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Uxbridge's Mike Lanigan, a third-generation cattle farmer, has had a change of heart and plans to turn his 100-acre property into a sanctuary, dubbed the Farmhouse Garden Animal Home. He hopes to eventually become a non-profit organization and charity. **See story, page 7**

UXBRIDGE FARMER TAKES CATTLE OFF THE MENU



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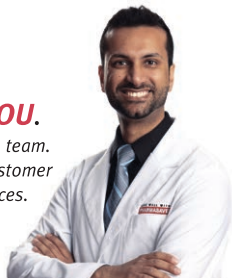
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Uxbridge cattle farmer Mike Lanigan has a change of heart, decides to start animal sanctuary

Farmer's decision to stop sending his cows to the butcher has been met with support

BY SHANE MACDONALD

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UXBRIDGE -- A third-generation organic vegetable and cattle farmer from Uxbridge has had a change of heart when it comes to his animals, deciding to stop sending them to the butcher and instead letting them live out their days.

Mike Lanigan, 60, was helping a calf nurse beside the apple tree on his 100-acre mixed farm in north Uxbridge when he had a bit of an epiphany.

He described lovingly coaxing the calf to feed and thinking to himself that the end result would be far from loving.

Eventually that calf, tagged as 5Z, would grow up and be sent off to the butcher, and at that time Lanigan said he would be able to "turn off" a part of his brain, knowing that was what was needed to pay the bills and make a living.

But he thought differently this time.

"All of the sudden I turned on that part in my brain, 'maybe I don't have to kill you,'" he said to the calf.

He asked Edith Barabash, who works as a cashier for him at the market where he sells his produce, if she knew of another way.

Barabash and Lanigan talked and the idea of creating a sanctuary came up. They took a camera and filmed a video of Lanigan explaining his wish to make a no-kill sanctuary out of his farm and posted it online.

The response from people who saw the video was resoundingly in favour.

Barabash says people have been calling and asking how they can help or donate since it went up.

"It's been amazing," she said.

"We didn't know if people would be receptive but we're really happy with



Justin Greaves / Metroland

UXBRIDGE -- Mike Lanigan is a third generation cattle farmer who recently decided to stop taking his animals to slaughter and start an animal sanctuary instead.

“ I think we're meant to do this, it's just come that way. The cows that are here and the cows that are going to be born here, are going to die here, and not by my hand. ”

-- Mike Lanigan

what happened.”

Lanigan says there is no going back now, and that things are moving quickly thanks to the Internet support.

“What we're looking at now is to get some help and organize it,” said Lanigan.

Barabash says she is working on making the farm a non-profit and charity.

They've reached out online on their Facebook page called Farmhouse Garden Animal Home looking for people to help support them.

“It's extremely expensive to run a sanctuary, especially with so many animals,” Barabash said.

While things have been moving quickly, Lanigan feels this is what was meant

to happen.

“I think we're meant to do this, it's just come that way,” he said. “The cows that are here and the cows that are going to be born here, are going to die here, and not by my hand.”

Barabash says she thinks people have latched on to Lanigan's story because of how out of the ordinary it is.

“It's a really odd story,” she said of the third-generation farmer's decision. “For somebody to make a 360, I think that's a really nice thing, people really resonate with that.”

Caring for his animals has always been important to Lanigan, who says he just wants to be at ease with his decisions

later in life.

“We tried really hard to give them a good life,” he said of the cows that have gone to the butchers. “I was always trying to do it right, and this is just one step further.”

Before, if a cow stopped reproducing, they'd become hamburger, Lanigan said.

“Now they'd just wander the fields and make manure,” he said.

The calf under the apple tree will never go to the butcher and it is longer known as 5Z.

Her name, decided by a poll on Facebook, is now Hope.

“She was kind of the catalyst for Mike's change,” Barabash said.

The runner-up name was Edith.

“That would've been really cute, but I think Hope is very fitting for her,” Barabash said.

The change to a no-kill sanctuary will be life changing, said Lanigan.

“Not just for the cows, but for us,” he said. “We're going to change this farm for generations, and I think for the better.”