

## **DREAMS DO COME TRUE**

A dream came true for 25-year-old Joanna Fowlie when she won Supreme Champion of All Breeds at the New Zealand Dairy Event (NZDE) in Feilding last week.

It's always hard for Intermediate Champions to first beat the Senior Champions of their breed to earn the chance for a crack at the All Breeds title. Especially when the Senior Breed Champion – a former Supreme Champion of the show – is considered a breed legend herself.

However, Joanna's second-calved three-year-old Raetea Rubicom Debbie took that first step when she beat the 2021 NZDE Supreme Champion, Pukekaraka Elle Delila (exhibited by the Gilbert family, from Ashburton) in the Ayrshire ring. Delila, aged eight, was in great form and she had had the longest trip from Canterbury. However, South African judge (and World Ayrshire Federation president) Edmund Els created Debbie's chance when he chose her.

By capturing the Grand Champion Ayrshire title, Debbie moved forward to the All Breeds competition – another significant hurdle – given that she was up against the Holstein, Jersey and Combined Breeds Champions – who were all senior cows.

History now shows that the All Breeds judges, which included Mr Els, Daniel Bacon (Jersey judge, Australia) Ben Govett (Combined judge, Australia), Mark Nutsford (Holstein Friesian judge, UK) and Gordon Fullerton (Youth Show judge, Waikato) would crown Debbie the Queen of the show.

It is the first time an Intermediate Ayrshire Champion has won Supreme Champion at the NZDE and only the second time an Intermediate of any breed has won Supreme – and it happened just one week after a similar feat was tabled in Australia at International Dairy Week.

Debbie cost her Matamata owner \$850 as a calf in 2019 after she was passed in at the Waikato Next Generation sale. That moment now becomes part of the young cow's meteoric rise for her owners who had "no words" after she was sashed at the end of a long day of judging.

Joanna said their fully spring calving herd of 300-head included only two Ayrshires and two Holsteins. The balance is registered Jerseys. She credited Spanish cattle fitter, Alberto Medina, with having a big role to play in helping finish Debbie's preparation.

"I don't think we would have got her to the standard he did," Joanna said. "Usually, I would have been stressing when all this happened but there was no stress at all through the day, even though it was a massive day of judging and we had to hold her from the Intermediate Championship through to the end of the show."

## **STRONG WOMEN STEP INTO THE LIGHT**

Joanna joins two other women who enjoyed a great show. Letitia Horn was at the helm of Horn Genetics' campaign, that included broad ribbons in three breeds. While it's undoubtedly a team effort, the 24-year-old manager of her family's 200-cow operation in Feilding, put in a lot of the grunt work in the lead-up to the show. Letitia and her father, Peter, made the decision to break in eight-year-old Kuku Tbone Leila after she calved in with her seventh calf last spring.

Sired by Richies Jace Tbone, Letitia said Leila had been close to getting a NZDE start for a number of years, but she had always been trumped by her herdmates. This year, there was no denying her form and in her first show she gave her owners their first NZDE Grand Champion Jersey title.

Nicknamed "Nana" by Letitia's brother, Letham, because she is so quiet and likes to follow everyone around licking them, Leila's previous lactation was 6870 litres and 628kg of Milk Solids.

"She's an eight-year-old TBone cow that is bloody friendly and stubborn, so she was not the easiest to participate with," Letitia said. "It was her way or the highway, so we had to use lots of meal to train her.

"Out in the ring she just looked like the proudest old cow, and I was so proud of how well she did, given she'd just been broken in a few months before. It was a very emotional moment to watch her win, because we saw something special in her."

Letitia said it was also an important win at a personal level because her father has been classified as living with heart failure. As the fifth generation of her family to farm, bringing home the results is a responsibility she takes seriously.

Letitia said Leila took to the show programme like a duck to water.

"She's one of those cows we didn't even worry about when we bagged them. Going into the show there was never a time she didn't eat, never a time she didn't drink, and she was just so content. That's what she's like at home. She's always eating, always going out there and doing what she needs to do to keep that milk on her."

Letitia put Rob Barclay (who will become her brother-in-law on March 10), on the halter because Leila was a bit "too comfortable" with Letitia. Horn Genetics also won Honourable Mention Senior Champion and Best Udder of the Jersey and Supreme Udder of the entire show.

Letitia now owns close to 40-head – some in partnership with her sister, Michele, under the Ypres Jersey prefix. She also had success with her Ayrshire entry. Allandale Rubi Burleigh finished Reserve Intermediate Champion – and second in her age class to the young cow that would go on to win Supreme Champion of the show.

