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“4-H has always been my hockey”: lifelong 4-H keener Lesleigh Elgie is Ontario 4-H Council’s new president

By Diane Baltaz

Lesleigh Elgie loved 4-H so much in her youth that she grew up to become its president. Elgie, 36, recently assumed the presidency of Ontario 4-H council.

“I wanted to give back in return for everything that 4-H gave me,” said Elgie. “I’ve also always been a committee person.”

Elgie, who lives in Brantford, joined the Ontario 4-H Council in 2021, representing Brant 4-H, and replaces outgoing president Erica Murray of Perth 4-H Association. She was an executive member-at-large for two years prior to being elected to her new, one-year term.

The Ontario 4-H council develops the vision and governance policies for 4-H Ontario. Each 4-H Ontario association elects a representative to speak and vote on their behalf at the provincial level.

“We’re delighted to have Lesleigh step into the role of president,” said Christine Oldfield, executive director of 4-H Ontario in a press release. “Her commitment, reliability, and genuine respect for diverse perspectives make her an inspiring leader for our organization. We look forward to the vision, collaboration, and positive energy she brings.”

The new president has volunteered with the Brant 4-H Association since 2010 after “graduating” as a 4-H participant. She led several local clubs and participated in other Brant 4-H events, moving on to 4-H Ontario council as the Brant association’s representative and then joining the executive.

While many farm leaders in Ontario today speak fondly of their 4-H background and credit its “Learning by Doing” mantra for shaping their community involvement as adults, Elgie’s 4-H formation also instilled a deep passion for the organization itself.

Elgie got involved at age 10 when her older



4-H Ontario president Lesleigh Elgie at the Bell Homestead, which is a site for a 4-H project.

brother joined 4-H through the invitation of a family friend - that happened when 10, not the current nine, was the minimum age for youth to join 4-H. The Elgies lived in Mt. Pleasant at that time.

“I was a rural girl but not on a farm,” she said. “I was an opportunity seeker – I just love to go to everything.”

Prior to volunteering, Elgie completed more than 150 projects and participated in numerous provincial opportunities. She also served as a 4-H Ontario ambassador in 2008, where she gained experience promoting the organization and supporting committee projects.

It is easier to repeat which clubs and projects Elgie did not participate in: “I didn’t do

the demolition derby or farm machinery or the beef clubs.”

“This (childhood activity) was and is my hockey – I joined every club that I could do,” explained Elgie.

After 11 years of participation, Elgie “graduated” in 2011, but leaped directly into volunteering in 2012.

“I earned my 15-year volunteer pin in 2025, which was the 110th year of 4-H in Ontario.”

She also obtained a BA from Wilfrid Laurier University, Brantford campus with studies with a focus on youth and then did post-graduate studies on human relations, which enhanced Elgie’s 4-H work.

Elgie joined 4-H Ontario council as the Brant Association’s representative in 2019 prior to moving onto the executive level. Council and executive meetings are usually conducted virtually, due to the vast distances that members must travel.

The new president isn’t the first Elgie to serve on the Ontario council: her father, Dave, was a director; locally, her mother, Elaine, is the Brant 4-H’s program manager.

“I’m a lot like my father as I like boards and committees. I just wanted to give back to the organization which gave me so much – as I said -- 4-H is my hockey.”

Elgie’s youthful 4-H portfolio typifies the expansive potential of 4-H.

“If you can think of a topic, there will be a club on it. You just need a leader and get experts in to show youth how to do things,” she said.

“With the (Brant) curling club, for example, we brought in people who could do their part and leaders who could do what they couldn’t do.”

Today’s 4-H clubs range from square dancing, robotics, handwriting, catering, art, to financial fitness and community involvement. A popular one with Brant 4-H involves training mature youth to be interpreters at the Bell Homestead in Brantford. This year’s participants guided visitors at the 2026 Doors Open Brant as their “achievement.”

“Our 4-H provincial member fee is a one-time fee – as a member you can join as many clubs as you want,” said Elgie. “There’s a caveat that maybe some clubs may require a materials fee. But all of the activities must empower members.”

Sometimes the confidence built from their activities results in youth creating their own clubs or assisting with others. “Even a 15 year old can become a junior leader—they may just ask for an adult leader for a crops club or whatever club they want.”

“I take pride that I’ve seen several members of clubs do activities, then they volunteer or talk about what they want to lead,” Elgie said. “For example, one shy member who is now a youth leader from the Homestead is talking about starting a kayaking club – the program turns trust into leadership.”

4-H Ontario’s 2025 annual report states

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“4-H has always been my hockey”: lifelong 4-H keener Lesleigh Elgie is Ontario 4-H Council’s new president

that 81 percent of youth surveyed reported that 4-H helped shape their future career goals.

“Ultimately through all these opportunities we are supporting the next generation of Ontario’s workforce. In the moment youth may recognize the hard skills that they learn in 4-H such as how to clip a calf, but as they grow older and reflect on their time in the program, they recognize the soft skills they learned through 4-H. Confidence, resilience, critical thinking, team work and leadership are all skills that support youth wherever their journey takes them.”

The original 4-H mandate evolved from its 110-plus-year-old agricultural roots to more diverse activities, according to the new president.

“4-H was initially known as the Boys and Girls Club until 1952 when the name changed to 4-H Canada. For many years, projects were divided by homemaking and agriculture, although even then the experience-based learning and the opportunity to build leadership skills was at the root of it all.”

“While there are still strong ties to agriculture,

we provide 4-H’ers with access to over 100 project manuals spanning topics including STEM, the environment, healthy living, recreation, food, animals and agriculture.”

“We also adapted programming to digital formats so we can increase accessibility of 4-H by reducing geographic barriers to participation. This has been done through our own virtual art show, virtual judging competition, and exploring the 4-H and Cloverbuds at home programs, but also by our local associations.”

Today’s 4-H members come from a diverse demographic said the president.

“4-H is open to all, not just to farm or rural kids anymore. Although right now our highest numbers still come from the farm, rural non-farm and small towns, we are expanding further into cities as we have the volunteers and participants.”

This diversity also benefits its popularity, resulting in Ontario 4-H membership rising to 44,705 registered participants by May 27 said the president.

“We had a goal of 5,000, therefore we reached 89 per cent,” Elgie said. “Also, 29 per

cent of these are new members.”

Provincially, 4-H Ontario has 1,521 volunteers in good standing with 38 per cent having volunteered for 10-plus years, and the association has 175 new applicants.

Brant 4-H has 145 participants and 50 volunteers, said Elgie.

Norfolk 4-H currently has 52 members, 20 Cloverbuds and 21 volunteers, reported Vivian Adam-DeVooght of the organizing committee.

Elgie said that the provincial council is considering a 2028 review of council representation, with the aim of attracting more association representatives under age 40.

“We want to encourage new blood and obtain fresh ideas as we have a new generation of 4-H members.”

In her spare time, Elgie devotes herself to her King Charles Cavalier spaniel, Paisley, as well as curling and quilting – “both 4-H skills!” She also participates in other community activities, including the Paris Agricultural Society:

“I love agriculture and the Paris Fair – 4-H is what got me in!”. 🌱

Ontario 4-H facts

- 4-H began in Missouri, USA in 1901. The president of the Farmer’s Institute of Macoupin County offered local boys a bag of corn seed to grow and share at the St. Louis Fair. When more than 500 boys asked for corn seed, the concept of a youth component in agriculture became a clear success... which in turn sparked the 4-H movement.

- The leadership development pillars that shape the 4-H program include community engagement and communications, science and technology, the environment and healthy living, sustainable agriculture and food security

- 4-H emerged in Canada in 1913 with the first club in Roland, Manitoba. That province’s Department of Agriculture donated 12 purebred poultry eggs, purebred potatoes and seed to Manitoba youth to raise and grow over the season. It was done to educate youth about agricultural skills in a club setting.

- In Ontario, the clubs began as the Boys and Girls Club and was run by the Ministry of Agriculture. Many of its principles were retained by 4-H including: age regulations; leaders who guide and supervise members’ projects while providing constructive feedback; presenting completed projects at an Achievement Day; aiming to develop agriculture or life skills according to the “Learn to Do by Doing” concept.

- The first Ontario club began in 1913 with a potato-growing contest in Carleton County, a fact that didn’t resurface until the 1980s.

- A club established by Stanley Knapp in Waterloo County was recognized as the first

Ontario club in 1915 which all of Ontario 4-H anniversaries have been dated.

- Ontario initially had 450 4-H members; by 1923 there were 127 clubs with 2,369 participants.

- In 1935 the Homemaking Club was introduced and 1,000 girls completed the project, “A simple cotton dress.”

- 4-H Ontario membership peaked in 1965 with 28,833 members. By the 1980s, membership began to drop. In response, in 1988 the

Ontario 4-H council was established to act as a guardian of 4-H programs in order to ensure its longevity.

- 4H Ontario became autonomous from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food in 2000.

- 4-H Ontario is a non-profit youth organization that builds youth as leaders within their communities. With roots in rural Ontario, today it is open to youth aged six to 21 across the province. 🌱

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Brant County mayor and councillor candidates speak out on ag issues

By Jeff Helsdon - Editor

As part of its coverage leading up to October's municipal election, Brant Farms talked to the mayoral and councillor candidates about their thoughts on farm issues.

The questions, and candidate responses in alphabetical order, are below from those who responded.

1) Where does agriculture fit into your economic development priorities for the municipality?

Mayoral candidates

Stuart Braid - Agriculture and farming are very important facets and drivers of the economy of Brant County. I believe it is a top priority to maintain and grow the farming sector. I will do all I can to work for farmers across the county and listen to their needs in these economic times.

Christine Garneau Bisailon - Ensuring that farms remain financially viable by focusing on decisions within municipal control forms part of my economic development strategy. Council needs to welcome businesses of complementary scale and function to rural and agricultural communities, consistent with the provincial on-farm diversified use and planning policies, because these contribute to the broader viability of Brant County's farms. This also means recognizing that a standardized approach overlooks the important role that each local farm plays, along with revisiting the red tape recently introduced through the Community Planning Permit System (CPPS).

Jennifer Kyle - Agriculture is a major economic driver in Brant and should be treated that way. To me, that means not only protecting farmland, but also making sure roads and infrastructure work for agriculture, and supporting opportunities for local processing and other agri-food businesses. It also means recognizing municipal decisions of all kinds can have significant impacts on everyday farming operations. As a farmer, I strongly believe an agriculture lens must be applied to decision-making from the beginning, not after the fact. A strong farming community supports a strong local economy, and agriculture will absolutely be part of my economic development priorities.

David Swanson - Farmers and homesteaders are our most self-reliant and productive people. You will all find no better ear for exception and understanding when dealing with our heavy-handed government and lawyer-happy society. Be it arguing for water allowances, road design, and zoning flexibility - David Swanson will be a strong and loyal ally.

Ward 1

John Kemp - Agricultural is the origin of this community and remains a majority influence in its prosperity. I am hearing from constituents that the rural and quiet nature of Brant County is why they live here. I will strive to maintain this for our future generations.

John MacAlpine - Growing up in a rural part of the county, I spent many years working on neighbouring farms and on my uncle's and grandparents' farms. Those experiences taught me not to underestimate the importance of agriculture or its impact on our local economy. Farming remains the county's largest employer, and as a council, it's essential that we celebrate this sector and work with the community to

ensure it remains strong. Protecting farmland and supporting agriculture will help keep it viable for future generations in both our county and our country.

Ward 2

Jeff Johnston - I'm a huge supporter of Brant 4H and understand the need of agriculture in our community. It builds community, while recognizing grassroots feeling and how it benefits all. Also, more engagement with education as something agricultural based in the high school or even public schools curriculum would benefit and help people to realize that whether a small hobby farm, or even starting small, can lead to bigger and better and for the obvious benefits of farms feed city's and we continue to grow.

James McCulloch - Agriculture is a core economic pillar for the County of Brant. It drives local employment, supports food production, strengthens agribusiness, and anchors rural community identity. My priorities would focus on protecting farmland, expanding value added processing, supporting farm innovation, and improving infrastructure that helps producers reach markets. Agriculture isn't just an industry, it's a foundation for sustainable growth, tourism, and long term resilience across the municipality.

Ward 3

John Bell - Short answer- it's a high priority. The agricultural system is one of the county's most important economic sectors and needs to be protected and developed. Agriculture represents the largest land use but provides less than 10 per cent of the county's employment (Source: County 2025 Economic Development End year report). I believe, with help from county staff and provincial government, the sector can take more of the value of the agricultural supply chain e.g. through more food processing plants, through higher value crops, through the introduction of cutting edge technology. I support the recently introduced Rural Prosperity Community Improvement Plan to support agricultural viability and at the same time strengthen long-term vitality of rural communities.

Ward 4

Andrea Bowden - "Saving farmland" isn't just a slogan to me — it's something we need to take seriously. On paper, I agree with the county's words in the Official Plan and the RPCIP: "agriculture is our core economic sector, a major employer, and a foundation for long term growth." My focus is making that statement real. Strong economic development depends on farmland that stays workable, productive, affordable and adaptable — not acres tied up in rules and overlays or pushed into Natural Heritage zoning with added restrictions. Protecting farmland is how we keep our rural economy strong.

Ben Clement - In Ward 4, we are strongly dependent on agriculture and our small communities have been built and survive around it. Farming is major contributor to our local economy and therefore would be high in my priority list. Agriculture is a large employer in Ward 4. It would be great to see more programs to help young farmers to either start up or become educated in agriculture as the future of agriculture and community will eventually be on them. I believe we need to continue to work with the hard-working individuals and families

involved in the agricultural sector to sustain a vibrant and healthy community.

Claudine Craigie - Although I am not an agriculture expert, I recognize the agri-food sector as a key economic driver. Economic development is often linked to urban residential growth, but agriculture and related industries also generate and sustain employment. We should promote small-scale farm businesses and support value-added activities on local farms to create jobs and strengthen our community. This requires innovation, flexibility, and support for new growth in the agricultural sector, including market development and the commercialization of new food and farming products.

Elaine Tully - Agriculture is at the top of my economic priorities for the County of Brant.

Being an ag based economy, council is tasked with preserving our valuable farm land. I would resist the requests of planners/developers to remove agricultural designation from lands they wish to develop, and earnestly plan to work to find better solutions. Land designations across the county have been done with purpose, and it is up to council to preserve those designations, guiding development to take place where it is designated.

Ward 5

Sonia Brown - Agriculture is the backbone of Ward 5 and my top economic priority. We must move to viewing our farmlands as our primary economic engine. My priority will be seeking opportunities to expand our local agri-food value chain by supporting on-farm diversified businesses, estate wineries, and local processing facilities. This keeps food dollars in Brant County. Furthermore, I will advocate for targeted infrastructure investments—specifically high-speed rural broadband and upgraded bridge networks—to ensure our farmers can safely transport equipment and compete in a modern marketplace. Supporting our agricultural sector isn't just about heritage; it's about building municipal resilience.

Mike Gatopoulos - Agriculture is one of Brant's biggest economic strengths, and I think we sometimes take that for granted. Economic development shouldn't just mean attracting new businesses or industrial development. It should also mean making it easier for the businesses already here to succeed. For agriculture, that means protecting good farmland, keeping taxes and fees reasonable, supporting agricultural businesses, and making municipal processes easier to navigate. We should be looking for growth, but we shouldn't lose one of our strongest industries while we do it.

2) How will you ensure municipal planning decisions protect farmland while accommodating future growth?

Mayor

Stuart Braid - I will absolutely make sure no one loses their homes, livelihoods, and farm lands. I will fight for that right to property ownership. There has been a lot of that going on the last few years from government and overzealous land developers.

Christine Garneau Bisailon - Recognizing that council must operate within its Official Plan and Provincial Policy Statements when approaching new proposals, I believe Council



Brant County mayor and councillor candidates speak out on ag issues

can find better balance in these decisions. Council should proceed cautiously when expanding settlement boundaries and pursuing boundary adjustments with larger urban municipalities. Keeping farms financially viable also helps protect agricultural land from development proposals as part of the broader strategy to manage land use pressures.

Jennifer Kyle - We need to grow up rather than growing out. That means making better use of infill and available land within our existing communities, and not continually expanding settlement boundaries onto farmland. Our official plan already sets out where growth should happen, and we need to stick to it. Protecting farmland also means protecting the ability to farm it. Drainage, road access, traffic and conflicts with neighbours all need to be considered, not just acres lost.

David Swanson - I don't like putting limitations on what land owners can, and cannot, do with their land. Allowing a half - 3/4 frontage acre severance and a home on a tract of 1,000 farmland keeps the rural setting intact, gives a great amount of flexibility to land owners and increases property tax income for the county. I support more density in downtown Paris so we're growing up, not out.

Ward 1

John Kemp - As Ontarians, we need farmland to grow crops to feed each other. It is our responsibility to keep as much farmable land as possible at work growing. I will use my vote in favour of prime farmland over suburbs.

John MacAlpine - When we make decisions at council, one of the key lenses we use is how those choices affect our agricultural community and its ability to sustain our food supply now and in the future. I've been advocating for a stronger role for the Agriculture Advisory Committee, so we can better understand the impacts of growth and ensure our farmers have the support they need to continue doing their essential work effectively.

