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Show prize surprise for E. Cape farmer

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WHEN his Boerbulls got into his lamb pen and killed a substantial number of his prize hopefuls just weeks before the Royal Agriculture Show, Eastern Cape farmer Gert Lotter nearly gave up hope.

Lotter, who has been a stalwart supporter of the Royal's fat lamb competition and the carcass auction which follows it, was left with a difficult choice,

"Gert had to decide whether or not to bring what lambs he had left to the show and try his luck or to just not come at all," his wife, Louise, said.

"We love coming to the Royal Show, so we thought we must just bring the lambs and hope for the best."

The Lotters travelled from Hofmeyr to Pietermaritzburg with few expectations of success and were left somewhat discouraged when

their best White Dorper fat lambs failed to show to advantage in the ring.

On Tuesday evening, some 200 cattle, sheep and goat breeders and buyers gathered at the sheep section for the Royal Show's pres-

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tigious red meat auction.

Among them were the Lotters, looking apprehensive.

Minutes later, however, the couple were all smiles as Terry Strachan, chief executive officer of the Royal Agricultural Society, revealed

that one of their White Dorsers had been named RAS champion for 2018.

Lotter also took home the prize for the champion group of lambs.

Speaking to *The Witness* afterwards, Lotter said he couldn't quite believe it, adding: "It looks like our luck may have turned for the better."

During the auction, the lamb sold to the Oyster Box Hotel in Umhlanga for R180 per kilogram — well above the current ruling price of R71/kg — but well down on last year's price of R1 350/kg. The hotel also bought the champion group of lambs for R170/kg.

Asked if he was concerned about the big drop in the auction price, Lotter said: "No. For me this is more about having the winning carcass. It's been quite a long time since I last won and it feels wonderful."

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