

Obituary : Anton (Tony) Joseph Meier

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Living with the big bad alpine wolf

Recent wolf attacks on sheep have once again highlighted the sensitive issue of co-existence with the protected predator.

The number of wolves in Switzerland is expected to rise in the coming years. Yet critics of the current protection strategy say the wolf remains a taboo subject and greater transparency, monitoring and prevention is needed.



Since mid-May over 100 sheep have been slaughtered by wolves in cantons Valais, Bern, Fribourg and Lucerne. The Valais and Lucerne authorities this week said three wolves involved in these incidents could be shot.

Fifteen sheep were killed in an attack in the Dix Valley in canton Valais last weekend. The flock was in an enclosure and watched over by two mountain dogs and a donkey.

Wolves were driven out of Switzerland in the 19th century. They started to return about ten years ago from neighbouring Italy and have begun colonising again.

According to experts, there are around 200 wolves in the Alps, of which 150 live in France and 40 in Italy. In Switzerland seven wolves have been confirmed by DNA analysis, but it is thought there may be up to 20 - and the number is likely to rise.

Graubünden is one of the areas, along with Valais and Ticino, which has been most affected by the wolf's return. But since last year the alpine predator, which can travel up to 50 kilometres a day, has started migrating to cantons Vaud, Fribourg, Lucerne and Bern.

from swissinfo



Anton (Tony) Joseph Meier

Tony Meier was born in Würenlingen, Switzerland, on 6th June 1922, and emigrated to New Zealand at the age of two. The family lived in Dannevirke from 1924-1925, where his father, Julius Meier, worked as a chef in a hotel, and then moved to Napier in 1925, where they owned and operated a boarding house. A further move to Whakatane in 1927 began the Meier family's farming life, firstly on a leased farm, and a year later on their own farm, "Titoki Park".

In 1940, the Meier Family moved to the newly purchased farm at Matangi (near Hamilton), which was later named "Santis Lodge", after Tony's mother's birth place, under the Santis mountain in Switzerland. The horse stud was started in 1950 with the imported stallion "Oman", breeding and racing many successful horses.

Tony married his life long partner Marie Van den Heuvel in July 1954, and the couple had two sons.

From the early 1960's, they began breeding pedigree Jersey cattle, going on to hold 21 annual Santis Jersey cattle sales on the farm, and exporting cattle world-wide. The mid 1960's also saw the introduction of 2000 hens for the farm's poultry business.

Between 1969 and 1972, Tony and Marie nursed both of Tony's elderly parents at their home until their passing.

The Santis Jersey herd continued to be milked by Tony and Marie until Tony was 80 years old, and he never ceased seeing to his horses.

Tony passed away peacefully at home surrounded by his family, completing his extensive book of life on 29th August 2009. May he rest in peace.

Our condolences go to Marie Meier and family, from the Hamilton Swiss Club and the Swiss Society.

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