Ward 2

Jeff Johnston - To ensure municipal planning decisions protect farmland and growth zoning and the consistency of both is a good place to start all the while recognizing environmental impact of growth while keeping farms intact ensures environmental protection and most important water.

James McCulloch - Municipal planning must balance farmland protection with responsible growth. I would prioritize firm urban boundaries, evidence based land use decisions, and investment in intensification areas so development occurs where services already exist. Protecting prime agricultural land, supporting farm viability, and coordinating infrastructure planning ensures growth strengthens communities without eroding the rural landscapes that define the County of Brant.

Ward 3

John Bell - The county's 2023 Official Plan's Agriculture designation prioritizes the protection and enhancement of a continuous agricultural land base as a finite resource. That's a great starting point. In my eight years on council I have routinely objected to the expansion of urban settlement areas that takes farmland out of production. Focusing residential and industrial development in existing urban settlement areas

will reduce further pressures to take farmland out of production.

Ward 4

Andrea Bowden - Real agricultural planning protection isn't simply painting it green on a map. Start with zoning, CPPS, overlays. Keep allowing practical farm businesses that help farms stay viable and farmable without red tape. Support rural jobs and infrastructure to strengthen agriculture. Steer growth to serviced areas, major projects must show how they affect farming. Keep rules simple and consistent, not exceptions to rezone like the CPPS. Otherwise, we're paving paradise to put up a parking lot!

Ben Clement - I believe moderate growth and thorough planning are key when it comes to preserving farmland and allowing for growth. In Ontario, we are currently losing over 300 acres per day to development. I don't see that number being sustainable if we want food security. I think as a municipality we need to be sure our infrastructure supports what growth we allow while taking into consideration that farmland is an asset and necessity to a prosperous future.

Claudine Craigie - We must protect farmland for the future and ensure agricultural land has equal opportunities for growth. Innovative agricultural development can attract investment and encourage residential growth that reflects our ward's character and heritage. Education within our community and council is essential to advancing innovative agricultural projects.

Elaine Tully - My vote, one of 11 around the table, cannot single handedly ensure this, or any policy. It is my intention, however, to work diligently and collaboratively with my colleagues to develop innovative ways to both protect farmland and allow growth. Adhering to designated zoning is the first and most important step. I am concerned, however, that the ever-impending imposition of an OLT appeal makes this an even bigger challenge, over which council has very little control.

Ward 5

Sonia Brown - Protecting our prime agricultural soil will require strict adherence to our settlement boundaries and prioritizing smart, high-density intensification within existing urban hubs. I strongly support council's recent efforts to remove hundreds of agricultural acres from urban expansion transfers. Moving forward, I will ensure municipal planning mandates a "farmland-first" lens, utilizing rigorous agricultural impact assessments before any development occurs. We can comfortably accommodate our provincial growth targets without sacrificing the fertile land that feeds our community.

Mike Gatopoulos - We need to grow, but that doesn't mean farmland should automatically become the next place we build. Growth should go where the infrastructure and services can actually support it. We also need to look at what development does to the farms that remain around it. Protecting farmland means more than drawing a line on a map. It means making sure planning decisions allow farms to continue operating successfully for the long term.

3) Do you support reducing the farm property tax ratio for farmland? If so, why? If not, why not?

Mayor

Stuart Braid - Yes, I would definitely look

into that. I would also want to ask if the farm owners feel they are getting anything in return for these taxes. In other words, can the county do more?

Christine Garneau Bisailon - Nearly 70 per cent of OFA survey respondents indicated that reducing farm taxes should be the organization's top advocacy priority. This spring, outgoing Council exceeded the OFA's targeted 25 per cent tax ratio threshold, which needs to be reconsidered as part of broader council deliberations about affordability for ratepayers more generally starting this fall.

Jennifer Kyle - For at least the last eight years, including my time on council, Brant's farm tax ratio has remained at 24 per cent of the residential rate. While I'm open to reviewing it, there are many other ways council can support agriculture through decisions that recognize the realities of farming in the county.

David Swanson - We all want lower taxes and everyone will get a break when we can. I will be using property tax credits to pay our employees and contractors where we can so they can pay their property taxes. Reducing interest costs and keeping the money local and get a tax reduction for everyone.

Ward 1

John Kemp - I am still contemplating this point as I have not yet properly seen all the views. Presently, I am leaning toward reducing the taxes for farming as I see fewer services being provided to farms by the municipality.

John MacAlpine - I wish we could lower taxes, but maintaining Brant County's high quality of life requires everyone to contribute their fair share. Reducing taxes on farmland would mean raising them elsewhere or cutting services, so any changes must be carefully evaluated to ensure fairness and sustainability.

Ward 2

Jeff Johnston - As for supporting the farm property tax ratio, we need to work and reach out to our MPP for support as politics aside accountability is at hand as adhering to budgets enables for more especially the farmer. That being said, we can only encourage add at the end of the day, it's your land to handle as best suits everyone.

James McCulloch - Yes, I support reviewing and, where it is fair and affordable, reducing the farm ratio. Farmland uses far fewer municipal services than homes and businesses. Brant already sits at 24. Any change must be transparent, phased, and balanced so we support farm viability without quietly shifting costs onto residents.

Ward 3

John Bell - No. Farmland property tax rates are already legislated to be a maximum of 25% of the residential rate to reflect that farmland uses fewer municipal services than residences. In the County the ratio is set at 24% and has been for many years. What is the compelling case for further reduction in farmland taxes vs other classes? Even though farmland contributes only 4% of the County's total weighted tax assessment reducing the ratio for farmland would transfer the tax burden to other classes.

Ward 4

Andrea Bowden - My track record advocating for farmland shows I support

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agriculture. The 25 per cent farm tax rate is set by the province, and any reduction shouldn't come at the expense of residential taxpayers. My concern is the appealed CPPS pushing farms into Natural Heritage zoning and risking farmers' current tax status.

Ben Clement - I personally would support reducing the farm property tax ratio. With costs of operation continually rising from fuel, fertilizer, equipment, insurance and labour, farmers could use a break, you must consider these farms are for the most part not serviced lands.

Claudine Craigie - I fully support maintaining the farm property tax ratio at 25 per cent or lower. The municipal budget should not rely heavily on farm property taxes for infrastructure, but should fund only the services necessary to support agricultural businesses in rural communities like Ward 4.

Elaine Tully - I absolutely do support reducing the farm property

tax ratio for farmland. Having read the supporting documentation, I believe it is a fair request. As this matter is before the province, I will be following it carefully.

Ward 5
Sonia Brown - I support maintaining and further optimizing a lower ratio. Brant farmers face steep tax hikes driven by skyrocketing land assessments, disproportionate to the municipal services rural properties consume. Keeping the farm tax ratio low protects agricultural viability, prevents family farms from being priced out, and ensures a stable local food supply.

Mike Gatopoulos - I support looking at reducing it further. Agriculture is a major part of Brant's economy, and keeping farming viable benefits the entire community. At the same time, I want to see the numbers and understand exactly what a reduction means for every taxpayer before making that decision. 🌱



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Meet Lauren Miller-Lensvelt: OFA's new member service representative for Zone 3

By Lauren Miller-Lensvelt

Hello! I'm Lauren Miller-Lensvelt, OFA's new Member Service Representative (MSR) for Zone 3, supporting members across Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk. While I may already be a familiar face to some, I wanted to take the opportunity to introduce myself and share a little more about my background.

I was raised on my family's grain farm just outside of Glen Morris and have been connected to farming from a young age. Growing up, I was an active member of Brant County 4-H, an experience that introduced me to different parts of the industry and many of the people within it.

My farm background also helped shape the direction of my education. I hold a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture and a Master of Science in Rural Planning and Development, both from the University of Guelph. Through my studies, I developed a particular interest in land use planning, farmland preservation and finding ways for agriculture and growing communities to work alongside one another.

Before joining OFA, I worked with Farm & Food Care Ontario in communications and project management. In that role, I worked with farmers and commodity organizations from across the province on projects that helped share the stories of Canadian food and farming with the public.

Community involvement has also been an important part of my connection to the industry over the years. I currently serve on the Bite of Brant committee, helping to plan the annual event



Lauren Miller-Lensvelt

that gives local Grade 5 students a hands-on introduction to farming, food and where it comes from. The event brings together volunteers and members of the local farm community to create an engaging learning experience for students.

My interest in agricultural education has also included the Paris Fair, where I previously served as Co-Chair of the Ag Awareness Committee. From 2023 to 2026, I served as a director with the Brant County Federation of Agriculture, giving me the opportunity to work alongside local farmers and become more involved in local issues and initiatives.

Now, I'm excited to bring those experiences to OFA and work directly with members across Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk.

My first few weeks as an MSR have already been busy. I've been assisting members, installing new OFA gate signs, attending events and meetings, and getting to know more of the people and farm businesses across Zone 3.

As I get settled into the role, I'm looking forward to spending more time across the three counties, getting to know members and their farm businesses, hearing about the issues that matter to them and helping connect them with the information, resources and support they need.

Outside of work, I enjoy travelling with my husband, especially when it means a trip to Holland to visit his family. I also enjoy playing ringette and can often be found on my family's grain farm, or behind the camera as the owner of a small photography business.

With regional meetings, fall events and plenty more ahead, I'm looking forward to meeting even more OFA members in the months to come. If you see me out and about in Zone 3, be sure to say hello. 🌱



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Paris Fair Beef Show is a double qualifier for the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair and the Canadian Western Agribition

By Diane Baltaz

The 168th Paris Fair had its own “double double” with its Beef Show during the Labour Day weekend.

The ‘double-double’ is because this regional cattle show needs two judges working concurrently in two adjoining rings to handle its ever-growing number of entries.

Much of it is because the Paris Fair Beef Show has the prestige of being a “double qualifier” to Canada’s two most outstanding purebred beef shows – the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair in Toronto and the Canadian Western Agribition in Regina.

Specifically, the fair is what Canadian beef officials call a “Super Qualifier” for the Royal’s Masterfeeds Beef Supreme on Nov. 8 and a “Qualifier” for the Agribition Master Feeds Beef Supreme.

As Agribition qualifiers, the Supreme Champion Male and Female from Paris automatically qualify to enter the show ring in Regina in late November.

A recent Agribition media post stated that the Beef Supreme brings the Grand and Supreme Champions from 21 major livestock shows across North America, concluding that “this elite competition showcases the best genetics in the beef industry.”

“Paris Fair is a Super Qualifier for the Royal Winter Fair,” said Paris Fair beef committee chairperson Amy Reinhart of Reinstone Farms. “Every champion male and female receives a golden ticket for ‘The Road to the Royal.’”

The 2026 Royal Agricultural Winter Fair website states that the fair designated 16 premier regional beef shows in Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes as qualifiers; but only four fairs are designated super qualifiers: Barrie, Paris, Expo Beouf and the Lindsay Exhibition.

Qualifiers from these regional shows join the grand champions from each of the Royal’s seven breed shows in the show ring to determine which bovine earns the titles of supreme bull and supreme female.

The Paris Fair brought in two respected judges to determine the breed winners and the Supreme Grand Champion male and female: Scott Jensen of Southwold, near London and Riley Pashulka of Derwent, Alberta.

Both men were born into cattle families, and began developing their judges’ eyes from childhood.

Pashulka, 25, along with his parents, Bill and Diane, own Rusylivia Cattle Company, where they run approximately 400 head of cattle, including purebred Black Angus, Simmental, and

Maine-Anjou along with a commercial cow herd. The Pashulkas exhibit cattle across Western Canada and sometimes at the National Western Stock Show in Denver.

Pashulka said that he learned how to evaluate cattle while exhibiting in youth shows, and through 4-H and other judging camps. This was also his second time at the Paris Fair to scrutinize cattle: he came to Brant on a Brant 4-H exchange in his early teens.

“I learned it through work,” he said.

He added that he got involved in “serious judging” five years ago at age 20, travelling to shows in Saskatchewan, Ontario and Prince Edward Island.

Jensen grew up exhibiting steers across Canada and the United States before transitioning to breeding heifers and starting his own herd. Notably he won multiple years of the Bred & Owned Show at the Royal Winter Fair, as a junior. He also travelled to U.S. majors, and mentored with a prominent Missouri cattle farm, Seldom Rest Farms.

Today, he runs his own progressive Simmental and Simmental-influenced program, primarily focusing on raising competitive and functional show heifers. Alongside his family, they run the Junior Livestock Judging Program in Southwestern Ontario. The program provides youth with expanded judging, networking, and leadership opportunities across the Canada–U.S. border.

While this was Jensen’s first time judging in Paris, he has judged shows and supreme qualifier fairs across Ontario and Quebec.

During the Paris qualifiers, Jensen evaluated the shorthorn, Herford and Speckle Park breeds; Pashulka judged the Angus, Simmental and Any Other Breed categories. In the morning prior to the competition, Pashulka judged the Gary McCormick Memorial Junior Beef Showmanship, a youth showmanship competition which drew 91 Youth (youth showmanship and open breeding classes) and 21 youngsters who walked the ring with an elder and their cattle the Future Farmer Competition

Judging criteria

What does a judge look for while picking out the best cattle?

“It depends upon the class, how they show and stuff,” said Pashulka.

All livestock shows reward exhibitors of those animals whose natural conformations are most desirable, and in the case of breeding stock, are most likely to be valuable for breed improvement.



Although they judged simultaneously in adjoining rings, Riley Pashulka (left) and Scott Jensen had a moment to chat between rounds.



Paris Fair beef committee chairperson Amy Reinhart discusses last minute details with Alberta judge Riley Pashulka prior to the double qualifier beef show.

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Scott Jensen judged other qualifiers in Ontario and Quebec prior to judging the 2026 Paris Fair double qualifier.

Paris Fair Beef Show is a double qualifier

In showmanship competitions such as the Gary McCormick Memorial Junior Beef Showmanship, the emphasis is on an exhibitor's ability to present the animal to its best possible advantage. Therefore, at the end of each heat and breed round, Pashulka commented on his observations, praising the groups of exhibitors for expertly demonstrating their "partnerships" with their animal, using space well in rounds with extra entries, and also gave tips for improvements in handling and walking the ring in future shows.

For market and breeding shows, the emphasis is solely on the animal said Pashulka: "You pick out the Grand Champion and Reserve Champion of each breed, and they go back into the ring for the Supreme Grand Champion."

Above all, said both judges, the key determinant in judging is the conformation of the entire animal: body structure, muscling, frame size, how the animal's traits match the ideal standards of its specific breed.

"Conformation is all about the cow," said Jensen.

Structure -- the bovine skeletal system including joints, hooves and legs --is another judging priority, said Jensen. "Structure in breeding cattle predicts longevity. Maybe this value drops to number three in market cattle as they aren't going to be around as long."

Phrases they used when explaining why they chose their winners in each round included, "stout"; "lot of body"; "explosive-looking muscles"; "balanced"; "ton of looks"; "rugged"; and with the females, "feminine" -- which covers



Jackson Corner of Caledonia is headed to the Agribition in Regina with Miss Jewel, the 2026 Female Qualifier from Paris.

balance and structural details that promise that the cow will carry a calf well.

Both judges stated that any purebred animal that is well-structured, athletic, balanced and maternal stands a good chance to win the Supreme Grand Champion banner regardless of breed.

Jensen shared his rule: "Keep it about the cattle, know the priorities, have fun and just enjoy cattle."

By the end of the 2026 Paris double qualifier show, David, Shirley, Justin and Josh Lasby of the JDL Cattle Company-D&S Livestock, Mulmer, won Supreme Champion Male with JDL Nitro 316 15N.

Supreme Champion Female went to Caledonia's Jackson Corner and Serhienko Cattle Company with SVY Miss Jewel 555N. 🌱



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The Royal Winter Fair brings country to the city

By Jeff Helsdon - Editor

The Royal Agricultural Winter Fair is often held up as the pinnacle for those involved in livestock competition.

Often called 'The Royal' for short, this year's show is planned for Nov. 6-15 at Exhibition Place in Toronto. It's the 104th edition of the fair, which has grown into the largest agricultural and equestrian event in the world.

The Royal started in 1922 and King George V permitted it to use the Royal title. The Royal Coliseum at Exhibition Place was built for the show.

Although it's in the middle of corn harvest for some, a trip to the Royal is a great experience for farmers on a rainy day when they can't be in the fields, or for those who aren't cash crop producers during harvest.

The Royal Agricultural Winter Fair is not the same as the Outdoor Farm Show, or even the International Plowing Match. Farmers won't find the latest pesticides or farm machinery there.

It is an exhibition of the finest in livestock and horses on a grand scale. Competitors travel from across Canada and the United States to take part.

Here are the reasons to go:

1. The horse shows are top calibre and cover every imaginable facet of equestrian display, from jumpers to Belgians to teams with wagons. This is not to be missed.

2. The Royal is an opportunity to see an indoor rodeo in the winter. It's likely the only opportunity to see a rodeo in Ontario after the fall season winds down.

3. Butter sculptures are something that are not common outside of the Royal Winter Fair, where butter sculptures are one of the Royal traditions. Besides the sculptures on display, people can also make their own carvings from a pound of butter and submit photos for the competition.

4. Horses aren't the only livestock at the Royal. There are rows on rows of the finest cows and other livestock in paddocks, and they are also on display.

5. Notable chefs share their favourite recipes on the cooking stage. This is a chance for aspiring chefs to learn more and up their game.