"The Ayrshires are my breeding, so that was pretty special to do well with her," Letitia said. "Dad has always said to breed for production and the show cows will come along. I think that's true."

The family also ticked a box in the Holstein ring, winning Reserve Senior Holstein Champion with Okawa Mogul Lexa.

## **BROWN SWISS COMES A LONG WAY**

For Canterbury exhibitor, Rachel Stewart, the NZDE was the culmination of her determined campaign to bring her Brown Swiss, Rokella Dynamite Bella-ET, to the national playing field at Feilding.

It involved 14 hours of trucking one way – which included crossing the Cook Strait. The four-year-old impressed the Combined Breeds judge Ben Govett (Australia), validating Rachel's faith in the young cow when she was sashed Senior Champion, Best Senior Udder and Grand Champion of the Combined Breeds. Rachel said when she competed at Christchurch Show enough people were impressed with Bella to give her the momentum to push on and expose her to more competition.

"She did what I hoped she was capable of," Rachel said. "I wasn't expecting to win, but I really wanted to see where she fitted nationally. It was definitely worth the trip, the expense, and the stress of it all.

"Without the help and support of family and close friends I couldn't have done this."

Rachel said she and her brother, Bernard, used to show Brown Swiss together and she loved their temperament.

She and the rest of the Canterbury cattle were just ahead of ferocious weather following the show, which included one of the interislander ferries breaking down in three-metre swells with 40-knot winds.

There wasn't an exhibitor who had landed their cows safely at Picton ahead of the storm who wouldn't have breathed a deep sigh of relief.

## **WAIPIRI DOMINATE HOLSTEINS**

Waipiri secured Premier Exhibitor in the Holsteins after winning four of the nine titles on offer for the breed. The Fullerton family showed eight cows and five heifers.

David Fullerton said it was a satisfying campaign with Waipiri Mogul Kristy – who they own in partnership with Andrew Dreadon – winning the Senior Holstein Championship and the All Breeds five and six-year-old in-milk championship.

Kristy didn't need any introduction. She was Best Udder of the 2021 NZDE, and this show season she has won Supreme Champion at Stratford and Senior Holstein Champion and Senior All Breeds Champion at the Waikato Show. She was also the 2021 Semex On-Farm four-year-old Champion.

"She's been there or abouts her whole life," David said. "We only take her to the main shows, so she's always up against pretty stiff competition."

They were also thrilled to see two of their Lindenright Moovin daughters finish Reserve and Honourable Mention Junior Champion to a another Lindenright Moovin daughter in that group, who won Junior Holstein Champion (owned by Hannah Lawson, of Woodville).

Waipiri was also on the ownership papers of the Intermediate Holstein champion with Andrew Dreadon, who had been bred by Tahora Farms, from Canterbury.

David said it was great to see international judges and cattle fitters back in the mix.

“For me, that makes the show,” David said. “I suppose I’ve always been working that way around the world so without the internationals it hadn’t been as interesting for me. To have everyone back and moving around a bit was great.”

David was fresh from his associate judging role to Warren Ferguson (Ferdon Genetics) in the Holstein ring at International Dairy Week, and he said the English judge Mark Nutsford had a clear pattern.

“You have to realise there will be some different interpretations and we saw that,” David said. He liked the cows a little bit more compact, a little bit stronger, and he didn’t differ from it too much.

“He wanted really good uddered cows – in particular he wanted good rear udders – and they had to move on a pretty nice set of feet and legs or else you weren’t going to get to the top. The term “balanced cow” is a term that gets used too often, but that’s pretty much what he was after.”

Even though they live in the North Island they still had a six-hour transit, which was stretched out because of a detour for resealing roads. David said he walked into the house at 3.15am following judging.

## **ENTRIES AND LIVESTREAM ACTION**

Show committee chairman Jamie Cunninghame said it was gratifying to have so many entries this year. The livestream action clocked 2200 visitors online.

“It was a massive success from our perspective,” Jamie said. “This was the best sponsorship we’ve had for a few years, and they were really positive about it. I do think that we have to look at the last day of the show to trim it up in terms of time frames.

“We have a new team now established and while we have made some changes already, but there will be some more to come once we debrief and talk with the exhibitors.”

Jamie was quick to applaud the inclusion of the internationals and the strength of the youth show.

“The international judges and fitters give the show a different flavour, and the learnings people take from that are massive. It’s also about the connections for all

those young people to open doors to International Dairy Week and further afield. We also had an international photographer this year and that made the coverage next level.

“The Youth Show has always been good. But it’s gone from strength to strength in recent years with numbers. Semex are a gold sponsor, and they are very passionate about the youth show.”

Written by Dianna Malcolm, Mud Media