

Tasmanian FARMER



PRODUCER DAYS:
Greenham Tasmania beef.
Picture: Supplied

Beef info sessions for North farmers

GREENHAM Tasmania is heading to the state's North for three producer information days this month.

Each session will cover animal welfare, natural beef programs, Meat Standards Australia guidelines and feedback for farmers, Meat & Livestock Australia market updates, pasture management and health defect reports.

Northern sessions will be held at Scottsdale Football Club between 8.30am and 1pm and at Longford RSL Club between 3.30pm and 8pm on Wednesday, March 21.

Flinders Island farmers have their session on Thursday, March 22, between 9.30am and 2pm at the Flinders Island Golf Club.

For more information about the sessions visit www.greenham.com.au or call 1300 548 378.



EXPLORING OPPORTUNITY: Tasmanian mountain pepper grower Andrew Rath shows almost-ripe berries at Underwood. Picture: Phillip Biggs

Mountain pepper puts Tassie exports on map

BY JOHANNA BAKER-DOWDELL

A WALK in the bush behind their Underwood property for Andrew Rath and his wife resulted in a business idea that has transformed Bronzewing Farm.

The couple had always wanted to expand their beef operation with a native Australian crop, and the discovery of the spicy leaf of the Tasmanian mountain pepper gave them the impetus to get started.

Drawing on his plant pathology roots, Dr Rath started researching the native

crop and found cultivars that would grow consistently at the North-East property.

"Ninety per cent of the Tasmanian crop is wild harvested, but research shows the spice level is variable," he said.

"I had to select cultivars that were consistent in spice and yield."

That was seven years ago and now Dr Rath is exporting his hot air and freeze dried berries to Europe and the USA, as well as selling within Australia, under the Tasmanian DEVIL Mountain Pepper brand.

And he has big plans for

the future of the brand.

The Underwood plantation has 5000 female mountain peppers he planted six years ago, with a younger group planted two years ago and more awaiting planting in the greenhouse.

"Last year we harvested 110 kilograms, but by 2020 it will be 10 tonnes," Dr Rath said.

Working on the average one kilogram of berries per tree, Dr Rath calculated how many people he would need for harvest, but when his trees produced an average of 2.2 kilograms last year he had to go back to the draw-

ing board.

"We'll need 10 pickers to hand pick the berries, but will also have to store them. By 2020 I hope to have a new facility built," he said.

Ripe mountain pepper berries are a deep purple-red, almost black, when ripe, and can be dried and used whole as a spice, like peppercorns, or as flavouring and colour agent for gin, vodka or syrup.

"I love lemon and ground mountain pepper on fresh oysters," Dr Rath said.

"And we are experimenting with gin, with the berries making it a pink colour."

Mountain pepper leaves can also be used as a spicy flavouring.

Dr Rath's crop will be ready to harvest between April and June.

"They will be black in three weeks, but their flavours continue to develop. It's like apples - when you pick apples they are often starchy when they're coming into season, but the sugars develop as they are stored."

Australian Native Foods & Botanicals and Tamar NRM has organised a tour of Bronzewing Farm during the Growing the Growers event on Thursday.

COMMUNITY HARMONY DAY

17 MARCH 2018, 11AM - 4PM
INVERESK PRECINCT
(adjacent to QVMAG, Inveresk)

FREE COMMUNITY EVENT
International food & wine, entertainment,
kids activities & MORE. No BYO.

More information cityprom.com.au/events or [@HarmonyDayLaunceston](https://www.facebook.com/HarmonyDayLaunceston) #EveryoneBelongs

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