6. Spotlight on Local is a section where the best of Ontario-grown food is featured. The winners could be from our area.

7. Early Christmas shoppers will have the opportunity to get a jump on filling their lists at the Holiday Market at the Royal and the Artisan Pavilion. Whether you're looking for unique handcrafted gifts or gourmet treats, there are plenty of shopping opportunities.

8. The Royal K9-Equine Challenge is a unique event that has both horses and dogs complete an obstacle course, with the fastest time winning.

9. This is a great day for the children and grandchildren. The Royal focuses on agricultural education, and the more today's youth know, the better.

Getting there: Parking is available on the exhibition grounds, or you can park in Aldershot and take the GO train to the Exhibition Grounds stop. 🌿



The SuperDogs show is always a crowd favourite that results in packed bleachers.



Not all livestock on display is large livestock as the Royal Winter Fair has the Small Animal Pavilion dedicated to smaller livestock such as sheep and goats.



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The horse shows are always a highlight of The Royal. From jumpers and a rodeo to heavy horses such as Percherons, Belgians and Clydesdales, there is something for every equine enthusiast.



Top beef and dairy breeds are showcased in the Semex Ring of Excellence, but can also be viewed in the stalls in between shows.

Don't forget to test for molybdenum in your soil, BC agrologist advises Norfolk farmers

By Diane Baltaz

Although molybdenum, or Mo by its symbol in the periodic table, is a trace mineral, with an amazingly large job in growing successful crops. Yet, many Ontario farmers fail to add molybdenum to their routine soil tests, warns an Okanagan Valley agrologist.

"I call molybdenum the forgotten nutrient," said British Columbia's Richard DeJong, a self-confessed "nutrient geek" and Canadian regional manager for the Spanish-based Rovensa Corporation.

Speaking at the recent Norfolk Soil & Crop Improvement Association's annual grower day in Courtland, DeJong said that molybdenum is a trace element that improves nitrogen uptake and conversion in crops. It assists in converting nitrates to ammonium. While important for most crops, the trace element is particularly vital for legumes for the processing of atmospheric nitrogen fixation by the rhizoidal bacteria in the roots' nodules.

Deficiencies in plants often resemble those of nitrogen, including stunted growth, distorted leaf margins and yellowing of older and middle leaves; brassicas present narrow, misshapen leaf blades, while other crops exhibit marginal leaf scorch.

Sometimes deficiencies in this trace element are confused for nitrogen deficiencies in soils, resulting in farmers applying unnecessary levels of nitrogen, said DeJong.

"It shows up in soil samples, but I can gamble that not many of you test for it," said DeJong. "It is seldom added to the soil tests, and molybdenum really struggles to get into the crop. North American labs aren't analyzing for molybdenum as an essential nutrients as farmers aren't asking for it even though it's only an extra \$3 to \$5 for the test; compared with Africa, where it is known to be an essential nutrient for nitrogen conversion (due to the acidic soils in many regions of that continent)."

"Molybdenum efficiency is important, but how do you know what your levels are if you don't test for it?" said DeJong.

"So maybe you're applying more nitrogen than necessary as you don't have enough molybdenum," he said. "Remember that insects and disease look for high nitrogen and a high nitrate building up in crops as that attracts them. Therefore, your nitrogen management

may end in requiring more pesticide management."

"You will see less disease and insects in your crops if you test for micronutrients like molybdenum."

DeJong advocates for soil testing and sap analysis to determine molybdenum levels as well as for other trace nutrients such as boron.

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“Reap What You Sow”: Walpole Township native and PhD student Sid Heeg unpacks misinformation about farming on social media

By Diane Baltaz

University of Waterloo doctoral candidate Sid Heeg knows that there is misinformation about farmers and farming on social media. She's addressing this problem by doing her doctoral dissertation on it through her department, School of Environment, Enterprise and Development (SEED).

Heeg – who is known professionally as Sid – and as Sue by her Haldimand-Norfolk family -- titles her doctoral paper, *Reap What You Sow: Refuting Misinformation about Farming and Farm Practices*. It focuses on the types of misinformation circulating within reach of the 31.6 million Canadians who use social media and the effects it has on farmers.

“I'm exploring the intersection of ag, social media and misinformation,” said Heeg. “I find that the social media use in agriculture is far behind in other fields of research like that of health or education. Farmers may be told that using social media will help you improve your work practices, but the digital environment may be rife with false information, or it's just tons of information.”

Heeg chose this area of research because of her roots in Springvale. In the 1980s, her father, Bill Heeg, raised hogs and cash cropped with her uncle, who lived next door on the dairy farm where the brothers grew up. Her father sold his farm to a cousin in 2013, and moved on to own Sunchoice Produce, Jarvis.

“All of my summers were spent in that greenhouse until my masters program in 2017,” said Heeg.

“I chose farming as my topic for misinformation because this is my life and how I was raised. I've experienced many types of farming. My research seeks to help farmers and farm associations navigate their way through the digital world, especially since some farmers have used it for a long time since the 2010s.”

Heeg is clear about the definition of misinformation. It is not to be confused with disinformation, although the terms are used interchangeably.

“The difference is intent,” she warned. “Misinformation is false information spread without intent to harm, and I am clear with this. We are all capable of spreading misinformation.”

“Disinformation is defined as any false information that is spread with the intent to cause harm, such as propaganda. It's sometimes hard to determine what the intent of that information is when it's shared. Sometimes it's just a misunderstanding.”

Although there is an undercurrent of belief that urbanites are more likely to spread farmer misinformation on topics like animal rights and climate change, farmers themselves can also share misconceptions, Heeg added.

“There are isolated cases of animal abuse which must be addressed, but the majority of farmers care about their land and animals,” said Heeg. “But when the word gets out, it's hard to put the genie back in the bottle.”

Working closely with her dissertation committee, Heeg designed an online questionnaire for farmers to gauge a snapshot of the Ontario landscape. It queried topics such as farmers'



University of Waterloo doctoral candidate Sid Heeg.

use of social media, their engagement with agricultural misinformation, and whether it negatively impacts them. It also examines whether farmers are constructing new identities online.

The survey ultimately intends to determine what farmers are already doing and how researchers, writers, and experts can support them.

Heeg sent it out with assistance from Ontario farm organizations, friends and relatives. The survey ran from November to late January, with approximately 117 farmers responding.

Her initial results indicate that farmers often use social media for work practices, education such as DIY or repair videos, business and financial matters, agriculture news, and networking. Their internet use mirrors that of the general population, with younger farmers often being more tech savvy.

Female respondents used social media as a means to supplement income or create very publicly intimate posts of their livelihoods compared with how men participate online.

“It's very important for female farmers to sell their products but also to connect with other farmers and share their lives.”

Heeg's question about what types of agricultural misinformation farmers came across generated several broad categories.

The responses include how farmers treat their labourers or dislike hiring locals, antibiotics, pesticides, conventional versus organic farming, animal welfare, and the environmental impact of farming, factory farms, and rants about tractors on road, supply management, and claims about how farmers are changing Canadians' food quality.

“The big one was the topic of animal husbandry. Next is crop and land management; then the safety concerns around GMOs (genet-

ically modified organisms), and comments that farmers are killing the environment,” said Heeg.

“Yet many farmers reported that they are experimenting with regenerative practices. I remember discussing this with my dad about the 1970s when more chemicals were applied than what is used today. They see value in sustainable practices to help them create healthier soil.”

When given the chance to expand on these topics what often came up was the emotional toll these allegations take on them, frustrations that people “know more than the farmers”, and how farming misinformation can extend into food and health issues: “That means that people do not understand how food is grown, that it's safe to eat.”

These misunderstandings often “spills into marketing”, said Heeg.

“Pasture raised sounds good in marketing, while farmers try to efficiently continue to do what's best for their animals, what's best for the plants and the land. Farmers don't spray more than they have to especially with the costs this year; they are always looking to innovate, as aware of the environmental impacts.”

“One interesting comment I got was about how farmers are well-educated, yet some urbanites perceive them as ‘dumb hicks.’ First, being considered uneducated is insulting; second, it devalues skills developed through relational knowledge from childhood through parents, other family members, and land-based knowledge.”

The impacts of misinformation can be quite varied, including one's mental health, said Heeg.

“When you have people on social media blaming your profession for things like climate change, or the quality of food, it is hard to not let that get to you. But often it impacted participants as a lack of public trust in online information, the government or even in others,” said Heeg.

“There's even a financial part. Many mentioned how applying the wrong method based on bad advice cost them financially; which is a risk farmers take if they get their information online.

“As a farmer, you may be told that using social media will help you improve your work practices, but what often goes unsaid is the digital environment has... just tons of information. It is hard to determine what is beneficial for you, especially since as farmers, you know you need to understand local and regional knowledge first. It's not's going to help you if you're getting advice ... from someone who is living on the east or west coast.”

The survey ended by sounding out participants on how they respond to agricultural misinformation in order to show farming as authentically as possible.

Some mentioned that they directly respond to the misinformation whether that's through comments or direct messages if the misinformation was shared by someone they know. Another one provided links to various sources of expertise, such as agricultural associations and individuals with credibility.



“Reap What You Sow”: Walpole Township native and PhD student Sid Heeg unpacks misinformation about farming on social media

“And then the final category was simply, ‘I don’t,’” said Heeg.

But some farmers are de-bunking agricultural mistruths online – and creating authentic tales about farming.

Heeg highlighted examples of farmwomen in Alberta and Ontario whose online postings portray genuine truths about farm life. One of them, Southwestern Ontario cattle farmer Laurel Ysebaert, posts YouTube video about her life (“Chaos and Cowgirlin”) including her kitchen renovations.

“She (Ysebaert) shows other sides of farming to people who don’t see them,” said Heeg. “Laurel breaks myths about the strong divide between rural and urban.

“Women portray demographically multifaceted lives on social media. For example, Laurel posted about her devastating barn fire and how the community rallied around her and raised \$100,000. Social media can really make or break you, but once you build up authenticity, there can be emotional support and validation even from other farmers as well.”

How can the farm community and its collaborators counter the digital misinformation universe?

Education is the first measure, said Heeg. It provides the basic building blocks to help people inform their own opinions. She lauds organizations like Farm and Food Care Ontario whose public events such as Breakfast on the Farm bridge that knowledge gap.

Second is the sourcing of experts and resources, which Heeg said ensures that farmers have access to quality information for their work practices.

Heeg credits the University of Guelph’s Ataharul Chowdhury of CAREE (Canadian Agricultural Extension and Education) for addressing agricultural misinformation by publishing and building resources in this area, including the user-friendly, myth-busting website: misinfo-research.com.

“Ataharul is one of the key players in this area,” said Heeg, adding that she discovered his works during the second year of her established doctoral thesis committee and has since

volunteered at a CAREE conference. “CAREE has heavily influenced me. Atta curates myth busting in a digital age. The work that someone like Dr. Chowdhury does for building the infrastructure for addressing ag misinformation shows that we’re getting things in place.”

Now in her fifth year of her research, Heeg is in what’s called “the Victory Lap” – the final steps of preparing her thesis on the intersection of agriculture, social media and misinformation. After her dissertation committee reviews her work, Heeg hopes to publish her findings in a journal, preferably a highly accessible one with wide-spread readership.

Heeg intends to continue developing resources and solutions, working within the Canadian agricultural landscape.

“It’s my hope that as I finish up my PhD to work within the Canadian ag space. I want to bring my experience, my passion, my knowledge in a way that will benefit the farmers here.”



National survey aims to better understand Ontario’s woodlot owners

Researchers at McGill University, in partnership with Canadian Forest Owners (CFO) and with support from MITACS Canada, are launching the first national survey of private forest owners in more than 20 years, with a significant focus on Ontario.

There are approximately 480,000 private forest owners in Canada, accounting for approximately 10 per cent of Canada’s managed forest land base but contributing roughly 20 per cent of the country’s forest production.

“Ontario’s woodlots play an important role in supporting local economies, supplying forest products and delivering environmental benefits,” said Andrew de Vries, chief executive officer of Canadian Forest Owners. “Yet we are lacking information about who owns these forests, how they are managed and what motivates those who steward them. This survey will help close that knowledge gap.”

Ontario is home to a large and diverse private forest land base, but limited data has made it difficult for governments, researchers and organizations to fully understand ownership patterns, management objectives and the contributions these lands make to the province’s economy and environment.

The survey will collect information on forest area and the goals, priorities, challenges, opportunities, and management practices of landowners. Researchers say this data is critical to understanding how private forests contribute to local economies, environmental outcomes and rural communities.

“Without basic information about who forest owners are, supporting them becomes difficult,” said Dr. Jackie Hamilton, a postdoctoral researcher in natural resource

sciences at McGill University. “In Ontario, and many provinces across Canada, identifying and reaching forest owners remains a challenge. As a result, their perspectives are often missing from science, policy, and planning discussions.”

Many of Ontario’s private forests are managed by individuals and families, often across generations, bringing a long-term perspective and patient capital to land stewardship.

“The survey is an essential step toward better understanding the needs and motivations of woodlot owners across the province,” said Glen

Prevost, executive director of the Ontario Woodlot Association. “Ontario’s woodlot owners are deeply connected to their land and committed to responsible forest stewardship. Having good information will help ensure policies and support programs are able to meet their needs.”

Woodlot owners are encouraged to participate by completing the confidential survey, which takes approximately 20 minutes to complete, at <https://www.forestowners.ca/about/survey>.



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Tariffs ‘create more uncertainty in already uncertain times’ says Norfolk Federation of Agriculture president

By Tamara Botting
For several months, representatives from the Canadian and United States governments had been negotiating for a mutually beneficial trade agreement.

However, the negotiations broke down; Canada suspended the trade talks, and President Donald Trump’s administration announced that it would be imposing a 50 per cent tariff on \$27.6 billion of Canadian goods effective Aug. 22, 2026.

Immediately following this development, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney gave a speech where he spoke more broadly about how America’s global commercial relationships have changed in recent times.

He also discussed the attempted trade agreement with the US, saying that in the final days of the negotiations, “the United States proposed new terms that were uneconomic, unfair, and undermined the net benefits to Canada, and called into question the reliability of any deal. In short, they asked too much and they offered too little.”

Carney said Canada would match the new tariffs “dollar for dollar in order to protect Canadian workers, farmers, families, and businesses,” specifically noting that Canada’s response would be concentrated in specific sectors, including dairy, agricultural equipment, and pulp and paper.

The entire list of products from the US that were subject to Canada’s counter tariffs effective September 8, 2026 can be found online here: <https://bit.ly/3UOSDAJ>

Some of the items on the list that impact agriculture are:

- **Harvesting or threshing machinery, including straw or fodder balers; grass or hay mowers;** machines for cleaning, sorting or

grading eggs, fruit or other agricultural produce, other than machinery of heading 84.37: This includes mowers for lawns, parks or sports-grounds: powered, with the cutting device rotating in a horizontal plane (25 per cent tariff); other mowers, including cutter bars for tractor mounting (15 per cent tariff); and parts (15 per cent)

- **Other articles of iron or steel:** This category includes but is not limited to steel stanchions for confining livestock either in pens or individually; (items) for use in the manufacture or repair of engines or parts thereof for commercial fishing vessels; (items) to be employed in the processing, storing or insemination of animal semen; and tracks for use in the manufacture of skid steer loaders (50 per cent tariff)

- **Trailers and semi-trailers; other vehicles, not mechanically propelled;** parts thereof: This category includes other trailers and semi-trailers for the transport of goods: aluminum construction drop-centre livestock trailers having a g.v.w. of 11.778 tonnes or more and a length exceeding 12 m; and farm, logging or freight wagons (25 per cent tariffs)

- **Cheese and curd:** This category includes various types of cheeses, both within and over access commitment (25 per cent tariff)

- **Natural honey** (50 per cent tariff)
Tariffs are paid by the importer of record; that is, the individual or company that is bringing the goods into the country pays the tariff to the customs authority at the point of entry. Generally, these additional operational costs are passed on to the consumer, and the prices for these imported goods goes up.

On Sept. 11, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) issued a statement on the Canada-US trade escalation and Canada’s

counter-tariffs, cautioning the “dangerous trajectory of this dispute.”

It noted that in response to Canada’s counter-tariff, the Trump administration has threatened import bans on Canadian dairy and alcoholic beverage produces.

“Trade escalation is not a long-term solution,” the statement read.

In the piece, OFA President Drew Spoelstra noted that farmers on both sides of the border are “dealing with rising costs, shifting trade policies, geopolitical tensions, and market volatility that make it difficult to plan and invest with confidence.”

He said trade disruptions and retaliatory measures on exacerbate the struggle consumers on both sides of the border face when it comes to food affordability.

“Ontario farmers continue to urge both federal governments to return to the negotiating table and secure a fair, durable trade agreement that protects producers and processors across North America,” Spoelstra said.

The OFA’s statement noted that it “welcomes confirmation that tractors, combines, and agricultural repair parts are exempt from Canadian counter-tariffs. Under the federal remission framework, farmers can continue importing critical combine and machinery parts duty-free, avoiding added tariff costs during harvest.”

However, on the issue of farm and livestock trailers – which are subject to a 25 per cent tariff – the OFA said it is “calling for immediate remission relief on agricultural trailers and continues to advocate for all agricultural tools and equipment to be fully exempt from tariffs.”

