

MAY 2019

HOMEGROWN

Michigan

Pork industry
grows in
Branch County

Scottish
farmer raises
Highland
cattle

**WINDOW BOX
GARDENING**

FOCUS ON BRANCH, HILLSDALE AND ST. JOSEPH COUNTIES



Eddie Mackay with a bull at Dundonald Farm, where he raises Highland cattle and Cheviot sheep.

Scottish Touch

Highland
cattle farmer
brings
Scotland to
Lockport
Township

Story & Photos by Elena Meadows

As Eddie Mackay raises 50 Highland cattle and 30 Cheviot ewes in his 58 acres on the Prairie River, his world has come full-circle.

As a child in Scotland during World War II, Mackay helped friends with their farm and enjoyed the farm life. Coming to America with an interest in the aircraft industry, he worked alongside his aunt and uncle in

their dairy farm in The Catskills.

After serving in the Army, his career turned toward engineering. Employed by Grumman, he helped open Grumman Olson in Sturgis in the early 1960s and played a key role in the design of delivery vehicles for both the U.S. Postal Service and UPS.

He traveled nationally and internationally setting up production facilities, but when

In 1995, he took up farming on the "old Davis place" on Hoshel Road in Lockport Township, land he had purchased in 1977. He named it Dundonald Farm, after the village where he grew up in Scotland, and bought some "Highlands" – the long-haired, long-horned breed of cattle indigenous to the Scottish Highlands and Western Isles.

They have lean, tender, flavorful beef, are excellent foragers and have docile temperaments.

His land consists of rolling pastures and wooded wetlands adjacent to the winding river. He clears trees and brush, then seeds with various grasses and legumes to result in good rotational grazing. Twenty-five acres of the farm used for rotational grazing are irrigated.

There, he raises cattle for freezer beef, canned beef and for breeding stock.



He frequently uses artificial insemination, getting semen from Scotland, and he sells semen from his farm.

"Highland semen is available for use with Highland cattle, or for purposes of crossbreeding to achieve the ease of calving and the excellent hybrid vigor so well demonstrated when breeding other breeds of cattle with the Highland," his website, www.dundonaldhighlands.com, notes.

He names his females after their dams and the bulls after their sires, with very few exceptions.

One recent exception was Cho Sona, a young bull whose name translates from Gaelic as "so fortunate."

"He was a breech birth, in the

birthing process for 24 hours," Mackay said.

Daily work at the farm involves feeding, calving, breeding and normal farm chores. Longtime friend Rick Milliman helps Mackay with the cattle, and now "pretty much takes care of the place." Neighbor Kolton Beachey helps show Highlands and is involved in raising the crossbreeds.

Milliman got Mackay into showing. He attended the National Western Stock Show for the first time in 1998 and has gone almost continuously since. Five other shows at which Dundonald has a presence each year include the Mid-Atlantic, the U.P. state fair, the new Michigan State Fair in Novi, the St. Joseph County Grange Fair, and the Cornhusker in Nebraska.

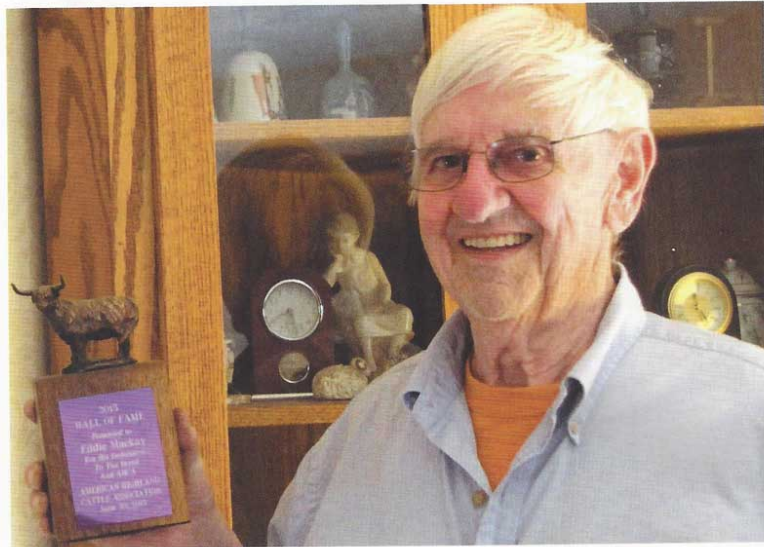
Mackay has collected boxes of ribbons, and he would like to find someone to turn them into a quilt for him.

At the St. Joseph County Grange Fair, he served as the catalyst for developing language in the fair's rules that would allow horned cattle on the premises.

He only shows bulls under three years of age, so they don't cause problems.

Mackay took on leadership roles – including president – in the American Highland Cattle Association, into whose hall of fame he was inducted in 2015 for "dedication to the breed and AHCA."

Dundonald Farm was one of the



Eddie Mackay was inducted into the American Highland Cattle Association Hall of Fame in 2015, for his "dedication to the breed and AHCA."

first to participate in the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program, which assists in the implementation of agricultural pollution prevention practices on farms.

"I've been a very big promoter of that," Mackay said.

Environmentally verified in farmstead, livestock and cropping, he worked with then-MSU Extension agent Maury Kaercher to develop MAEAP livestock standards for small farms.

"It's a way of life, not a job," he said of farming. "I spent my young life working in a dairy farm so I could afford to be an engineer, then

as an engineer so I could afford to be a farmer."

In addition to his work on the farm, Mackay is active in the recovery community in this area.

Since getting sober 25 years ago, his goal is to put a face on recovery. To facilitate this, he serves on the St. Joseph County Community Corrections Advisory Board and has led multiple AA groups.

Mackay, 83, says he's lived three lives: his younger years in Scotland; time in America as an engineer; and this period as a farmer and recovering alcoholic.

"I've been truly blessed, to say the least," he said.

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