

## Business Is Booming For Pastured Pig Breed

Idaho Pasture Pigs (IPP) are reproducing all over the place, with nearly 60 purebred breeders in 28 states. The breed got its start in 2007 and was featured in FARM SHOW (Vol. 36, No. 5) as the perfect pasture pig breed. Founders Shelly and Gary Farris passed the torch to Dave and Jodi Cronauer, breeders and keepers of the breed registry.

"We've been raising Idaho Pasture Pigs since 2012," says Dave Cronauer, White Bison Farm. "We bought some breeding stock early on, then some more, and when Shelly announced they were selling out, we went all in."

Currently the Cronauers have around 600 head, including all 25 registered sow lines and 12 registered boar lines. The IPP breed combines the meat quality and growth rates of Duroc and Berkshires with the Kunekune snout and good nature. They have erect ears, compact bodies and a good layer of fat for tasty meat, reaching market weight of 240 to 250 lb. in 5 1/2 to 7 months.

"The sows make spectacular mothers, weaning about 8 piglets per litter," says Cronauer. "They are docile around us, but very protective against predators. We have eagles, wolves, bears, and coyotes in our area but zero predator issues."

Having spread from Idaho west to

Washington state, east to Maine and from Texas to Wisconsin, the IPP have proven to be weather tolerant. Farming in northern Wisconsin, Cronauer farrows everything in A-frame shelters on pasture, even in winter with no supplemental heat. When not used for farrowing, the A-frames provide year-round shelter, including in the dead of winter when Cronauer adds straw bedding.

Other facilities are minimal as he uses rubber troughs for daily watering. The pigs are on fresh grass, shifting to alfalfa/clover/grass hay in the winter.

The IPP were designed to graze with their upturned Kunekune snout. Cronauer reports that his pig paddocks look like they were grazed by horses or bison. In addition to the fodder, he supplements the pasture with about 1 1/2 lbs. of grain per day in a mixed ration with minerals such as selenium. Cronauer suggests that adequate minerals reduce the pigs' urge to root in the dirt. That said, he recognizes that pigs do get benefits from some rooting. In the winter he warms buckets of dirt he has stored for piglets born on frozen ground.

Cronauer sells breeding stock as well as feeder pigs and pork. As the breed is still developing, only about 10 percent of pigs littered make the cut for breeding status.



Idaho Pasture Pigs (IPP) have erect ears, compact bodies, and a good layer of fat for tasty meat, say Dave and Jodi Cronauer.

"We sell feeder pigs at about 30 lbs., usually 4 to 5 weeks old for about \$125 each," he says. "Our pigs usually go to market at 9 to 10 months after birth. Registered breeding pairs sell for about \$800, while a gilt is priced at about \$500 and a boar at \$400. On occasion, we have bred gilts available for \$1,500 each."

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IPP pigs have a short, upturned snout that reduces rooting in pastures.

## Farm-Milled Grain No Longer Just Chicken Feed

By Jim Ruen, Contributing Editor

Ross and Harold Wilkins stopped turning the grain they grew into chicken feed and started milling grain for flour. Their "Mill at Janie's Farm" grinds wheat, rye, corn and oats into blends and varietal flours for professional bakers and home bakers alike. They also sell the wheat and rye un-milled for people who prefer to mill their own.

"It was a leap of faith to build our mill with no guarantee customers would come," says Harold. He credits Ross' decision to return to the farm as one of the factors in creating the business. "We spent a couple of years researching the idea, finally ordered 2 Danish Engsko mills, and built a building around them."

They mill around 1,000 lbs. of flour a day, but getting there has been a challenge, according to Ross. "There are a lot of facets to adding another enterprise," he says. "It isn't just grinding grain into wheat. There is also inventory management, and having the grain on hand and insect-free. You have to have enough grain on hand for this year and the coming year, in case you have a crop failure."

On top of all that, there are regulatory hoops to jump through. As Ross explains, "The regulations aren't set up to encourage people like us to do what we did."

Harold Wilkins had already added value by switching his acres to certified organic. He had experience storing grain and dealing with regulators. However, adding a mill was a very big, next step.

"It is very costly to do what we are doing," says Harold. "It's not so bad if you only plan on milling a couple hundred pounds of flour a week and sell to a local baker."

Knowing they wanted to market a substantial amount of their grain through the milling operation, the Wilkins looked at high quality, professional mills. They visited other local milling operations around the country.

Their goal was to produce fresh, whole-

kernel, stoneground flour, not the roller-mill style flour generally available. The large corporate milling companies remove the germ and the bran, adding some back along with various preservatives and other additives. The Mill at Janie's Farm flours are different. The cool temperature stone milling process ensures that all the nutrition in the grain is also in the flour.

"Fresh stoneground wheat is not generally available in the Midwest," says Harold.

"We don't separate out the different parts of the grain," says Ross. "We only sift to ensure uniform particle size."

Quality control and freshness are key. Every batch for their commercial bakers is freshly ground to order. Finding artisan bakers and getting them interested was another challenge. "You have to find the right bakers to understand what you are doing," says Ross. "Once you find them, you have to help them drive their story to the consumer. You have to add value to your product."

Ross says it has taken about a year and a half to refine their products. He worked with some Chicago area bakers to get their feedback.

"We're happy with what we are doing now and are starting to move it into retail packaging," says Ross. "We are selling it from our website and getting it onto more store shelves."

FARM SHOW readers can order a variety of flour and other products in 1 1/2 and 3-lb. packages. Whole grain wheat/rye and wheat bran (the large particles sifted out of some flours) are available in 1 and 2-lb. packages. The Wilkins mill a mix of artisan and hybrid varieties that they and other farmers produce. These include Turkey Red, Glenn and Warthog wheat and Brasetto, a high yielding rye.

"We are working with a farmer in western Nebraska who will raise einkorn (ancient wheat) and Red Fife (a heritage variety) for us," says Harold.



An Illinois farm family set up their own mill to turn grain into varietal flours for both professional and home bakers.

The Wilkins also work with researchers from the Universities of Illinois and Wisconsin, as well as Cornell and Washington State University. They are even considering sponsoring baking classes to build their customer base.

"There once were mills in almost every town, and people had access to different grains with crop rotation," says Harold. "Conventional farming has obliterated crop rotation. This is a new system. For it to succeed, we need to engage the researchers, the bakers and the consumers, as well as other farmers."

"I don't know if I would wish the process on others, but we like what we are doing," says Ross. "Adding value to your products is something for everyone to assess."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, The Mill At Janie's Farm, 405 North 2nd St.,



They sell a variety of flour and other products in 1 1/2 and 3-lb. packages.

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