

PENNED IN: Breeana Macrae (left), Unique Taylor & Meagan Te Kani watched the annual 'Running of the Sheep' in Te Kuiti with excitement as the hooved mass made its way down Rora St on Saturday.

Muster draws up to 6000 visitors

CALLING Te Kuiti woman Gillian Hooper 'lucky' is something of an understatement.

For the second year running, Ms Hooper won the town's Lucky Ewe Shopper competition, at the 23rd Great NZ Muster on Saturday.

"It was certainly a surprise to hear my name,"

"I might have to give some vouchers away, because I don't need to use them after using last year's ones."

Hers was among 1400 entries with the winning ticket drawn by Waitomo District Council community developer co-ordinator and muster organiser Donna Macdonald.

"So, I know it wasn't a jack-up," joked Mrs Macdonald.

In another turn of lucky events, three people

guessed the number of sheep that ran down Rora St, including world champion wool handler Keryn Herbert of Te Kuiti who took a break from the NZ Shears to enjoy the muster.

Stacey Rasmussen of Te Awamutu and Cassie Moran from Waiuku also shared in the \$1000 prize.

SHEEP RUNNING

The Shearing Capital of the World was again centre stage for another Te Kuiti spectacle on Saturday afternoon as the annual 'Running of the Sheep' performers were trucked into town.

More than 5000 people thanked the "sheep gods" for the beautiful weather as they lined both sides of Rora St, holding scrim barriers to ensure the woolly runners kept on track.

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EXPERT COMMENTARY: Muster visitors listened to the commentary of dog trialist Tony Hargreaves (above) from Kaiwaka as they watched the Great NZ Muster's most anticipated event (below) as 342 sheep made their way along Te Kuiti's main street.





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Heralding in the muster's main attraction was the Te Kuiti and Districts Highland Pipe Band, followed by quad and motorbike riders, local dog trialists and handy among them were Waitomo mayor Brian Hanna and Taranaki-King Country MP Barbara Kuriger.

Tony Hargreaves of Kaiwaka gave the crowd and informed commentary over loudspeakers about the mustering techniques being used by King Country dog trialists managing the hooved participants.

Mrs Macdonald said the muster was again simply "fabulous".

""There must have been 5000 to 6000 people at least here for the muster. I couldn't believe how great a day it was. The set-up of all the stallholders was great and the weather was exceptional."

More than 90 stalls lined Rora St. From paua fritters and candy floss, to rock climbing, kitchen fire demonstrations, dancing exhibitions and singing performances, there was plenty drawing people into Te Kuiti.

Rikihana Rhind was among the many local gifted performers who entertained the crowd from the 'Homegrown' stage in the centre of town.

Singers Tim Ruki, along with Jan and Allan Barclay hit the right notes throughout the day, and there were performances from Arkadas Tribal Belly Dancers and Imperious Dancers from Leeza's Dance Studio.

MC John 'The Balloon Man' Martin from Tirau said it was a day blessed by the "sheep gods".

"I've been doing this for several years now and it's always such a good day where the weather is a beauty and everyone absolutely enjoys themselves."

Rain the day before did, however, dampen one scheduled event.

The annual St Joseph's Catholic School Duck Race was postponed due to heavy rain which caused the Mangaokewa Stream to rise to an unsafe level. The 1000 yellow plastic ducks will be released from the King St East memorial bridge this Saturday at 10am.





COUNTRY CLASSICS:

Nine-year-old Duggie Valler (right) of Benneydale tried his luck at 'shearing' the Buy Kiwi Made store's sheep, while Hayley Wards collected donations for new kilts on behalf of the Te Kuiti and Districts Highland Pipe Band.













