

# Henty farmer set to pound the pavement in New York

Jodie O'Sullivan

STEVEN Scott is up at 5am most mornings, which is not so unusual for someone who runs a farm.

But the 58-year-old doesn't get up to start work at that hour.

Instead of throwing on a pair of farm boots, he laces up sneakers, grabs a head torch and his air pods and sets off down the road for a run.

This is no leisurely jog we're talking about; the schedule ranges from 45 minutes to a two or three-hour run.

In the dark, in the dust, in the depths of winter ... in any weather really.

A lot like farming, in fact. Steven and his wife Cindy run a successful Angus cattle stud on their 2400-hectare property Glen Elgin, 20 kilometres west of Henty.

Steven - a sixth-generation farmer who attended the nearby Pleasant Hills Primary School (of just 28 students) as a boy - admits he's not "your garden variety farmer". And he reckons there's a pretty strong chance he'll be "the only 58-year-old Aussie cattle farming, tree-hugging, theatre-loving dad" who will run the 42-kilometre New York marathon on November 3.

Considered the largest marathon in the world, Steven will take to the streets with more than 52,000 competitors for a race that courses through the five

boroughs of New York City - just two days before the US presidential election. He doesn't expect to win.

"I want to find a balance between running a good time and enjoying the most amazing 42-kilometre sight-seeing tour through New York," Steven says.

Steven, who says he only took up running to help his daughters, Joely and Casey, train for their school cross-country events, is no stranger to distance racing.

Cindy insists it was her husband's "fiercely competitive" nature that prompted him to start running further than the two kilometres required for the girls' primary school race training!

Something must have taken hold because Steven entered his first marathon in Canberra in 2012 "and from that moment on my toenails have never looked the same".

In between the daily rigours of running the property, raising three children (Casey, now 23, Joely, 21, and Sam, 17) and preparing 230 bulls and 150 heifers for sale each year, has been a steady program of training and racing - from Sydney's City2Surf with the whole family to the London Marathon.

Oh, and there's the yoga class in Henty on a Wednesday night.

Steven's training ground is the dirt tracks and roads around the farm.

"I try not to look over the



"If I was out playing golf, I wouldn't be looking at the farm," says Henty's Steven Scott, who will run the New York marathon on Sunday, November 3. Picture by Mark Jesser

fence to what's happening," he says. "It's my shut-off time. If I was out playing golf, I wouldn't be looking at the farm."

Steven often starts his run listening to podcasts; his reasoning is somewhat unique.

"They say you become the average of the five people you spend the most time with - given that person is myself I want to lift the average a little," he laughs.

"I want to be the most stimulating company I can be for myself."

Often, though, he's just content to "get lost in my own thoughts".

When it comes to the hazards of running mainly in the dark on your own, Steven insists he's more likely to be hit by a kangaroo than a vehicle.

"If I see a vehicle I usually know who it is and where they're heading - it'll be that's so and so's truck picking up a load of sheep from such and such," he says. "It's very parochial."

It's a far cry from the hustle and bustle he'll encounter

during his adventure in The Big Apple.

He's pretty confident his body will hold up; it's the potential mental fatigue that worries him.

"Two years ago, I ran the London Marathon and was surprised by two things," he says. "Firstly, how hot it was ... secondly, I hadn't fully anticipated the sensory overload of 50,000 other runners with their elbows and feet flailing about, bands playing everywhere, thousands of spectators, and non-stop historical

landmarks."

Steven, who describes himself as a "far less famous version of fellow country boy Cliff Young", says when he turned the final corner in front of Buckingham Palace, with thousands of onlookers cheering, he was totally cooked.

"I was a long way from Kansas," he reflects.

## 'I think he's mad'

Steven and Cindy have been married for 25 years after meeting at a mutual friend's wedding in her



## He doesn't do things by halves, my husband.

Cindy Scott

hometown of Johannesburg, South Africa.

Steven says he fell in love on the banks of the Crocodile River with the hippos making funny noises in the background.

"All my schooling, primary, secondary and tertiary, was within an hour's drive home," he begins. "I may not have travelled far to learn

but I did to [find] love!"

Together they run Scotts Angus and share a mutual passion for maintaining biodiversity in the land around them. They do not share a love of running.

Steven tactfully says that Cindy is more of an avid walker, enjoying "the journey" of interacting with the birds, plants and animals.