More locally, Norfolk Federation of Agriculture President Jennifer Schooley said, “Farmers here depend on healthy, cross-border relationships and trade agreements and reliable export access and supply chains.”

She said the tariff will threaten exports, increase costs for local farmers and disrupt their processing capacities.

Schooley noted that Canada and the US “share one of the most important agricultural trading partnerships in the world, and Norfolk County – being the largest producers of several commodities – will suffer through the tariffs,” adding, “Both farmers and consumers will stand to lose as trade becomes difficult.”

She said the tariffs “create more uncertainty in already uncertain times. We’re already facing steadily rising output costs. Remember – farmers are price-takers, not price-makers, so these rising costs are coming out of our bottom dollar – during an already economically difficult year.”

Schooley added, “The bottom line here is that these tariffs, and the trade agreements in general (or lack of), lead to an unreliable market for those of us toiling the fields to produce the food, flowers and fuel consumers need. This has an impact on all agriculture across the board, adding more pressure to farmers, their families, and the communities they serve.”. 🌱

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Agricultural drones take flight after Health Canada pesticide approval

By Amanda Nelson

A Health Canada approval allowing pesticide application by remotely piloted aircraft systems (RPAS), commonly known as drones, was granted in June, allowing farmers and small businesses across Southwestern Ontario to spray pesticides in accordance with the Pest Control Products Act and the Pest Control Products Regulations.

While Canadian farmers have been able to use drones for mapping, scouting and crop monitoring, the major regulatory hurdle has been using them to apply pesticides.

Now that new approvals have opened the door for drone-based pesticide applications, small business owners, such as Justin Shieck, owner and operator of Norfolk Drone Services, say they believe farmers can now utilize the technology for greater efficiency.

Shieck was initially taken off guard when he read the report stating that pesticide spraying via drone technology was approved back in June, something he thought he wouldn't see until next year.

"There weren't even signs that this was going to happen by the fall... we were taken completely off guard about the approval."

Shieck says that countries like China, the United States and Australia have been using drone technology in the agricultural sector for around 15 years, and yet Canada is just starting to see the value after getting feedback from competing countries.

"In the States, drones are treated as another aircraft," he said. "What got me into this business was really watching how fast it expanded across the States and seeing YouTube video after YouTube video and news article after news article showing small businesses booming, with young 20-year-olds and different age groups of farmers enjoying what they're doing and bringing a cheaper solution for farming."

Shieck says he believes farmers throughout Canada will soon own and operate drones, similar to the way they own tractors, combines or other farming equipment. He says in farming,

timing is everything when it comes to spraying pesticides or fertilizers.

"Do I see every farmer owning one, like a Swiss Army knife in their toolbox? One hundred per cent, because farming comes down to timing," said Shieck. "Especially if you're deploying it out of the back of your barn, you can hit timing windows when you really need to."

Compared to small conventional tractors, drones can cover more ground in less time, at about 40 acres per hour; however, large self-propelled sprayers can cover more than 80 acres per hour. These large sprayers are often hard on fields and don't allow for the same mobility as a drone.

The Health Canada report noted that drone application is often the most practical option when fields are soft, wet or too difficult for ground application equipment; when pest outbreaks occur late in crop growth; or for areas that are either too large or inaccessible for ground application.

"If it's been raining a lot, I don't think anyone's pulling a rig through a field," said Shieck. "Then once a canopy gets high, you can't really spray beans or corn because it's too tall. In the fall, I really see drones tackling the heavy canopies where you're not getting that 25 per cent loss from driving over your beans."

Although Canada is behind in its approval, Shieck says it's not all bad news, and being able to track and assess what's happening in other countries before the Health Canada approval has benefited the budget.

"Canada is cautious," he said. "We take a more science-based regulatory approach than most places, and they do it for safety reasons. I would say it's not a horrible thing that we were behind. Watching and allowing other countries to spend a lot of money on research while we sat back and collected data was valuable. Now we have some brands approved, and we're not wasting that time or money on the trial and error they've already gone through."

The report notes that the approval also

aligns Canada with other countries like the United States and Australia, helping Canadian agriculture stay competitive internationally during times when competitive prices are key.

"Using RPAS to apply pesticides can make farming more efficient by helping farmers protect crops while using fewer inputs — such as pesticides and other resources needed for crop production, including labour, fuel and equipment use," read the report. "This will support food security and help keep food affordable."

Drone operation is regulated by Transport Canada, whereas the regulation of pesticides is under the jurisdiction of Health Canada. Transport Canada considers aerial drones to be aircraft, and all pilots must understand and follow Canadian Aviation Regulations.

The data show that the risks of applying pesticides by RPAS are generally similar to those of conventional aerial application. However, drones also have the potential to apply pesticides very precisely, similar to some ground-based spot treatments.

Health Canada also concluded that pesticide residues on food crops resulting from RPAS applications are not higher than those resulting from conventional application methods, making foods as safe as with conventional applications.

Shieck's company, Norfolk Drone Services, offers agricultural drone services focused on precision spraying, spreading and mapping. Its main agriculture-related services include aerial spraying, granular spreading, mapping and aerial imagery, as well as drone sales, support and training.

The cost of a drone package varies, but Shieck says it is generally around \$40,000 to \$50,000 and includes multiple batteries and packages, including spray equipment that can be used for pesticides, fertilizers, herbicides and biological products.

Shieck encourages anyone interested to visit his website or reach out to him directly at www.norfolkdroneservices.ca



Justin Shieck, owner and operator of Norfolk Drone Services, demonstrates agricultural drone technology. The June Health Canada approval allowing pesticide applications by remotely piloted aircraft systems opens new opportunities for farmers and agricultural businesses.



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Jersey Canada adds third-generation Brant Jersey booster—mentor to their honorary lifetime member roster

By Diane Baltaz
In a time when Holsteins dominate the Canadian dairy industry, and hockey sweaters and not cows come up first in internet searches for Jerseys, the Kyles of Ash Lawn Farm south of Ayr stuck to raising premium Jersey cows for a century. Moreover, its current patriarch, George Kyle, earned Canada-wide recognition for promoting the breed.

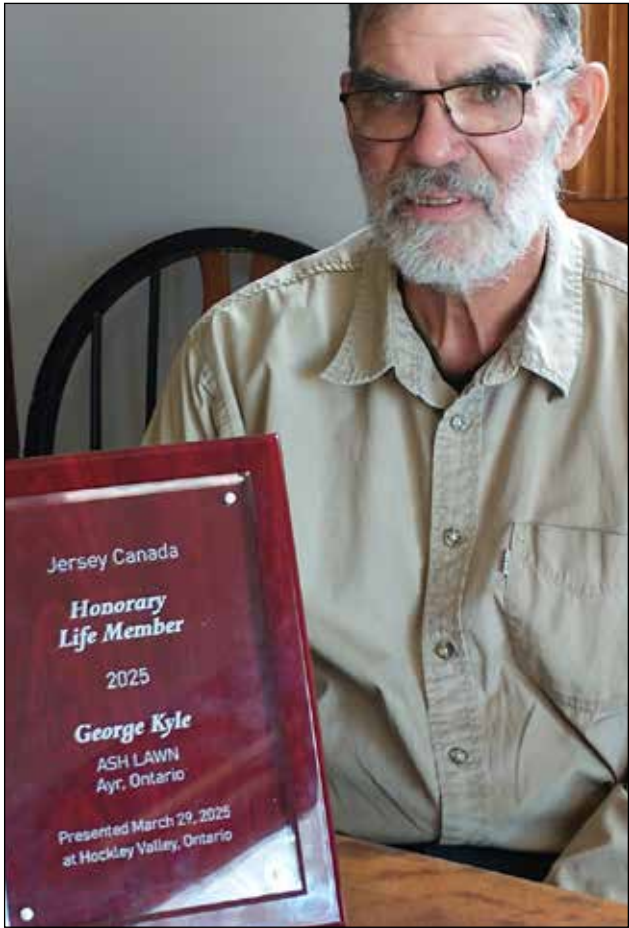
Jersey Canada declared Kyle, a third-generation Jersey breeder, as one of its three 2025 honorary lifetime members.

Nominated by Jersey Ontario (formerly the Ontario Jersey Club), Jersey Canada cited multiple examples of Kyle's commitment to the breed, including his term as a director of the Ontario Jersey Club and then as its president in 1999. The association referenced several ways how he encouraged Ontario youth to consider raising Jerseys, in conjunction with his late wife, Nancy.

"I'm the second Kyle to receive this honour," said Kyle while sitting in the home farm's kitchen with his Jersey Canada plaque. Jersey Canada previously listed his father, Robert, on the national honour roll in 2008. That tribute happened just months after the Brant County Federation of Agriculture declared the Kyles as the Brant Farm Family of the year.

Kyle's innate Jersey love intensified when he began exhibiting Jersey calves in 4-H and at Jersey calf rallies. George became a partner in Ashlawn Farms when he graduated from Ontario Agricultural College and married Nancy in 1975.

The family got into Jerseys in the mid-1920s when Kyle's grandfather, Jack and his great-uncle James switched their farm's beef operation on the Brant-Oxford Townline to a Jersey dairy farm. Ash Lawn Farm had 25 to 30 milking cows by the time of Kyle's birth; today they have 55 milking cows which are primarily



George is the second Kyle to make Jersey Canada's honorary life time member roster.

tended to by Carmen, who is one of two sons operating the farm.

Jack and James Kyle chose Jersey cows for their higher protein and butterfat content. This is their descendants' motive for keeping this breed, along with increasing public demand for higher-protein milk products.

In fact, as part of his personal promotion of Jersey milk, Kyle invested in, and as a director in the former Quality Jersey Products, an all-Jersey cheese and dairy product plant in Seaforth several decades ago.

This involvement occurred in a period when

Jersey breeders and some dairy processors lobbied the Ontario Milk Marketing Board (now Dairy Farmers of Ontario or DFO) to allow Jersey milk to be separated from the province's common milk pool in order to make specialized product, as some other provinces were allowing.

"The greater fat and butter content in their (Jersey) milk makes for better cheese and butter production. In those days, around 1968, the Milk Marketing Board said that 'milk is milk'," he explained.

Quality Jersey Products no longer exists -- the Millbank Cheese and Butter Company purchased its cow milk supply quota in 2004.

"But it helped lead us to where we're at now," said Kyle. "Initially the lobbying was unsuccessful; now there are on-farm milk processors."

But most of Kyle's breed promotion work involved mentoring youth, according to Jersey Canada.

"His most significant contribution to the Ontario Jersey Club would have to be his dedication to the Jersey Youth Seminar, a three-day seminar for teenaged youth across Ontario. He and his wife Nancy helped organize and chaperone this event for over a decade," states Jersey Canada's press release on Kyle's election to their Honour Roll.

The youth seminar is a three-day weekend event for teens aged 16 to 20, which Kyle linked with the annual Jersey Club sale. Kyle said that he and Nancy took youth on farm and business tours and brought in guest speakers "to learn what the Jersey business is all about for the breeding and the promotion of this breed."

For more than 10 years, Kyle also served as a 4-H leader for the Brant 4-H Dairy and even the Sheep Clubs. He raised Dorset sheep, beginning with six ewes and growing the herd in Kyle's words, "until they became a meaningful part of the operation by the early 2000s when they became more than a hobby."

He joined the Drumbo Agricultural Society, showing livestock and eventually becoming the fair's president.

This dairy farmer also participated as an intensive grazing expert in the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs' Pasture Mentorship Program. He offered suggestions about rotation practices and planting to farmers across Southern Ontario, including multiple Juno and Canadian Country Music Hall of Fame winner George Fox, whose family runs a cash crop-beef operation.

Ash Lawn Farm achieved further recognition with Jersey Ontario's select Ontario Invitational Sale (OIS) – a major annual consignment sale which has ran each spring since 1965. Open to buyers from across Canada and the United States, a designated Ontario Jersey selection committee chooses 30 to 50 of the top cattle of members' herds to consign.

Ashlawn consigned some of their top heifers to the sale over the years, several of which were later nominated as the "All-Canadian" at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair.



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Jersey Canada adds third-generation Brant Jersey booster—mentor to their honorary lifetime member roster

“It’s an honour thing,” said Kyle, grinning.

Other Ash Lawn cattle or their offspring which Kyle sold through the OIS went to the World Dairy Expo in Wisconsin.

“We’ve watched these Jerseys or their offspring in some cases move around North America in some cases.”

Kyle also purchased many OIS calves for his children to enter in the affiliated OIS Youth Production Contest, which encourages youth to gain skills in herd management and milk production. In one year, he purchased an OIS heifer for all four of his children—Carmen, Christopher, Kathryn and Curtis.

“4-H kids can enter the Youth Production Contest,” said George. “Parents buy the heifer with the hope she calves and produces a lot of milk. All four of my children were involved in this.”

Consequently, three of Kyle’s children actively breed Jersey stock and are involved with both Jersey Ontario and Jersey Canada: Carman and Christopher run Ashlawn Farm, with extensive day-to-day help from their father; Kathryn milks a mixed Jersey-Holstein herd several kilometers

away. Curtis works locally as a mechanic.

Today, the family’s bank barn is gone, having been replaced last year by a new barn with a robotic milking system that is set up to milk up to 60 cows. Training the cows to go the robots for milking was “no problem as they were easily attracted to the high-protein, sweeter treat that appears before them in the milking spot,” said Kyle. “And besides, Jerseys have higher intelligence!”

But he admitted that, “It took some getting used to the fact that the robots’ sensors go by numbers on the cow tags, not by their names, after decades of calling them by name. The cows still have names, but we’ve got to match the number with the cow, instead of wondering ‘Which cow is this?’”

Off-farm, Kyle visits other farms for morning coffee each Wednesday, plays pickle ball in Paris, mentors his grandchildren and local sports teams.

Kyle is prepping a fifth generation to continue the family’s Jersey breed connection: his grandchildren Maddie and Kallum recently got OIS heifers transferred into their names. 🌱

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Brant Farm Crawl: inaugural agri-tourism initiative links farmers to residents and visitors interested in local farming

By Diane Baltaz

Participating farmers in a new, County of Brant agri-tourism initiative did a lot of farm education while connecting with local residents and visitors.

The County launched the “Brant Farm Crawl” on Sept. 12 as a self-guided, ticketed driving tour of five farms. These stops provided behind-the-scenes opportunities to learn how local food and agricultural products are produced and marketed, and discover how and where to buy Brant-produced products.

“It was a huge success for our very first farm crawl, and we really appreciate the County of Brant inviting us to participate,” said events coordinator Sarah Elliott of Moore Farms, one of the designated farms. “We saw a lot of first-time visitors, who left wonderful reviews and shared some great comments.”

This year’s event was organized with mentorship from Farm Crawl Hamilton, which ran farm crawls since 2012. It was supported with funding through the regional tourism association, RT03 – Hamilton Halton Brant under the 2026-2027 Partnership Fund Program.

The participating farms were: Glenridge Hazelnuts, Glen Morris; Moore Farms, Paris; Brantview Apples & Cider, St. George; Browndale Farm, Paris; and Blue Gables Acres, Paris.

These farms already had established sales venues, such as farm stores, wine and hard cider tasting facilities, or online sales. Most of the host sites provided samples of their products as well as opportunities for the “farm crawlers” to purchase. Some farms offered field tours with tractors pulling visitors in wagons, provided games or play areas for the kids, and picnic areas.

Kimmy and Delano Osmond of Blue Gables opened their events tepee where visitors sampled their haskap and other berry wines, or enjoyed a haskap cheesecake that Kimmy created.

Browndale Farm opened their Holstein barn with robotic milking facilities for families to view their dairy cows and calves.

Glenridge Hazelnuts, which is Ontario’s largest hazelnut producer, made pick-your-own hazelnuts available for the first time since their trees began producing approximately five years ago.

Moore Farms teamed up with two local farm businesses - Horner Creek Honey talked about honey production, giving visitors honey straight from the hive and Eby Manor educated the crowd

about milk production and handed out samples of milk and cheese produced from their Guernsey cows.

Additionally, adults and children alike participated in what Elliott calls “a crop nutrition fact-finding mission” designed by local nutritionist Joanne Willis, which taught participants about the nutritional value of each of the farm’s crops and when they are planted.

Because the event coincided with the family’s 110th anniversary of farming, local ward Councillor Jennifer Kyle joined the Moore family to hand out cake. The family also showcased some historical artifacts, displayed old tractors for people to examine, and hosted an artisan’s market.

All of the hosts answered multiple questions about growing and marketing their crops along with educational chats.

“Agri-tourism has been getting more popular in the last few years as well so I wanted to plan an event similar to Doors Open where people could visit farms while getting more background info on where their food comes from,” said Brant Tourism Development Officer and Farm Crawl planner Tia Chisholm in an email.

Hamilton’s Farm Crawl model fit the bill; therefore the county approached its organizers.

“We wanted a variety of farms so each one could offer a unique experience. So, between hazelnuts, apples/cider, dairy, cattle and a haskap orchard, I believe we succeeded in finding a variety,” said Chisholm.

The county sold 225 tickets prior to the Farm Crawl. Children under age five were free.

Stephanie Sharp of Glenridge Hazelnuts organized her family’s Farm Crawl venue, set in an open field between their 16,000-tree orchards.

