I'm passionate about feeding families healthy meat," she said.

"We know how the cattle had been treated and handled."

"The cattle haven't been given any antibiotics or growth hormones, they have only been out in the paddock eating grass."

"They haven't travelled thousands of kilometres for processing, so they're not stressed."

Sales are purely through the internet and word of mouth, mainly to Adelaide and the Adelaide Hills region.

Having purely grass-fed product is a huge selling point for the business.

"People are starting to talk more about grass-fed meat," she said.

"Chefs are looking for grass-fed meat."

While not coming from a farming background, Leanne threw herself into learning all she could, undertaking a TAFE certificate in agriculture.

She has also taken part in the Women in Agriculture courses run by Jeanette Long and Sharon Honner.

"Everything has really just clicked into place with the busi-



YEARLING BEEF: Cattle on the property are processed as yearlings.

ness," she said.

"I work with a great network of people that are just as passionate about their livestock and agriculture as we are."

Murray Grey and Angus are the main breeds the business focused on. Another farmer who supplies the business uses Simmentals.

"We have more of a focus on local production of quality beef cattle than a certain breed," Leanne said.

Leanne designed the business' logo which features Lake Alexandrina in the background and the property's dam in the foreground.

The Vears use a number of methods to get the most out of their property and cattle including rotational grazing.

They are fortunate their property has a spring-fed dam that never runs dry and that they are based in a high-rainfall area.

"We're very fortunate that we have a property that is the last in the area to run dry," she said.

"So we have a supply of fresh, reliable water and good feed."

Paris Creek Beef promotes its product as premium-quality beef at an affordable price.

"It's been the quality of the product that's been driving the business forward," Leanne said.

"I was working full-time and selling beef as a hobby. But, I've followed my passion and I've loved the journey of moving from having it as a hobby into a business."

Behind the headline

PARIS Creek Beef's Leanne and her husband Ashley say a social media presence and word of mouth have helped build their business. Their facebook page - www.facebook.com/ParisCreekBeef - has been at the centre of plans to reach out to more customers. Apart from selling cattle online Leanne started working with other producers in the region to expand the business and support local small enterprises. She says their business has only been able to grow through working with neighbours and others in the Adelaide Hills region. Leanne says this is a good way to keep track of where the cattle is coming from, how it is being treated and ensure meat quality.