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Editorial

Just when you think you have discovered all the oddities about your country you find yet another one - rabbit shearing.

My partner Marc and I went on a short holiday to Waitomo the other week. A quick break for both of us and our first vacation together.

While both of us were expecting the usual points of interests, like glow-in-the-dark critters, cool rock formations and camera-toting tourists, neither of us were prepared for the rabbit encounter.

Not your everyday shorthaired rabbits are used for this, the company is using long, white haired Angora rabbits. Apparently this activity started in Germany after the bunnies were introduced from the Pyrenees mountains. I guess they didn't have enough sheep. And I guess that means we don't either?

The Shearing Shed (aptly named) is - according to the locals - the only rabbit shearing shed in the country. Perhaps we

should put this into perspective. This ain't no regular de-fleecing chamber.

Sitting innocently by the roadside is a cute little red building with bunnies signs near it. You enter what looks like a classic hay barn and step into what seems like a souvenir shop. From here you are guided into a room next door containing woolly garments and one bewildered, hot looking bunny displayed on a pedestal for everyone to touch.

After 10 minutes of shmoozing with the East Bunny look-a-like, a woman announces she's about to start the de-fleecing.

Nabbing bugs from his stand, she takes him to what looks suspiciously like a medieval torture rack. But not to fear, apparently as the rabbits get older they position themselves starfish style without guidance, ready to be strapped in.

Our bunny, however was slightly less experienced. He was attached, kicking and wriggling, onto the rack.

Once all four feet were roped to the table, Bugs was rolled onto his back exposing his silky belly - this is where they start the shearing from.

Moving quite slowly, the expert shearer shaved his stomach and back legs. After spinning the rabbit and finishing one side, she let us know the rest of Bugs would be shorn when the next bus load of tourists arrived. This left Bugs with one doozy of a bad hair day.

I know what some of you are thinking, "how inhumane", however we were all reassured that the rabbits were under no stress. The shearing clippers are always kept about one centimetre above the skin and the reason for the rack is to keep the skin wrinkle free to stop nicks and cuts. The SPCA have checked the procedure to make sure it is safe for the animals.

The rabbits need to have haircuts about every three months, which also stops them from overheating in New Zealand's conditions.

Stay tuned for next month's editorial covering more wacky Waitomo adventures.

(No animals were hurt during the making of this editorial)

Liz

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Margrit & Ruedi Dudli's Golden Wedding (15-11-02)

Margrit and Ruedi have been together as husband and wife for 50 golden years.

On November 15, 2002 Father Cook led a commemorative mass, held at St Patrick's Church, Kaponga.

On November 16, 2002 the happy couple were joined by family and friends at the Taranaki Swiss Clubrooms in an afternoon/evening of fun and laughter reminiscing about the couple's colourful path through life to date.

Congratulations on reaching this magnificent milestone.

Contributed by the family.



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