“The county reached out to us in the spring about the Farm Crawl, and we were so excited to participate,” said Sharp. “We always enjoy having groups tour the orchard and educating people on hazelnut production in Ontario.... We aren’t yet open to the public on a regular basis, so this seemed like another great opportunity to share our story, what we do, and the products that we have available.

“We have also followed the Farm Crawl Hamilton for some time and think it is such a great initiative to connect community with farms and provide agriculture education.”



Nick Slade, Waterloo, harvested Honey Crisps at Brantview Apples & Cider to make apple pie.



Two Brant “farm crawlers” examine packaged hazelnuts while Josh Green and Stephanie Sharp of Glenridge Hazelnuts look on.

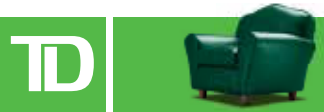


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Lenny Malley, Scotland, chews a freshly picked apple prior to taking a farm tour at Brantview Apples & Cider.

Brant Farm Crawl: inaugural agri-tourism initiative links farmers to residents and visitors interested in local farming

The crawl's diversity attracted people from surrounding areas, and as far as the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), who genuinely wanted to know about farming, according to the hosts.

"The crowd was fantastic—everyone was genuinely interested and eager to learn," said Elliott. "We already had a free event planned that day, so the ticketed farm crawl was a great addition. We definitely could have sold extra tickets the day of, but the county ended ticket sales the night before. We also had one minor hiccup where a few people saw the ticket sign for the crawl and turned around, but the day was otherwise absolutely amazing."

Elliott added that their farm's "massive hit" was the interactive learning session on crop nutrition. "Visitors from ages three to 99 participated, learning exactly how long our crops grow, when they are planted, and the nutritional value behind each."

"It was a great event and a wonderful way to connect urban culture and agriculture," said Ashley Brown of Browndale Farm. "Any opportunity the public has to meet the people who raise, grow and harvest our food is always a positive experience and helps to create trust and loyalty within our community."

As the region's first haskap estate winery, Delano and Kimmy Osmond of Blue Gables had many people asking about the wines, jams and other products derived from their haskap bushes. "I like the exposure of the products," Delano said.

Brad Little of Brantford enjoyed hand harvesting hazelnuts using an implement provided by Glenridge Hazelnuts. "It's a fantastic idea," he said about the Farm Crawl concept. "We get closer to experiencing where and how they're grown. You hear about the 100 mile diet, but it's amazing how much you can get locally."

"Brant's agricultural community plays an important role in our local economy and helps shape the character of our rural communities," said Zach Gable, Director of Economic Development and Tourism. "Farm Crawl Brant provides a unique opportunity for residents and visitors to connect directly with local farmers, learn about agriculture and experience everything our farming community has to offer."

Chisholm said that the county aims to expand the Brant Farm Crawl in 2027. 🌱



Chloe the baby Longhorn Calf wowed "crawlers" at Moore Farms on September 12.

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AgScape marks 35 years, calls for expanded investment in agri-food literacy across Ontario

By Amanda Nelson

AgScape marked its 35th anniversary during its annual general meeting last month, highlighting a renewed focus on strengthening agri-food literacy among Ontario students and expanding programming to address growing workforce needs in the agriculture sector.

The meeting centred on the evolving relationship between public perceptions of agriculture and the sector's need for a skilled workforce, with leaders noting ongoing challenges in attracting talent due to misconceptions and limited visibility into modern agricultural careers.

Speakers emphasized that while industry partners often engage in research and discussion, there remains a pressing need for qualified individuals to support growth across the agri-food sector.

According to AgScape, its programs - including the Teacher Ambassador Program (TAP) and the Agri Careers Initiative - reached nearly 140,000 students across Ontario over the past year.

The initiatives are designed to integrate agriculture into classroom learning and improve student understanding of food systems and related career pathways.

"This initiative showed what's possible when education, industry and government align with purpose," said Amanda Robertson, executive director of AgScape.

"While the projects have concluded, they've offered us the opportunity to access parts of the province where we have historically lacked the resources to go and sharpen their responsibility to move from isolated careers exposure to intentional, high quality agri-careers literacy," she said.

TAP saw record growth through the integration of agriculture into curriculum-based learning, while the Agri Careers Initiative - supported by industry partners - aimed to enhance student understanding of agriculture-related careers.

The organization's report also calls for



Amanda Robertson, executive director of AgScape, spoke at the organization's annual general meeting, where leaders marked 35 years of agricultural education programming and outlined future priorities. Pictured, Robertson received a certificate from Sarah Andrews, vice chair, on behalf of the Ontario government, congratulating AgScape on 35 years.

increased financial and human resources to meet rising demand, particularly in underserved regions such as the Greater Toronto Area and Northern Ontario.

Robertson said the future of AgScape depends on stronger sector-wide investment and advocacy.

"This is where the sector comes in, not simply as funders, although we absolutely need the dollars, but as champions," she said. "An investment in AgScape is an investment in equitable education, in the future workforce and in a generation of students who understand and value agriculture and food."

Robertson also emphasized a shift in focus from awareness-building to deeper literacy-building within food systems education.

"But literacy is understanding how food systems actually work," she said. "It's the ability

to understand where food comes from and how it's produced, processed, distributed."

She added that students must be able to critically evaluate food systems and see themselves as active participants - as future workers, decision-makers or informed consumers.

"The agri-food sector is modernizing rapidly and facing unprecedented workforce needs, innovation pressures and policy complexities," Robertson said.

She added that a population that does not understand agriculture cannot meet future challenges, but one that is informed can help strengthen the system.

Robertson said AgScape's next phase will focus on deepening literacy outcomes across Ontario classrooms.

"This shift from awareness building to literacy building really is AgScape's next evolution," she said. "We're just at the beginning of this work, and AgScape is excited to build, deepen and lead the next chapter of what agri-careers education will look like in Ontario."

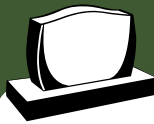
In a press release, AgScape announced its 35th anniversary campaign, "Deep Roots, Bright Futures - Planting for the Next 35 Years," aimed at expanding agriculture and food education across Ontario.

The organization, founded in 1991, said it now reaches hundreds of thousands of students annually through programs such as TAP, virtual field trips, thinkAG career experiences, and digital learning resources.

AgScape said its programming costs approximately \$3.05 per student, allowing the organization to deliver curriculum-linked agriculture education at scale.

As part of the anniversary campaign, it is encouraging supporters to make a symbolic \$35 donation to help sustain and expand programming.

"Deep Roots, Bright Futures is about building on that legacy, ensuring every student in Ontario has the opportunity to develop agri-food literacy," Robertson said in the release. 🌱



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Farm succession is an ongoing process, not a one-time conversation “succession quarterback” tells OFA members

By Diane Baltaz

Start early, talk often with your family, consult your accountant and legal experts and have a written business plan if you want a smooth farm transition to the next generation, says a Chatham-Kent succession mediator and farmer.

Len Davies of the Davis Legacy Planning Group of Muirkirk told Ontario Federation of Agriculture members from Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk at a workshop on March 3 that he prefers using the term “business continuity success” rather than succession planning because “farmers don’t want to retire as their life is their farm and they don’t have other hobbies.”

“Farm business continuity is a journey, not an event,” Davies said, adding that farm operations evolve and change.

The Norfolk Federation of Agriculture (NFA) hosted the event at the Waterford Legion, with support from the Haldimand and Brant County Federations of Agriculture. The event featured Davies and a panel of local farmers who are at different phases and discovering different issues with farm transition plans.

NFA president Jennifer Schooley notes that succession is complex and sometimes a highly emotional affair in some families but it is “the real gritty part about success.”

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) and its county affiliates have been advising their members to proactively put a succession plan into place that reflects the best interest of the involved parties.

The OFA states in an on-line press release that “succession planning is a crucial step to ensure every farm’s longevity and food sovereignty for our province.”

However, the OFA warns that statistics point to a potential of up to 40 per cent of farmers retiring by 2033 with approximately 66 per cent of farmers not prepared for succession with no plan in place.

“These statistics are staggering and further emphasizes the importance of having a succession plan organized to ensure Ontario farmers can continue to produce food, fiber, fuel and flowers for future generations.”

Davies recommended that farm owners do not delay considering and discussing transition goals and timelines and to ensure that everyone is on the same page.



Len Davies at the NFA farm transition event in Waterford.

“Don’t take anything for granted,” warned Davies.

Using his extensive mediation experience with farm families across Canada, Davies described examples of unfulfilled farm transitions that occurred because owners delayed doing it, unexpected deaths of a son or divorces resulting in farm sales or transfers outside of the family due to improper planning or wills. Changes in farm probate law, capital gains tax conditions, changing land values, sibling or cousin partnerships, consideration of legacies for off-farm children and the parents’ retirement plans were a few of the many circumstances Davies highlighted.

Davies said that both generations that are actively involved within farm enterprises must put careful thought and effort into discussing the farm as a business.

Calling himself a “succession quarterback”, Davies begins his work with each family “team” by privately interviewing individual members to sort out financial matters and relationship dynamics; this determines how well that family blends together. “I do this as some members don’t like each other and that creates tensions.”

This process may reveal a farm management “divorce” between the generations, which Davies said usually happens between the father and son. Often the mother is caught in-between the two as they typically vent about the other one to her. “It’s stressful for her, but often the mother tells me the real story.”

Davies outlined four factors for achieving a seamless farm transition: a mutually-agreed upon business plan; a “clear vision of the farm’s management”; constant communication including family meetings regarding managing risk; and utilizing SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) for decision making, such as whether or not to purchase additional quota.

“It’s not just about getting everyone on the bus, but getting people in the right seat on the bus – there’s some things that people just can’t agree on,” he said.

Adding tax, legal and other third-party advisors to the decision-making process assists in minimizing risk pre and post succession and for implementing a time line to complete it, Davies advised.

Much of Davies’s advice given in Waterford centred on the need for a current financial analysis of the farm.

“Take a snap shot of where you are today,” he advised, while describing the need for a current financial analysis of factors such as project cash flows and key financial ratios. “Take another snap shot of where the farm would be at transition - for instance, will you take the money to live in town?”

Davies also outlined tips on retirement income, estate equalization involving non-farm children, wills (one for the farmer, another for the farm, and a possibly a third for the land if the business is incorporated), capital gains and farm buyout considerations, and the need to resist having children influence one’s estate decisions. 🌱

Farm Succession Resources from the Norfolk Federation of Agriculture

Additionally, below are some links, attachments and information to help you with your succession journey.

- Succession Podcast Series on Huron County Economic Development Site – Section on Farm Succession (good ideas and tips shared) <https://www.huroncounty.ca/economic-development/lifeonthecoast/>

- County of Wellington has a great guidebook they just launched on their website - <https://www.wellington.ca/business-development/environment-agriculture/transition-planning#online> (Attached as well)

- Farm Credit Canada has some information on their website on transition planning - <https://www.fcc-fac.ca/en/resources/transition-planning>

- Banks typically will have information on their website or have someone that would look after that. I would encourage you to reach out to your bank.

- MNP has some information on their site as well. <https://www.mnp.ca/en/clients/agriculture/transitionsmart>

- OFA put on a workshop on Succession Planning and you can watch the re-

cording here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=196q305WV-I>

- OFA’s Viewpoint – Why Transition Matters
- Succession Planning Guide that OMAFA has put out

If there are further questions,

Please feel free to reach out to Joanne Fuller at 519-821-8883 Ext. 319, or cell: 519-868-5368; or email: joanne.fuller@ofa.on.ca ; or NFA secretary Rinske Peeters; email: nfasecretary1936@gmail.com 🌱

Halifax Statement outlines federal, provincial, territorial priorities for Canada’s ag, agri-food sector

By Tamara Botting

The Halifax Statement is the roadmap outlining the principles and priorities of Canada’s federal, provincial and territorial (FPT) governments for the nation’s agriculture and agri-food sector.

The document was released at the conclusion of the FPT agricultural ministers’ annual conference this July.

The priorities listed in the Halifax Statement are:

- Driving economic growth and competitiveness by building domestic capacity and improving productivity and profitability
- Diversifying markets and increasing trade by seizing new, and enhancing existing, opportunities in a complex and evolving global environment
- Advancing science, research and innovation through strategic investment and coordinated action
- Enhancing sector resilience by improving the ability across the value chain to anticipate, withstand and adapt to disruptions and risks

In working towards these goals, the identified guiding principles are:

- Flexibility, responsiveness and collective action
- Respect roles and obligations
- Collaboration and coordination
- Equity, inclusivity and accessibility
- Efficient administration
- Accountability and results

Samantha Seary, Communications Advisor of Media Services for the Public Affairs Branch of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC), provided some background on what has been done in the past and what these efforts will look like going forward on behalf of Heath MacDonald, the Canadian Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

The first thing Seary noted is that the priorities and guiding principles will be the foundation for the development of the Next Policy Framework (NPF); a consultation phase will be launched in fall 2026.

Input will be sought from key interested parties, including farmers, producers, processors, Indigenous communities, women, youth, and industry associations, Seary said.

“Over the coming year, FPT governments will develop a multilateral framework agreement that lays out the ways in which governments will collectively bring the Halifax Statement to fruition,” she said.

Collaboration between the FPT governments has been a focus since the initial Agricultural Policy Framework in 2003. Since then, there have been five five-year agreements that have provided continuity in how FPT governments have supported producers and processors, Seary said.

“Under the current framework agreement, Sustainable CAP, which expires in 2028, FPT governments are investing \$3.5 billion over five

years in strategic initiatives that advance shared priorities across the sector.”

This isn’t the only way the governments have been supporting the agriculture and agri-food sector.

Earlier this year, the Government of Canada launched the National Food Security Strategy, a series of initiatives aimed at addressing the structural causes of food insecurity across the country.

The Canadian government has also been supporting the AAFC’s research and innovation network, trade promotion, and market development efforts, which have helped Canadian producers domestically and internationally.

“Thanks to key trade agreements and market diversification efforts, Canada’s agri-food and seafood exports have almost doubled over the past decade despite historic challenges faced by farmers, including extreme weather, high input prices, livestock disease, and more,” Seary said, adding that the government is staying “focused on growing exports in existing markets and pursuing new opportunities to sell Canada’s high-quality, safe products around the world.”

All farmers know there are no guarantees in this industry, but to help producers manage significant hazards beyond their control, FPT governments have various business risk

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Halifax Statement outlines federal, provincial, territorial priorities for Canada's ag, agri-food sector

management programs in place.

These programs are regularly evaluated to see if they are sufficiently accessible to producers while also being flexible, responsive and reflective of the evolving needs of producers in the midst of growing economic and production risks.

"Over the years, policy frameworks have evolved to reflect the changing needs of the sector and the diversity of Canada's agriculture and agri-food industry, including regional and sector-specific priorities," Seary said.

"For example, in recognition of recent challenges, FPT governments increased the compensation rate of the federal-provincial-territorial AgriStability Program for the 2025 program year and doubled the payment cap to \$6 million to protect farmers against losses that are not in their control," Seary said, adding that at the conference, the governments agreed in principle to expand the list of allowable expenses under AgriStability.

The United States of America has long been Canada's largest trade partner, but the focus on that market has been shifting, especially recently.

Miriam Leardi, Senior Communications Advisor in the office of Trevor Jones, former Ontario Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness, said, "As President (Donald) Trump's tariffs and tariff threats continue to take direct aim at our economy, our government is taking action to advance the shared priorities identified by our federal, provincial, and territorial partners to build a more resilient and self-reliant agri-food sector."

She noted that since 2018, nearly \$1 billion has been invested to "strengthen agri-food research and innovation, help farmers and food businesses reach new markets, and make on-farm improvements that boost efficiency and reduce costs."

In particular, Leardi noted, "Through our Grow Ontario Strategy, we are delivering results by growing exports and attracting investment, including a \$533 million expansion by Lee Li Holdings, more than \$200 million by Chapman's, and more than \$100 million by Sunrise Farms, creating good-paying jobs, and increasing access to food grown and made in Ontario."

Leardi added, "Ontario is proud to be Canada's largest food processing jurisdiction, and we will continue to work across the country to expand capacity as we build a more competitive agri-food sector."

Seary echoed the confidence in the agriculture and agri-food sector at the national level, saying it "has all the ingredients to stand out on the global stage, while continuing to drive our economy here at home. Diversifying export markets is essential for protecting Canada's agriculture sector against global uncertainty and trade disruptions."

She noted that this approach has been multifaceted.

"Canada has taken significant steps in securing more opportunities for Canadian exporters to compete and succeed in thriving and fast-growing global markets and sectors."

To date, Canada has established a network of 15 free trade agreements (FTAs), providing preferred access to over 50 countries and more than 1.5 billion consumers across the globe.

Seary noted that these agreements include:

- The Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)
 - The Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA).
 - Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements (CEPA) with Indonesia and Ecuador
- Canada has concluded negotiations on a CEPA with the United Arab Emirates, and is actively engaged in negotiations with other countries, including India, the Philippines, Thailand, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

"Beyond these national measures, the Government of Canada is working to stabilize and expand our trade relationships globally. Diversifying our export markets has been a crucial part of Minister MacDonald's work, including six international missions in the first year of his mandate," Seary said.

"We actively support and promote current and prospective Canadian exporters, defend and advance new market access, and advocate for Canada's safe, high-quality products around the world."

There are several examples of this support.

