

# My Farming Week

Tiina Laas, Foxfield, Fenagh, Co Leitrim



Tiina Laas sells quail eggs and soap made from donkey milk. \ Philip Doyle

**I farm:** “On one acre in Fenagh, Co Leitrim. It’s quite a beautiful location with Sliabh an Iarainn directly outside our front window.”

**Stock:** “It’s mostly all birds now. We have about 300 birds in all. We had 3,500 birds at one stage but the work was great.”

**Breeds:** “We have five breeds of quail - Estonian quail, Italian quail, Japanese quail, English Black and Texas A&M quail.”

**How it began:** “I moved to Ireland in 2008 from Estonia and worked for Bank of America in Carrick-on-Shannon. After it went out of business, I turned to quails. I got 12 quails at first and it grew from there. I sell my eggs under the business 12 Quail Farm. They go

into restaurants and SuperValu stores across the country. Even Neven Maguire has used them in his famous restaurant.”

**The eggs:** “The quail eggs are delicious and highly nutritious. After I lost my job, I developed frozen shoulders and I believe the quail eggs helped me recover from my bad shoulders. One quail egg has the equivalent nutritional benefits of four hen eggs. They’re a little super food.”

**Donkey soap:** “About a year ago, we got into making handmade donkey soap. We use powdered donkey milk. My daughter Liisa works here too and we have Cianán Redmond here as well, who works on the marketing and design of the soaps.”

**Exports:** “We’re now exporting our donkey soap to countries such as the US, France, Brazil and Canada, as well as selling it in Ireland and the UK. We have made a connection with a distributor in China too. The soap is an excellent antiseptic and a deep moisturiser.”

**Prolificacy of donkeys:** “A donkey only gives you about one litre of milk per day compared to a dairy cow giving 24 or 25 liters. The donkey’s gestation is 11 months so you’re waiting a while for the donkey to deliver for you.”

**Quotable quote:** “Cleopatra had 700 donkeys so she could bathe in their milk. If it was good enough for her, it’s good enough for us.”