

Small Town Residents Love Her Mobile Grocery Store

From toothpaste to pork chops, Jeannine Leutenegger brings a wide range of products into small communities with her Fresh Xpress mobile grocery store. In just a year the 25-year-old Ontario entrepreneur has doubled the number of stops on her weekly route.

The concept is not new, Leutenegger emphasizes. She remembers grocery trucks in Switzerland where she was born, and she thought it would work around the Listowel, Ontario region where many small towns don't have stores any more.

"I thought my customers would be mostly seniors," Leutenegger says. "I'm surprised that my customers are people of all ages. It's like bringing the farmers market to people's doors."

Before she drove her first route in July 2015, Leutenegger advertised in local newspapers, spread the word on social media, and attended a home show. She had an old Purolator delivery van remodeled to include refrigeration, shelving and a freezer in the back with a generator.

"In the beginning there was a lot in figuring guesswork what to stock. Now I have it down to a science," Leutenegger says. On Mondays she shops and stocks supplies from wholesalers and local farmers.

Tuesdays through Saturdays she is on

the road tallying up about 400 miles a week traveling to nearly 50 sites. Among them are the senior centers and apartments she anticipated. But workers at businesses such as the Deere and Ford dealerships in Listowel shop from her van too on Thursdays and Fridays. In addition to groceries, she sells premade sandwiches from an area business.

"People like convenience, and they like choosing their own groceries and supporting local growers," Leutenegger says.

She purchases fresh produce from area growers and for her latest service - weekly CSA-style boxes that she puts together and delivers to customers' homes.

Her schedule has been busy, Leutenegger says, and she couldn't keep up without the help of family and friends. But by keeping prices competitive her business continues to grow. Town officials who once thought she would hurt other local businesses now appreciate her service.

One of the most challenging parts of the job is bad winter weather, Leutenegger says. But even on the worst days, it's been worth it because of the gratitude from customers - especially senior citizens.

Her website lists her schedule and products, and customers can sign up for email or cell phone text reminders.

It's all about convenience and service,



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Leutenegger says, along with getting to know her customers.

"It's lots of work, but I can't imagine working for anybody else. I'm very glad I started this business," she concludes.

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Ultra Rare Pony Breed

As one of less than 20 Dales Pony breeders in North America, Kelly Davidson Chou is as rare as her horses. Only 250 registered Dales ponies are left in the U.S. and Canada. Since the 2008 recession, prices for the breed have fallen, and fewer animals are being bred, further endangering the rare breed.

"Before the recession registered numbers were up to about 300, and we were getting \$5,000 to 8,000 for a weanling and \$25,000 for a nice mare," says Davidson Chou. "Things are better, but we're not back to where we were. A weanling now will go for \$3,000 to 5,000 and a proven broodmare, trained to ride and drive, will go for as little as \$10,000."

The Dales are an old breed, one of 9 recognized pony breeds. Known as Mountain and Moorland Ponies, they are strong in relation to their size, sure-footed, and thrifty. Initially bred as a pack animal, the Dales found a niche first on small farms. With the crossing of a Welsh Cob stallion in the early 1900's, they became known for their trotting and jumping. Although an ideal Dales pony stands between 14 and 14.2 hands, they can easily carry an adult of 250 lbs. or more.

Because of their attributes, they were used extensively by the British army in World War I and World War II. Numbers were depleted and have grown only slowly since. A few breeding animals were introduced to North America in the 1980's and 1990's, leading to today's small numbers.

"The Rare Breeder Trust looks at active breeding mares and estimates only 300 in the world," says Davidson Chou.

She has been a Dales Pony breeder since 2004. "I always wanted to be an animal breeder, but I am acutely aware of the unwanted dogs, cats and even horses that are euthanized each year," she says. "I



Only 250 registered Dales ponies are left in the U.S. and Canada, and there are fewer than 20 North American breeders.

learned how hardy, athletic and smart Dales are and what a great temperament they have. As a rare breed, I felt I could breed and help preserve them."

Davidson Chou competes with her Dales in halter, pleasure carriage driving, and jumper classes. The horses also do well in dressage. While she isn't actively breeding her mares due to decreased demand, she will consider breeding a mare if a buyer wants a particular colt. She also has a few for sale.

"I am one of a few breeders who does a lot of competition, so people often contact me about buying a Dales," says Davidson Chou. "If I don't have what they want, I send them on to other breeders."

She says Dales make wonderful family horses as well as work horses. They are great for first time riders and jumpers. Dales are also ideal for use in woods and on farms. One breeder uses them to haul maple sap out of the woods when making syrup.

"A lot of our breeders are very dedicated to the breed, and our first priority is to get our Dales into good homes," says Davidson Chou. "I've even been known to reduce the price on a filly if the new owner agrees to show and breed it."

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Danish Knabstrupper Shares Appaloosa Roots

The Knabstrupper is a Danish performance horse breed so rare in North America that the largest breeder has only 25 head. While few exist outside of Denmark and northern Germany, they have plenty of relatives among North American Appaloosas. The 2 breeds share ancient Spanish bloodlines.

"Genetically, the Knabstrupper and the Appaloosa have the same origin, but they've been bred for different purposes for the past 300 years," says Melyni Worth, Cedar Creek Stables. "The Knabstrupper is a good, solid, old fashioned, working type horse that was bred for general farm use in Denmark."

The breed originated with a mare purchased from a Spanish cavalry officer and bred to a Fredricksborg stallion on an estate called Knabstrupgaard. The mating produced a wildly colored stallion. The mare and her offspring were then bred to other high quality horses producing similar loudly colored offspring. Knabstruppers became highly sought after. However, breeding of the line was limited, and inbreeding was a problem. In 1971 three American Appaloosa stallions were imported to Denmark to introduce new blood. The breed has expanded in Europe since, most recently expanding to North America. Worth was among the first breeders here when she started with them about 10 years ago.

"I like their temperament," she says. "They are friendly, trainable, intelligent and sound horses. They do everything you ask of them."

Worth says the horses are popular for dressage, jumping, fox hunting and other performance events. She says the horses were long selected for viability, temperament and soundness, as well as a good work ethic.

"Before a Knabstrupper can be bred, it has to be evaluated in a ridden or driven test before a breeding committee," says Worth. "They may be pretty, but they have to be able



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to get out and do something, no matter how well they have done in the show ring. They have to demonstrate 3 gaits and a good temper."

While the Knabstruppers are most well known for their spotted color patterns, the breed also includes horses with solid colors. Breeders can submit applications to the breeding committee.

"Stud fees can run between \$800 and \$1,200," says Worth. "A filly can run from \$5,000 to \$10,000 in Denmark without a show record, depending on quality of bloodlines and how it performs."

Mature Knabstruppers can sell for up to \$50,000 or higher. One on her website is listed for \$75,000. Worth also sells flushed embryos from a selected mare bred to a stallion of the buyer's choice. A retrieved embryo shipped or implanted can run from \$1,000 to \$2,500.

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