An additional \$75 million has been invested in the AgriMarketing Program to create new market diversification streams, which will help Canadian agriculture and agri-food businesses and associations explore new markets and develop new trade relationships as they contend with tariffs and trade disruption, and work to promote their products.

Meanwhile, the governments of Canada and Ontario are investing up to \$20 million through the new Market Diversification and Trade Resiliency Initiative to help farmers, food processors and agribusinesses sell more of the products grown in the province around the world. This is being done as part of the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership.

"The results are starting to show," Seary said. "Last year, Canada's customer base for our agriculture, food and seafood exports was the most diversified on record and our exports hit a new record of more than \$101.2 billion."

Building bridges and inroads is something Canada's agricultural sector needs philosophically, but also somewhat literally, too.

"We understand the importance of an efficient transportation system and strong supply chains to help move agriculture and agri-food products to consumers across Canada, and to our valued trading partners," Seary said. "The Government of Canada continues to work to identify solutions to improve the resiliency, efficiency and fluidity of supply chains and to support the movement of agricultural goods."

This work includes:

- identifying and prioritizing nation-building infrastructure projects that will strengthen the capacity, efficiency, and reliability of Canada's transportation supply chains;
- providing support through the Major Projects Office to advance major projects and streamline federal regulatory project approval; and
- supporting infrastructure investments through Transport Canada's Trade Diversification Corridors Fund, which will support projects that build supply chain efficiency.

Another factor that has a continual and growing influence on the Canadian agriculture and agri-food sector is climate change, which brings with it an increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, changes growing conditions and puts more pressure on the sector's productivity and resilience.

Seary cited several recent examples of extreme weather events, like the wildfires in Northern Ontario and flooding in Niagara Region.

"Extreme weather events can disrupt supply chains by damaging critical infrastructure and increasing production and transportation costs. They can also force evacuations, displace, injure, or result in the loss of livestock, reduce crop yields or cause complete crop failures, and damage or destroy buildings, equipment, and housing," Seary said.

In an effort to be better prepared for when a crisis hits, the renewed Emergency Management Framework for Agriculture in Canada was announced at the FPT's July meeting; this "establishes a strategic approach to proactively manage risks and enhance the resilience of Canada's agriculture and food system."

Seary noted that AAFC often works with academia and producer groups to support and conduct scientific research in areas that enhance adaption and resiliency in the agricultural sector; there's a focus on developing innovations that will address region-specific challenges, since climate-related issues can often be localized.

More than just working to circumvent the challenges, "AAFC researchers are also evaluating how a changing climate will present opportunities for increased productivity," Seary said.

She highlighted the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (Sustainable CAP), an FPT agreement on priorities and investments that is driving Canada's agriculture and agri-food sector through to 2028; it has a total FPT investment of \$3.5 billion.

"The Partnership is giving producers and processors the tools they need to strengthen the sector's sustainability, competitiveness, and resilience," Seary said.

Sustainable CAP is contributing to efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, while also helping Canada's agriculture and agri-food sector adapt to climate change and ensuring a path to sustainable economic growth.

"These supports help farmers reduce input costs, adapt cropping practices, and stay productive as extreme weather increasingly affects planting windows, crop health, and harvest reliability," Seary said.

"The Sustainable CAP includes FPT cost-shared programs that help increase farmers' awareness and management of on-farm environmental risks and to support the adoption of beneficial management practices (BMPs) and technologies to reduce those risks, including through adaptation and resilience to climate change."

Seary said farmers are encouraged to make use of these programs to help them protect their farming operations.

Farmers are encouraged to explore their AAFC account to learn more about the programs and services available to them. . 

Brant County Federation of Agriculture launch dash cam project for farm vehicles using roadways

By Diane Baltaz

Motorists who think they can get away with illegally passing or cutting in front of farm vehicles on Brant roads might be caught on camera.

The Brant County Federation of Agriculture (BCFA) launched its Dash Cam Project at their annual regional and general meeting on Sept.24, at Szentimery Seeds north of St. George. They also issued 20 newly-purchased dash cameras for members to use on their farm machinery between this autumn and June 2027.

Videos from the cameras, which are on loan from the federation, will be recorded and used for educational and safety purposes as part of BCFA farm road safety and community engagement project.

The project matters because federal statistics reveal that slow-moving vehicles such as farm vehicles are 3.8 to 4.8 times more likely to be involved in a fatal collision per kilometer travelled than other motor vehicles. In response, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) runs an education campaign on road safety and slow-moving vehicles, including an online tip sheet for motorists sharing the road with farm vehicles.

“Sadly, most incidents happen when visibility and driving conditions are otherwise good, so they can be prevented,” states one OFA fact sheet released earlier this year.

Mark Eddy, one of five BCFA members looking after the project, introduced the dash cam concept; along with fellow committee members Alan Kelley, Michelle Snyder, Larry Davis and Steve Sickie.

Also, two transportation enforcement officers from the Ministry of Transportation (MTO), Cody Hammer from Waterloo Region and Garrett Marcella from Brantford gave a comprehensive presentation about the legalities of farm vehicles on roadways under the Highway Traffic Act followed by a question period.

The BCFA will host a second workshop this spring to edit and share the resulting videos. Eddy said that both the County of Brant and the OPP stated that they will work the federation to produce it.

“We look forward to working with the farmers who participate and we look forward to working with Brant County and the OPP,” said Eddy.

The BCFA appears to be the first of the OFA’s 51 county and regional associations to install dash cams on farm machinery: the Ontario Federation of Agriculture website lists many farm road safety initiatives launched by county associations. To date, they focus on measures such as the provision of slow moving farm vehicle signs, pass when safe stickers, educational roadside billboards and slow moving vehicle road signs for motorists.

Inspiring the Brant initiative was a previous dash cam project which the County of Brant Roads Department had done with a video on hazardous drivers and snow ploughs, said Eddy.

“Some weird things happened in it,” he concluded.

In fact, the county previously donated four used dash cams to the BCFA when they proposed their own road safety project, said Eddy.

The additional 20 web cams which the federation purchased this autumn will provide additional footage for the 2027 video, he added.

“I hope that we are making things better, but we have to try,” said Eddy. “We’ll see what comes out of it.”

The project is receiving funding from the BCFA and the OFA Revive Fund. The latter provides additional funding for county federations to play, develop and launch new projects in their local communities, in order to enhance agriculture’s profile in Ontario.

Additional facts from the OFA Winter, 2026 fact sheet on road safety and slow moving vehicles

- According to the OPP, injuries and deaths involving slow-moving farm vehicles often result from rollovers while entering, exiting, or crossing roadways.
 - Veering off soft shoulders and collisions with passenger vehicles are additional causes of injuries or death
 - Improper passing by motorists is a leading cause of serious collisions, with eight out of 10 collisions occurring during daylight hours.
 - Seven out of 10 of such improper passing occurs on dry road conditions – not during poor weather.
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- ✓ An additional residential unit (ARU)
- ✓ A commercial or community-benefiting property in a rural hamlet or village
- ✓ An existing rural tourism business

Grant funding available

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This grant helps to cover the cost of improving the exterior of an existing building. The goal is to improve the appearance, safety, and function of buildings in rural hamlets, villages, and eligible rural areas.

Signage Improvement Grant

This grant supports new or improved signage for eligible rural businesses, tourism operators, or farms hosting educational tours. Funding can help with permanent signs that improve visibility, wayfinding, and customer access.

Property Improvement Grant

This grant helps improve outdoor areas on private property. The goal is to make rural properties safer, more functional, and more welcoming for customers, visitors, and residents.

Application Fee Grant

This grant helps offset certain County of Brant planning and building-related application fees tied to an eligible project. It is intended to reduce upfront costs when applying for approvals needed to complete improvements for eligible uses.

Adaptive Commercial Reuse Grant

This grant supports the conversions or reuse of existing buildings for eligible commercial, community, On-Farm Diversified, or tourism uses. It may help cover renovation costs needed to bring a building up to code or adapt it to a new use.

Housing/Residential Unit Improvement Grant

This grant supports improvements related to Additional Residential Units on farms, or residential units in mixed-use buildings. Eligible work may include renovations required to create or upgrade housing. The goal is to support housing options that align with rural needs and County policies.

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Innovation and youth focus highlight Canadian Dairy XPO 2026



EastGen, based in Guelph, Ont., has long been a major sponsor of CDX, along with parent company Semex. From left are retiring CEO Brian O'Connor, Amanda Stokes, recently hired as EastGen's CEO, and EastGen director of sales Jamie Howard. (Gary West photo)

By Amanda Nelson

The Canadian Dairy XPO was held in Stratford from April 1 to 3, drawing a record 18,000 attendees. The show, considered Canada's largest dairy showcase, featured more than 350 exhibiting companies from around the world, bringing innovation, education, genetics and hospitality to Canadian dairy producers.

Opening ceremonies included several Canadian dignitaries, among them Heath MacDonald, Rob Black and Stratford Mayor Martin Ritsma.

"It's really great to see these people show up and stick their neck out," said Jordan Underhill, CDX director. "Getting in front of and speaking to the people who produce their food means a lot to the farmers and everyone they talk to."

Underhill said the record attendance is notable at a time when the dairy sector is consolidating across Canada, with farms growing larger.

"We don't have fewer cows or less milk being produced; we just see small farms getting bigger and medium farms getting even bigger," he said.

“We’re seeing consolidation in the dairy and agricultural sector by up to five per cent a year, so the fact that we’re holding attendance and even slightly growing each year is pretty incredible. It really comes down to the quality of the audience, which obviously we have with dairy farmers, but we’re still seeing more people attending each year.”

Event features included the Canadian Dairy Business Summit, held March 31. The one-day educational program focused on discussions about the future of Canadian dairy, including market outlooks, trade pressures, artificial intelligence, profitability and farm succession.

DairyFEST also hosted its annual Irish-themed opening night, presented by Enterprise Ireland, featuring food, networking and entertainment.

Youth Day was held April 2, offering students a career-focused program connecting them with dairy employers for résumé reviews and networking.

"It's a chance for youth to drop off résumés at the companies that are hiring," said Underhill.

“Over half of the 150 companies that participate in CDX are actively hiring. There are a lot of great job opportunities not only in agriculture but also in agri-food.”

Featured events also included the Youth Dairy Showing Clinic, Calves for a Cause sale, producer pancake breakfast, Hoof Trimming Corral show presented by Diamond Hoof Care, Blondin Sires Youth Clipping Clinic, John Deere Kids Zone, Genetics in Motion showcase and international pavilions from Germany and the Netherlands.

“The Canadian Dairy Expo is for Canadian dairy producers, but the idea is that we give them access to international innovations,” said Underhill. “We’ve had the German pavilion for years, and this year we added a Netherlands pavilion showcasing companies interested in doing business in Canada and North America.”

Underhill emphasized the importance of encouraging youth to consider careers in dairy farming, noting innovation is helping improve work-life balance on farms.

"You hear people say this is an industry show, and it's become the place to be seen, whether you're an agribusiness or a producer," he said. "You see families walking around with their sons and daughters, and it becomes more than just a trade show. There's a cultural component — a real need for it."

"With farms getting bigger and dairy farmers having less time off, this is a chance to get away, network and share ideas. That camaraderie has become really important.

"The magical thing about the dairy industry in Canada is that it's attracting young people. Whether it's robotics or the



Sue Orr, mayor of South Perth and deputy warden for Perth County, stands with Stratford Mayor Martin Ritsma. Both say they are pleased Stratford and Perth County continue to host the international show each year and are grateful CDX is held in a region that boasts one of the highest numbers of dairy cows per capita in Canada. (Gary West photo)

ability to have some work-life balance — which is important to younger people now — those opportunities weren't really part of agriculture in the past, but with robotics, they are."

Underhill said innovation plays a key role in attracting and retaining the next generation of dairy farmers.

"It's attracting and keeping intelligent young people on dairy operations. Youth and innovation go hand in hand. I don't think we'd have the youth without the innovation, but we do."

“The show’s concept is giving Canadian dairy producers access to international innovation to make them more efficient and help them produce a safer product for consumers. In turn, that’s keeping young people on these dairy operations.

"I think the Dairy Expo does a good job of capturing and showcasing the Canadian dairy industry to the rest of the world. We have so much to be proud of living here in Canada and being dairy farmers in Canada. It's a great snapshot of what the industry has to offer." 🌿

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Primer on the “5Rs” of nutrient management efficiencies, benefits of sap testing part of 2026 NSCIA Grower Day

By Diane Baltaz

Cash crop farmers who attended this year's Norfolk Soil and Crop Association (NSCIA) growers' day in Courtland on March 12 gleaned many nutrient tips from agrologists, and even heard a long-term weather forecast. But the morning began with a British Columbia-based agrologist who grounded the day with his primer on the “Five Rights (5Rs)” of balanced nutrient management.

Agrologist and “self-confessed nutrient geek”, Rick DeJong, works for Rowena, a Spanish-based agricultural firm that operates in 80 countries. He began his presentation on “making fertilizer dollars count” by outlining the Five Rights for fertilizer applications: right nutrient, right place, right form, right mix and right time.

“I am science-driven,” said DeJong, while explaining how he derived the 5Rs. “They follow the core principles of nutrient management: better application equals better outcome, higher yields, better quality fruit...”

DeJong advocated for “timely nutrient testing” in order to assist the application of the 5Rs, from determining the right nutrient down to the right form, mix and timing of its application. Soil testing should be done every three to five years; he also recommended fruit testing for apples. He added that multiple crops benefit from plant tissue testing and sap testing to determine the right nutrient combinations – including micronutrients.

“Micronutrients help the big three -nitrogen, potassium and phosphorus -- work and then you may need less of these macros. Macronutrients by themselves are never 100 per cent efficient; it's how we manage the micros that we get more response.

“Every nutrient has a role to play.”

Using tomatoes as an example, DeJong said that the micronutrient manganese, which is required for chlorophyll formation in plants, “slows down and regulates the potassium.”

“Some nutrients play well with others in the sandbox while others don't,” explained DeJong about right mix.

For example, while some micronutrients “don't mix well with potassium, but calcium and boron do.” Potassium moves through plant when needed; this movement becomes more efficient when combined with a calcium-boron application, two nutrients that work symbiotically. However, improper mixes such as excessive applications of boron often leads to cell mortality.

Using the right form of fertilizer ensures that the right nutrients go into the right place. For example, many micronutrients (iron, copper, zinc, molybdenum, copper, calcium) are best managed through the use of drop and foliar sprays in order to maximize rapid absorption into plants when they most need it. But liquid forms of EDTA chelated iron works well in soil for plants to access, but not when applied on leaves.

Because every field and crop has different needs; their conditions vary annually. DeJong suggested that growers should consider adding sap analysis to their nutrient efficiency tool box.



British Columbia agrologist Rick DeJong discussed crop nutrition at the Norfolk Soil and Crop Growers' Day.

“Sap testing is different from tissue tests,” said DeJong. “I recommend sap analysis for determining nutrition for 200 crops.”

Sap analysis measures the active liquids in the vascular tissues, the xylem and phloem. It provides a nearly real-time assessment of the nutrients available in the plant.

Proponents state that sap analysis can detect nutrient issues often long before visible symptoms appear. For example, sap analysis detects nitrogen deficiencies long before a plant's older leaves turn yellow due to prolonged,

insufficient chlorophyll synthesis.

Sap reports, as DeJong indicated in his talk, identify the deficiency long before the visual symptoms occur. Sap reports also identify when nitrogen has persistent levels, thereby indicating when fertilizer rates can be decreased. This helps reduce problems of pests and disease associated with excess nitrogen.

By contrast, plant tissue analysis measures nutrient concentrations in plant tissue. It is most useful when combined with visual inspections of the crop and soil conditions, knowledge of past field management and current soil testing.

“Sap testing protocols are different from those of a tissue test,” said DeJong. “You send in the leaves and the sap is extracted.”

DeJong discussed related issues related to the 5Rs, from the use of different solvents in spray tanks to plugged nozzles: “Plugged nozzles are a common problem. I see a lot of that in Ontario.”

The talks ended with atmospheric physicist-meteorologist Ron Bianci outlining how to read cloud formations to determine if a severe storm is forming nearby, and this growing season's long term weather forecast. He said that all of the international weather models indicate a cool, wet spring which extends into the summer with the “heat moving in during the autumn.”

Bianci indicated that alterations in the jet stream and a “significant” heat dome that will dominate the US mid-west and the prairies throughout the spring and summer constitute two major factors for the southwestern Ontario growing season.

NSCIA is affiliated with the Ontario Soil and Crop Association (OSCA) which is involved in the delivery of many education workshops, financial assistance programs, demonstrations and applied research. OSCA's vision is “farmers actively seeking testing and adopting optimal farm production and stewardship practices”. 🌱

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Harley livestock auctioneer described as having “one of the fastest mouths in the west” at Calgary Stampede

By Diane Baltaz

Harley’s Lars Deleeuw, 21, never had formal training, but he’s already on track to being one of Canada’s top livestock auctioneers.

In July, Deleeuw claimed the Reserve Champion title during the Stampede’s International Livestock Auctioneer Competition, held on Day Nine at the Calgary Stampede. He came second to the Grand Champion, second generation auctioneer Colvin Connell of New Mexico, with third place – the Rookie Champion – going to Tye Werk of Sundre, Alberta.

