

World may be sleeping partner

By Doug Laing

The link between a man's passion and the bedroom has a new meaning for Tikokino farmer Phil King, whose wool is being used in a new range of duvet inners he believes may soon adorn sleeping chambers around the world.

It indulges his passion for sheep breeding, which started at the age of 14 when he bought 10 aged ewes from Canterbury to start a border Leicester stud, and continues half a century later as one of the top-polled Dorset breeders in Australasia.

Despite reaping top prices for the sheep and presenting champion animals across the show circuit, he always wondered about the wool, knowing there was still something for the fleece which, because of its low weight, was not always a strong market proposition.

"For years I've been pressing this wool

and, every time, I think this would be ideal," he said. "It's so hard to press, so light, we can only get about 130kg a bail. It has a special character."

The outcome is the range of purely dorset duvets, summer-weight and winter-weight, launched to the market this month. And the range was just days old when an offer was made to offer the line in the UK.

The opportunity arose after daughter and qualified accountant Julia Paul started her Crisp Home bed linen design and manufacture firm in Auckland.

After she had done the research and other preparations, the chain started rolling when 250-300 hoggets were shorn in September.

Her husband, an architect, chipped in with things such as the design for the trademark.

Scoured in Hawke's Bay, the wool



Phil King, holds some wool which is ideal for making duvets.

was sent to a Christchurch plant. But production, including a shrink process designed to make the duvets machine-washable and easy to dry, was twice stalled when the machinery was damaged in the September and February earthquakes.

Even Mr King was surprised by the result, saying that having used one of the duvets for about three months, he was unlikely to go back to any other form of bedcover, except for the winter-weight to keep out the chill of a Tikokino winter.

His daughter, an old girl of Iona and Central Hawke's Bay colleges, studied accountancy at Massey University and worked in Waipukurau and the UK before settling in Auckland. Her business, now including the design and making of the covers to go with the inners, arose from deciding what to do now her son was off

to school.

Her business was launched last November and when the purely dorset website was "up and running" last week, there was an instant response, including marketing the product in the UK.

Mr King says there are things to do before that happens, but he is confident of the duvets' appeal.

It also gives him another chance to do his bit for wool. "This is purely New Zealand-made and it's wool." He said young people had grown up with the imported and synthetic products of the "throw-away" world, and needed education in the use and value of the natural fibres.

His daughter said the duvet inners presented one of the few times when the consumer would know exactly where the fibre had come from.

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