The Scotts have been married for 25 years and combine their love of breeding Angus cattle with a shared passion for building the biodiversity on their property. Picture supplied

"I think he's mad," Cindy states bluntly, before revealing a few of the less savoury practices associated with her husband's running "obsession".

"Did he tell you that when he comes back from a run he has an 'ice bath'?" she asks. "It's a contraption he bought online, like a kids' swimming pool, that he puts about 15 freezer blocks in, sets a timer and climbs into ...

"The thing is he was using water from the dam, which is full of manure, mud and probably baby yabbies. It was just revolting. I said if you want to sleep in the same bed as me, that water has to go!"

Then there's the equally repulsive "sweating sack" - a poor man's sauna, as Cindy describes it.

"He bought that online too and puts it on the sitting room floor. I give it a wide berth [because] when he lifts it up, there's a puddle of sweat on the floor.

"He doesn't do things by halves, my husband."

Still, Cindy concedes, Steven has used his running for good causes.

After losing a good mate to suicide, Steven raised money and awareness for the Black Dog Institute by running three marathons in three months.

"In all seriousness I think running is incredibly helpful for mental and physical health," Cindy says. "And, because Steven needs a support crew at these events, I've been able to go shopping on Regent Street in London and now we're off to New York ... Fifth Avenue is calling."

### A squirrel glider by the name of Matilda

There are those husbands who woo their wives with flowers and jewellery.

It's fair to say not every wife would welcome the gift of a dead marsupial with a cup of tea on waking from her night's slumber.

But so it was that on one particular winter's morning, Steven noticed something hanging in the neighbour's barbed wire fence while he was out running. He stopped and walked over to find a little squirrel glider caught in the wire.

It was, he says, a "bittersweet finding" - the knowledge there were gliders in the area a wonderfully positive sign; the down side there was now one less in the world.

"I carefully disentangled the cute little thing and carried it home," he says.

"Each morning post-run I take Cindy in a cup of tea

to wake her. She received a special treat that morning."

An unperturbed Cindy admits she did welcome the offering.

"It was still warm, poor thing," she recalls.

"Steven knows how much I believe in building biodiversity and doing the right thing by the environment - being custodians of the land.

"While we're not 'rabid greenies', we do put nest boxes around the farm and plant lots of trees ..."

So, what did the couple do with the precious discovery?

"Well, obviously we moved the ice cream and frozen peas around so that there was space for it in our freezer," Steven says.

And that's where it stayed for "a couple of years" until they were able to work out the logistics of getting "Matilda" to a taxidermist.

Matilda's journey is a story in itself (we might leave that for another day).

Suffice to say a plane was chartered and Matilda was carefully transported in an Esky to a taxidermist in Hillston, NSW, before returning to take pride of place at the Wirraminna Environmental Education Centre at Burrumbuttock.

Her legacy will provide insights and education for generations to come.

### Going the distance

It takes self-discipline to continuously train alone, Steven reflects. Distance running, much like farming, can be a solitary pursuit.

"I once came across a meme that said, 'If you want to gain an understanding of running, run a mile'," Steven begins. "If you want to gain an understanding of life, run a marathon."

Steven believes running has taught him a lot about farming. Of the importance of planning and preparation, of the satisfaction in methodically ticking off jobs on the to-do list - "like when my Garmin watch dings after each kilometre". Of the art of breathing.

When the going gets tough, literally and figuratively, "take a couple of deep breaths and get back on track".

"I also find, especially when fatigued or overwhelmed, setting achievable mini goals helps considerably," he explains. "Just get to the next guidepost."

The other thing he's learned is don't make unplanned changes when fatigued or stressed.

"When you've run 36 kilometres and the day is getting warmer, that is definitely not the best time to skip a drink," he observes. "Marathons are never won in the first kilometre but it's where many are lost."

In running, as in life, learn to "pace yourself accordingly ... to your reasons, capabilities and goals".

Steven admits if there's a period when he's not running, he tends to get a little "edgy and frustrated".

"There's just something special about watching the sun come up, of seeing those first rays poking through the fog and heavy frost," he reveals. "I go home and tell Cindy, 'I'm the luckiest bugger in the world!' She says to me, 'Steven, you're the biggest idiot in the world! And that's all right with me.'"