A press release issued by the Stampede newsroom dubbed the winners as, “the fastest mouths in the west”, adding that the 10 competitors came from across Canada and the United States.

The International Livestock Auctioneer Competition is presented by the Calgary Stampede Livestock Competitions Committee, and is held in the Nutrien Western Event Centre.

Deleeuw’s Reserve Champion title earned him \$8,000 and a custom-designed belt buckle.

Competitors at Calgary were judged on rhythm, clarity, voice control and livestock knowledge, as well as their ability to spot bids and conduct a sale. Finalists were required to sell brand consignment cattle by both the dollar, and by the pound in two different lots, and one Black Box item; the latter which In Deleeuw’s case involved a pair of exclusive, behind-the-scenes tickets to the 2027 Stampede, valued at \$500.

Deleeuw said that this was his fourth year competing at the Calgary Stampede. In 2024, the International Livestock Auctioneer Competition named him as the Rookie Champion, rewarding him with a custom-designed buckle. He placed ninth at his first competition in 2023.

Calgary is not the sole major triumph for Deleeuw, who has a growing collection of buckles to prove it.

In 2024, at age 19, Deleeuw won both the Grand Championship and the Rookie of the Year titles at the 25th annual Canadian Livestock Auctioneering Championship at the Livestock Marketing Association of Canada. It was the first time since that association’s inauguration in 1998 that someone swept both awards.

That win earned Deleeuw a championship ring, a limited edition Ken Frederickson bronze trophy, and the use of an EBY trailer for a year with an option to purchase (which he did).

His double-win at the 2024 Canadian Livestock Auctioneer Championship, which was held in Ontario, amazed Deleeuw, in addition to boosting his career profile.

“I didn’t expect to win the whole thing,” he confessed, adding that because it was being held in Ontario that year he assumed that he would know some of the buyers.

“The competition announced the top 10; then on Saturday night the awards committee announced the rookie first and then went up the list to Grand Champion.”

As the 2024 Grand Champion, Deleeuw could not return to compete at future events, but his win qualified him to judge at the 2025 Canadian championship in Verdun, Manitoba, which he enjoyed.

But Deleeuw never took formal auction training; nor does he hail from an auctioneering background.

Born in the Netherlands, his family immigrated to Canada in 2011, establishing Lion Holsteins (Deleeuw in Dutch translates into Lion), an approximately 52-milking cow herd outside Harley. At present it is run by his parents Adrian and Janet, and his twin brother Jarno.

“I’m a first generation auctioneer,” said Deleeuw, explaining that livestock auctions are largely non-existent in Holland.

Deleeuw got hooked on the art soon after settling in Brant while watching an Amish

auctioneer at an Ontario Livestock Exchange (OLEX) sale near St. Jacobs.

“I enjoyed listening to him,” he recalls. The youth began studying auctioneering techniques online. By age 13, he was so intent on perfecting his chant that he even practised on the school bus. Soon the bus driver asked him to stop, he added, laughing.

Presently he reached out to the 2008 World Livestock Auctioneer Champion Matt Lowery of Burwell, Nebraska, sending a clip of himself selling in order to have an honest critique.

“He (Lowery) gave me pointers online, but otherwise I learned online,” said Deleeuw. They still keep in touch.

DeLeeuw’s first public auction occurred in 2020 at a fundraiser at his high school, the Rehoboth Christian School in Norwich, where he sold toys.

“What a better way to start selling than at my school with people whom I know.”

In 2021 Deleeuw reached out to OLEX and landed his first auctioneering job. He began by working around the sales barn and graduated to selling slaughter/weigh-in cattle. He currently works there two days per week.

In 2023, Deleeuw added the Aylmer Stockyards to his resume, selling in the small animal ring (rabbits, chickens, sheep, and goats) on Wednesdays.

What skills does one need to sing the auctioneer’s chant?

“I’ve always been a big talker,” Deleeuw answered, laughing.

He said that the chant differs with each auctioneer as “they use different filler words between the numbers.” Deleeuw’s preference for fillers involves “dollar bidder” as in, “Dollar bidder down there, dollar bidder there.”

Spotting bidders requires “practise, experience and confidence” said Deleeuw. “You can



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Deleeuw’s 2026 Reserve Champion buckle from the International Auctioneering Championships at the Calgary Stampede

Harley livestock auctioneer described as having “one of the fastest mouths in the west” at Calgary Stampede

read an expression about whether they are interested in bidding or just swatting a fly. Also, some bidders are weekly regulars with permanent bidding numbers, and you get to know them.”

The preparation work for each auction involves marketplace knowledge: “You sell the same every week, need to know what prices are going to do that day; other days prices are lower or higher, depending upon seasonal fluctuations and economic pressures.”

Deleeuw does some volunteer events, including a benefit auction at an Amish school in Milverton, and assists in fundraisers at the Paris Fair for the Brant County 4-H, of which he was a member.

He also assists at other auctions. For example, this summer, Deleeuw accompanied an Amish auctioneer to Summerville, King’s County, PEI to sell new tools, equipment and a few horses.

When he’s away from the auction ring, Deleeuw said that he has a nine-year old partnership in a 30-head purebred Black Angus herd. He also has his own commercial heifers on the tenth concession of Burford Township, and makes time to train two quarter horses.

“I love what I do; therefore there is no need for me to do anything else.” 🌱



Lars Deleeuw with his auctioneer’s hat and his Reserve Champion cheque from the Calgary Stampede

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Calves for a Cause grosses over \$484,000 for Children’s Health Foundation – London



Sales crew and staff join Darryl and Sarah Markus and family at Wednesday’s CDX Calves for a Cause. Some of the money raised from the sale supports London-based Children’s Health Foundation. (Photo by Gary West)



Brooks Markus kicks off the Calves for a Cause live auction with Lot 1, Fraholme Apollo Aneedea-P, consigned by Fraholme Farms and born Jan. 6, 2026. Bidding opened strong, and the Holstein calf sold for \$4,200. (Photo by Amanda Nelson)

By Amanda Nelson

The Canadian Dairy XPO’s annual Calves for a Cause auction raised more than \$484,000 during this year’s live sale April 1 in the Cow Coliseum at the Stratford Agriplex. Thousands attended to show their support and submit bids on this year’s lineup.

Calves for a Cause is a live auction featuring elite dairy calves, embryos and genetics from breeders across Canada. Proceeds from the sale support programs and care for children at London Children’s Hospital.

The initiative was started by dairy producers Darryl and Sarah Markus to give back after their son, Brooks Markus, received care at the hospital.

The average sale price was \$6,942 across 47 live lots, with a total gross of \$484,248, including frozen genetics. Jordan Underhill, CDX director, said more than \$72,000 will be directly sent to Children’s Health Foundation.

“The cool part about it is that this donation helps people outside of the agricultural industry,” said Underhill. “It’s a bigger picture. Everybody knows somebody who’s had a child who’s been in a children’s hospital, and it’s such an important cause. I like the fact that the cause is helping all children, even those outside of the ag industry.”

Top sellers at this year’s auction included Lot 20, Hilrose-I Altitude Red Annalee, which sold for \$19,000 to Alphonse Stoltzfus of

Pennsylvania. Coming in second was Lot 21, Budjon-Vail Ec Citron, purchased for \$17,000 by Mark-A-Valley Holsteins in Arthur. Third was Lot 44, Echo Glen Major Irene, which sold for \$13,500 to Martin-View — David Martin, also of Arthur.

“The calves are selected for a combination of conformation, but also genomics,” said Underhill. “So some of it is about physical appearance, and some of it is genomics. The top-selling calf happened to have both, and when you get that combination, then you hit those kinds of sale numbers.”

The sale attracted buyers from across Canada and the United States, something Underhill said is encouraging.

“The show definitely started off in the first couple of years mostly with southwestern Ontario farmers, and obviously, there’s a high concentration of dairy farms in this region,” said Underhill. “But over time, it’s definitely pulling from the East Coast to the West Coast of Canada, and other parts of the world as well. It’s pretty cool to see that it’s become the industry show.”

Those in attendance who purchased calves included dairy farmers from Quebec, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Pennsylvania and California.

“We want to say a huge thank you to everyone who attended our sale last night,” the Markus family wrote in a follow-up post on Facebook on April 2. “Thank you to all the consignors and the buyers who invested in these great heifers. As a family, we are also so grateful for everyone who has played any part in this sale. Your dedication to our sale does not go unnoticed.”

The Markus family also thanked the Canadian Dairy XPO for its support and for providing a platform to run the Calves for a Cause auction. 🌱





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AgTech Breakfast showcases emerging agricultural innovations

By Amanda Nelson

Canada's Outdoor Farm Show in Woodstock ran this year from Sept. 15 to 17 on the fairgrounds on Oxford Road 17.

Every year, more than 36,000 people and more than 600 exhibitors attend the farm show.

For more than 30 years, Canada's Outdoor Farm Show has brought together visitors and exhibitors from across Canada to showcase agricultural innovation and new technology.

This year was no different. The annual AgTech Breakfast brought together farmers, startup companies and stakeholders to showcase new and emerging technologies from across Canada.

Nevin McDougall, Agricultural Research and Innovation Ontario (ARIO) board chair, moderated the event and said ARIO works together with Ontario leaders to bring the best agricultural innovation forward to enhance farming efficiency across the province.

"ARIO is the owner and investor in the 14 agricultural research stations spread across our great province, where we work in collaboration with the University of Guelph to conduct research and look for the next great solutions to improve our productivity and efficiency for our agri-food sector," he said.

ARIO is a board-governed agency of the province and is accountable to the Minister of

Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness. In 2024, the ARIO Act was modernized to help the agency

better support the sector in areas like equipment, technology, veterinary medicine

and the needs of rural communities related to agriculture and food.

One standout business presenter was Mahla Mirali, PhD, founder of grAln Data Solutions.

Growing up on a farm and earning a PhD in agriculture, Mirali has long been interested in agri-tech and has worked in artificial intelligence (AI) since 2021.

At a workshop at the University of Guelph, Mirali said a dairy farmer came to her with a problem: He couldn't reliably measure the moisture in his bunker zone, and he was looking for a solution that was user-friendly, fast and not very expensive.

Mirali said the products on the market at the time were very expensive, unreliable or too slow to process, so she set out to build a better solution. This is where grAln Data Solutions

FeedProbe was born.

"We started researching, and we worked with some institutions to make the first venture of funding, and then start the real work," said Mirali. "It was not an easy solution. It took us a while to find a good solution that is reliable enough for the farmers. And I came up with the final product after so many iterations."

grAln Data Solutions FeedProbe is a portable device designed to quickly measure the moisture content of silage right at the feed bunker. The goal is to help livestock farmers adjust how much silage they put into a ration based on that

day's actual feed moisture, rather than an older lab result or book value.

The technology uses sensors in a handheld probe that connects to a phone app and provides real-time measurements to help farmers work more efficiently and avoid wasted time.

"The farmer will grab some samples, mix them and put them in the probe," said Mirali. "From there, an app connected through Bluetooth will read three samples to make an average, and that's going to give a very reliable answer."

This product will hit the market soon and is expected to be priced around \$500 to \$800, making it one of the most affordable and reliable products on the market.

grAln Data Solutions is just one of the many businesses advancing the agri-food industry.

The agri-food sector is a vital part of Ontario's economy, contributing more than \$52 billion to

GDP and supporting one in nine jobs across the province.

"For me, that is very exciting, and it's an opportunity for us to look at innovation," said

McDougall. "How do we adopt innovation? How do we maximize the potential and value from new innovations, and in particular, support some of the new companies that are trying to bring new innovations to the marketplace? You know, that's a real signal of the health of our ecosystem. Are we getting new companies introducing their technology, scaling, getting adoption and creating new solutions for us to ensure that our sector is successful?"

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Update on the 2025 Canadian potato variety trial presented at Canadian Potato Summit

By Tamara Botting
The Canadian potato variety trial is an essential cross-country information gathering and testing practice that has been shaping the nation's potato industry for decades.

The influence the variety trials have on the nation's agricultural industry can't be understated when one considers the fact that potatoes are Canada's largest vegetable crop. Furthermore, according to the Government of Canada website, in 2023, potatoes accounted for \$1.96 billion in farm gate receipts.

Potatoes in Canada hosted its annual Canadian Potato Summit in January 2026. One of the sessions for that virtual event was the 2025 Canadian Potato Variety Trials: Industry Overview.

Jen McFarlane was the first presenter. She's an integrated pest management (IPM) consultant for ES Cropconsult (an IPM company in British Columbia that does that province's portion of the variety trials), and is the national coordinator for the variety trials.

McFarlane gave credit to all of those who contributed to the process, saying, "These field trials don't take place without grower collaborators, seed producers, and everyone else who works hard in the field to make these trials happen."

She also noted how expansive the trials are. "These really do span the breadth of the country, from Vancouver on the west coast all the way to PEI on the east side. There's a trial site in every province."

This helps with the data collection, since each site has a unique climate and experiences different weather patterns. For instance, in 2025, Manitoba had some higher temperatures in May, and wildfires meant smoky conditions throughout the middle of the summer. While western Canada's temperatures and rainfall were fairly average, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island had drought conditions in the late summer; Quebec had high rain levels in July, but then it was very dry for the rest of the season.

The fields in the eastern trials are not irrigated, meaning that they were relying on rainfall.

While the conditions for the eastern side of Canada were hard for the growers to experience, McFarlane noted that there was a silver lining in it for the variety trials, because it gave researchers "an opportunity to test drought tolerant varieties and see if there's anything there that can be of use."

She emphasized how much of a benefit it is to have trials in all of the provinces, because it allows for a broader data set; "2025 was a great year to compare these different conditions, because what we saw across the country was very varied."

It wasn't just the weather patterns that were diverse across the country, but also the varieties being grown.

Not only were up-and-coming varieties planted, but a short list of industry standards were also grown.

McFarlane said growing both types "really gave us an opportunity to provide a baseline to growers to compare from something like Yukon Gold with the newer varieties that are coming out, and I think that was helpful, so we will continue to do that."

Also, not every variety will be grown at every site across the country. Some may grow as many as nine or ten varieties, while others may only grow one or two.

"We needed to have flexibility for the local market and industry for that area, so we're not forcing someone to grow a potato that just isn't relevant to them," McFarlane said.

Throughout the trials, the parameters being measured include:

- Total yield – hundredweight (cwt) per acre
- Marketable yield
- Uniformity of shape and size
- Diseases observed
- Growth deformities observed
- Comments and other observations

McFarlane gave a quick rundown of some highlights of the varieties that were grown across Canada.



Jen McFarlane is an integrated pest management (IPM) consultant for ES Cropconsult, an IPM company in British Columbia that does that province's portion of the Canadian potato variety trials, and is the national coordinator for the variety trials.



During the Canadian potato variety trials, field days – like this one in Ontario – are an opportunity for stakeholders to come out to the growing sites and see firsthand how the trials are being conducted, and how the different varieties are doing in real-world conditions.



There's a lot of planning and data recording that goes into the Canadian potato varieties trials each year. This is necessary, as this information is vital to track the performances of different varieties over multiple years, in different places and with varying weather, soil, etc.

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Update on the 2025 Canadian potato variety trial presented at Canadian Potato Summit



It was an extremely dry growing season in the Maritimes during the 2025 Canadian potato varieties trials. While this is never easy for farmers to contend with, it did give an opportunity to see which varieties are more drought tolerant.

With red skinned potatoes, AG 1540 and Fenway both had great yields in BC, which made sense, as the weather was so favourable. The Dark Red Norland variety was grown in seven different sites, so there was a lot of opportunity for comparison.

With yellow varieties, Yukon Gold, which is the industry standard, had a better yield in Manitoba, but was lower in Ontario and Quebec. Colomba also did well in Manitoba.

Constance had great yields in the western part of Canada, but there wasn't as much of a basis for comparison, as it wasn't grown in many sites; this was also true of Alegria.

Russet varieties were split into two categories, processing and fresh. Burbank had a lower yield in the eastern provinces due to the drought conditions; the other three varieties looked at were mostly grown in western Canada, which again, had good results because of favourable weather conditions.

It was a similar story with white varieties; Eva, Alliston and Audrey were limited as far as where they were grown, so the comparison data is lacking; Audrey did produce well in BC.

Kennebec had a poor yielding in Quebec, but did much better in BC, Alberta and Manitoba.

As far as chip varieties are concerned, two old favourites – Atlantic and Lamoka – both performed well; so too did SP327, which did especially well in BC and Alberta, and McFarlane described as “a promising new variety.”

She added, “Maybe this is something we'll be seeing a little more of in the future.”

There were two other speakers during the webinar. Dr. Chandra Singh, from Lethbridge Polytechnic, spoke specifically about the field trials that took place in Alberta, while Samuel Gagnon with Progest spoke about the variety trials in Quebec.

While Ontario's varieties trials results were not covered in the webinar, the March 2026 Canadian Agriscience Cluster for Horticulture 4 update report did have some details about some new promising potato varieties

that were found through the province's varieties trials.

(The report, which discusses testing results for a number of commodities, can be read here: bit.ly/4rr9ILr)

F180085-04 was described as “a standout early to mid chip line with high yield and gravity and low sugar levels at harvest.” Furthermore, the report noted, this variety “reduces the likelihood of processors rejecting a crop due to high sugar levels.”

Meanwhile, AG1540 proved to be “the highest-yielding late-maturing fresh market line in trials,” and “VF180073-13 is highly resilient, ranking as a top yielder in both the standard and heat-stress trials. This variety allows growers to better manage the risks associated with increasingly frequent summer heatwaves.”

Three varieties – VF19006-002, AG1601.05, and Kingsman – “were found to be the strongest



Many of the potato varieties tested in British Columbia did very well in the trials, as the weather conditions were very favourable.

dual-purpose varieties for boiling and baking in trials,” according to the report.

Testing is currently underway for the 2025-2026 long-term commercial storage trials, the results of which are expected to be released in December 2026.

The varieties trials are a lot of work – not only at each individual site, but also considering the coordination that has to happen across the nation.

Also, “It takes a long time to get a variety from the beginning stages all the way to being a commercial variety that can be grown,” McFarlane said, adding that the process is generally 15 years from start to finish.

However, she added, there's a lot of value in the work being done.

“It keeps Canada at the forefront of producing new varieties,” she said. On top of that, it gives the growers the opportunity to see firsthand what grows well locally for them. 🌱

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Paris Fair Junior Veggies and Fruit remain a popular exhibitor entry point for rural and urban kids alike

By Diane Baltaz

The annual Paris Fair, held on Labour Day weekend, lured its share of the region's youthful green thumbs. Although molybdenum, or Mo by its symbol in the annual Paris Fair, held on Labour Day weekend, lured its share of the region's youthful green thumbs.

Moreover, youth ranging from kindergarteners to teens from Brant, Oxford, North Dumfries Township and Hamilton gladly shared their motives for entering home-grown vegetables when they dropped off their vegetables on Sept. 2, the day prior to the fair's opening.

This show had approximately 29 sections for vegetable and fruit, all categorized under Class 500 in the Paris Fair's Junior Prize Book. Overseeing the 2026 entries were the committee's three members: Kelly Turnbull, Darlene Ilett and Kylie Vander Hoek.

The Class 500 exhibits were placed at the front entrance to the fair's Homecraft Building, which doubles as the Paris Curling Club. Other Junior Division crafts and the Brant 4-H Club achievement displays were nearby.

The entry list begins with carrots with three roots and 2.5 cm top left on; it moves on to red and white potatoes, garlic, different varieties of red and green tomatoes, onions, cucumbers, eggplant, sweet corn, zucchini, beets, sweet and hot peppers, pie pumpkins, and "named varieties" of apples and pears.

The prize money going to the top five winners usually ranged from: \$4 first; second \$3; third \$2.50; fourth \$2, and fifth at \$1.50.

Several special categories offered slightly higher rewards starting at \$5. These included a fruit or vegetable decorated to resemble an animal; decorated fruits or vegetables that resemble the globe; a homemade stuffed scarecrow under one meter; and a display from the family vegetable garden adding decorations to showcase the competitor's heritage.

The prize book outlines to youth how to prepare fruits and vegetables for exhibition: choose blemish-free specimens that are as uniform as possible; the use of sturdy plates and recording their age at

the back of every tag, along with extra presentation protocols for tomatoes and potatoes.

Some entrants needed gentle reminders from committee members about needing to follow the prize

book display rules more precisely in order to win. One five year-old, for instance, had too much soil clinging to her entry in the unwashed potatoes category.

"I want to inform the kids on what to do for next year if they submit a vegetable that did not totally meet the exhibitor guidelines outlined in the Prize Book," said Turnbull, who accepted the girl's potatoes.

The Junior Vegetables and Fruit committee also oversaw the intake and judging of Class 505 – Junior

Grain, Corn and Hay. It was a smaller class with fewer entries, but youth brought in some bags of haylage, cut hay and soybeans pulled from the field and corn stalks.

Normally, the fair's usual 2:30 to 8:30 pm designated time for dropping off exhibits is routine, with obvious excitement by the entrants as they hand them over for judgment. However, this year, a severe storm with strong winds struck Paris in the late afternoon, causing much of the town, including the fairgrounds, to lose its hydro well into the night. The fair extended the drop off into the following morning, prior to the 9 a.m. judging time.

At press time, no information was available on the number of entries per section nor the total number of youth enrolled in the vegetable-fruit class. However, Junior Vegetables, Fruit, Grain, Corn and Hay committee chairperson Kelly Turnbull pleased with the numbers.

After their judgments, with the ribbons attached to the top five, the entries were put on display, with the hay, grain and corn and some larger vegetable class items placed out front with the bulk of the Class 500 entries going on glass shelves behind.

Most of the shelf space went to the class's largest group – tomatoes -- arranged on paper plates in groups of three.

"Tomatoes are always popular," said Turnbull. Jack Ferren, Paris, 10, explained why he submitted cherry tomatoes as part of his gardening efforts:

"Dad likes to eat them."

Ferren said that his mother bought seeds and seedlings for this year's crop. Once in the ground, Ferren said that he, along with his younger brother Nolan, "did lots of watering" to get them to show level quality by Labour Day.

"I'm amazed by their growth," said Ferren. "I remember when they were just little things-- smaller than

a marble -- some were seeds."

Ferren said that he previously exhibited at the Paris Fair for "four or five years". He also submitted hostas and Hydrangeas to the adjoining Junior Flower Class in the Homecraft Building, as well as submissions for the photography class.

Paris's Isabella Platz, 11, was a first time exhibitor. She picked three green tomatoes from the garden of her grandmother, Mary McConkey of St. George. Platz also entered flowers.

"We didn't have a garden but I entered this year because my grandmother entered many Paris Fair competitions. I want to carry on Grandma's entries," she said, inspired by her grandmother's success "I chose the prettiest and the healthiest ones."

Class 500 received five mud pie entries. This category required the pies to resemble the map of Canada.

Siblings Kara and Bryce Kelley, aged 5 and 8 respectively, brought two pies with different colouring and materials, with Bryce using blue paint to depict Canada's oceans while Kara used more natural materials such as grass. Bryce placed second while Kara took the fifth-prize ribbon.

The smaller, Junior Grain, Corn and Hay sections (Class 505) drew fewer entries in its several categories,

in part as it is more farm-based than Class 500, which also attracts urban gardeners.

Three Princeton siblings from an established dairy farming benefited from being able to enter more than just garden produce.

Travis and Henry Stuart brought their garden vegetables, such as zucchini, in addition to bags of carefully-first cut hay, and soybeans, including roots.

They also carried in the tallest corn stalks they could find for the tallest corn stalk competition. Travis, 10, said that the corn formed part of their silage crop which they use to feed their cattle. Moreover, their sister, Olivia, placed well in the hay section: Olivia took home the ribbon and \$4 for first place with their first cut hay while Henry, 8, placed second. Travis won third prize.

Judging shelves of choice vegetables and fruit isn't easy, as Judge Elizabeth Berta of Elberta Farms

Country Market, Paris, testified. She previously judged this class, but this year, she brought along her brother, Peter Takacs of Brantford, to provide an additional opinion.

Starting with the cherry tomatoes, the pair evaluated all of the fruit and vegetable categories within 90 minutes.

"I felt it was kind of hard to judge them in a way as they were all very good," said Berta. She used the cherry tomatoes to prove her point. "It was really hard to judge the cherry tomatoes which all had three on a plate -- to choose which should be first, second and third."

But, Berta added, "It's very interesting. I enjoyed it." 🌱



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Brant Rural Prosperity Community Improvement Plan another tool to boost county's rural economy

By Diane Baltaz

Applications for funding under the County of Brant's Rural Prosperity Community Improvement Plan (RPCIP) began coming in to county staff immediately after the program's launch.

The RPCIP passed its provincially mandated appeal period on May 7, following its approval by council at the April 14 meeting. The Brant RPCIP enables farmers and business owners operating in the county's hamlets and villages to access funding to reduce the cost of improvements to their commercial or mixed-use buildings, upgrade signage, and complete planning and building approvals said Brandon Webb, County of Brant's Research and Marketing, Economic Development officer and Zach Gable, Director of Economic Development and Tourism.

The six grant categories are: façade improvement grant; signage improvement grant; property and private parking area improvement grant; planning and building application fees grant; adaptive commerce reuse grant and housing/residential unit improvement grant.

Eligibility requirements vary by program, and all projects must meet county policies and receive approval before work begins. The pre-approval criteria include an on-site inspection and the submission of written quotes with one's application.

Such goals supports farm viability and housing options, enhances tourism experiences and the repurposing of existing buildings as opposed to new builds, said Webb.

The first applicants approved this summer include a St. George farmer with converting an

old grain bin into a coffee service counter, while another farmer used the funds to improve a second, on-farm dwelling. A third grant went to upgrades at a Scotland day care.

"The function of a CIP (community improvement plan) works from the belief that people invest and this in turn leads to an increased tax base," said Webb.

Informing this CIP is the county's previous Community Improvement Plan that offered grants for eligible projects within the downtowns of Paris, St. George and Burford, said Gable.

"It had a good uptake," said Gable. "Therefore we knew that it would be a great policy tool for more rural areas to spur investment."

The new CIP is available to qualified applicants living outside these urban areas, said Webb.

Although other southwestern Ontario municipalities have Rural Prosperity Community Improvement Plans, Brant's was tailored to its own specific needs and demographics. It was written in consultation with the Brant County Federation of Agriculture, the county's Agricultural Advisory Committee and with meetings with rural residents – "from Onondaga to Oakland", Harley to St. George and rural communities across the County of Brant, said Webb.

He explained that this new policy tool also assists Brant's farms with generational transfer by enabling the development of a more diversified farm base, or an additional residence to attract successive generations to farming.

Ministry statistics indicate that Brant County has 669 census farms with farmers having at median age of 58. They also state that 419 of these farms

lack a succession plan, said Webb.

Funding for the rural and urban CIPS comes through the county's tax levy, which is channeled to the capital budget. The county accrued \$150,000 to the CIP account, said Webb.

Interested applicants are asked to contact county staff before submitting an application to confirm eligibility and discuss project details. Funding is limited and subject to council approval.

To learn more about the Rural Prosperity Community Improvement Plan, including eligibility and how to apply, visit: www.brant.ca/RPCIP.



The Little Apples Day Care in Scotland is one project that benefitted from Brant's Rural Prosperity Improvement Plan





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Brant County riders do well at hunter-jumper championship

Brant County riders and horses were well-represented and successful at the recent Trillium Hunter Jumper Association Championship Show at Wesley Clover Parks near Ottawa.

To qualify, competitors must finish in the top eight in their division for their zone. There are six zones in Ontario, with the eastern zone also attracting many competitors from Quebec. The THJA has been running shows for over 30 years, allowing competitors to do a full division in one day.

Stables in Brant County generally show within the very competitive Central West zone, spanning the counties of Wellington to Niagara South, and Halton to Norfolk. Points can also be accumulated in other zones, with Oxford and Perth Counties in the South West zone offering nearby show opportunities for Brant riders.

Southern Cross Equestrian is located between Burford and Scotland. Trainer and coach, Fiona Borbely, had seven students competing at the show, as well as competing herself. Fiona's students fundraise all year to help offset the extra costs of travel, stabling and entries at a five-day championship show many hours from home.

Maddison Clarkson riding Liquid Sunshine and Elsie Kloefer on her pony My Sweet Madeline both competed in the under-12 Short Stirrup division and in the My 1st Medal classes. Elsie came home with second, fourth, fifth and ninth-place ribbons.

In the 2'3"-2'6" Children's (under 18) Hunter division and medal class, McKenzie Kloefer and her pony Kaleidoscope placed 10th in the medal class. This class is two phases, with the best from a technical jumping round returning to be judged again on "the flat" based on the quality of the horse or pony's gaits and manners. A top 10 in this class is well-earned.

Nathan Spiers competed in the Long Stirrup. This division is geared towards people who didn't start riding as children. Along with his horse Johnathan ZF, Nathan successfully placed sixth and ninth.

Nathan's horse Johnathan ZF also showed in the 2'3"-2'6" Adult Amateur Division with Nathan's daughter Maggie Spiers. The pair brought home two thirds and an eighth from this popular division.

Fiona successfully rode her horse Amberwood in the 2'3" Open Hunter Division to five placings: a third, 5th, two sixths and an eighth. Five top-ten placings against the best Trillium competitors is something to celebrate!

In the Jumper classes, Emery Howell and Life of Bryan, owned by Fiona Borbely, competed in the .75m division, placing seventh in the medal class and Mikayla Marks placed second in the .9m Jumper medal class with her Thoroughbred, Lyrical Note. Similar to the Hunter medals, these classes involve a more technical jumping course,

with the best performances coming back to be judged on the flat. Congratulations to both riders for placing in these demanding classes.

Emery and Mikayla also competed in the THJA Provincial Cup Team event. This class is comprised of teams of four riders, similar to a Nation's Cup format but with costumes encouraged. The class is meant to unite competitors and encourage teamwork. The top three scores from each team count towards a total score. Team Duck Duck Go, in true spirit of this class was comprised of Emery and Mikayla from Southern Cross teaming up with riders Emily Recker and Alauna Ferguson from Forrest Equestrian. Duck Duck Go, in their brilliant yellow shirts and royal blue tutus, brought both colour and talent to the ring, placing second overall in a large class. Well done team.

Qualifying first for the season in the 1.1m Jumper division for the Central West zone was Penelope Vamos. The Grade 11 student at Assumption College trains half the year at her parents, Matt and Melissa's farm just east of Burford, moving to a nearby stable with an indoor arena during winters. Her horse Icarus KVS, fondly known as Bear, is no stranger to all the activities on a tobacco farm. From greenhouse heaters in early spring to irrigation guns pumping water nearby and the noises of harvesting equipment, unlike many competitive Jumpers, he takes it all in stride.

Showing true Brant County hospitality, Fiona graciously invited her former student to stable with the Southern Cross group and it was my pleasure to get to know her better.

Penelope was the only junior rider in this Open class, tackling the biggest jump courses offered at Trillium shows. She and Bear completed all four of their rounds with only a few rails down. The placings are actually combined with the 1.0m class. In spite of this handicap, Penelope and Icarus KVS placed seventh, ninth and tenth and another seventh in the Mini Prix on Sunday. Four top 10 finishes while jumping higher courses than the majority of other competitors is a job well done by this hard-working pair.

These are definitely family events, and that often includes dogs. When you're away from home or the farm for five to seven days, it's often easier to bring them along. Even the dogs from Brant County did well at THJA Champs, with both Shawn Borbely (Husky/GSD/ACD mix) and Annie Vamos (Golden Retriever) winning "Dog of the Day" on separate occasions.

A big "thank you" to the coaches, parents, siblings, friends and other relatives who helped all the competitors look and perform at their best.

Congratulations to the riders and horses from Brant County on qualifying for and competing at THJA Championships! 🍀





BY LAURA RICHARDSON

Dishes to “fall for” this autumn



Peppers are in prime growing season in late summer and early fall here in Ontario gardens.

Although peppers often appear on the ‘dirty dozen’ list for produce with the most pesticide residue, Canadian-grown peppers tend to have lower levels of pesticides than certain imported peppers, so now is the time to make the most of the garden and greenhouse varieties. Experts say that peppers are well worth eating, as they are full of vitamin C and A as well as potassium and antioxidants.

Ontario produces over 70 per cent of greenhouse pepper crops, with an estimated farm-gate value over \$600 million. We have relatives in the Leamington area who bring us greenhouse ‘seconds’ from their rows upon rows of greenhouses. Enjoy this salad as a refreshing and crunchy side to a heavier dish like our Pizza Burgers Extraordinaire.

Sweet Pepper Salad

4 peppers, sliced thinly lengthwise
3 tiny red onions, sliced thinly
1 small carrot, sliced with a potato peeler
10-15 mint leaves, halved

Dressing:

Juice of 1 lemon
3 T. wine vinegar
3 T. oil of your choice
¾ t. Dijon mustard
1 clove garlic, minced
½ t. Oregano
¼ t. Salt
½ t. White sugar

Toss pepper, onion and red onion slices in a bowl. In a jar, mix the lemon juice, vinegar, oil, mustard, garlic, oregano, salt and sugar together well. Pour over vegetables and garnish with refreshing mint.

The inventor of the hamburger isn’t known, although it appears to have developed over time from Hamburg steak brought to North America

by those who immigrated from Germany. Now, it’s wildly popular, so much so as estimates have Canadians eating about 95 burgers per person annually. Although BBQ season may be soon drawing to a close, this recipe is great to dress up even the most plain of oven patties.

Pizza Burgers Extraordinaire

2 T. butter
6 Frozen Burger patties
1 T. Oregano
6 Good buns (we like pretzel buns)
1 cup Quality pizza or spaghetti sauce
1 cup shredded cheese
1 cup pepperoni slices

Sprinkle oregano onto partially thawed burger patties and press lightly with the back of a spoon to ensure the oregano sticks. Melt butter in a fry pan and fry or in melted butter according to package directions. Heat your oven to 375. Take patties out of the fry pan and use the buttery/meaty juices to warm up the sauce. Spread out the buns and put a patty on one side of the bun. Cover in sauce and then sprinkle with cheese. Lastly, put your pepperoni slices on it and pop the bottoms and tops of the buns in the oven for 10-12 minutes just so that the cheese melts nicely. Enjoy!

Although the lion’s share of global production of quinoa is still primarily out of South America, Canada does produce a fair amount of quinoa, as its annual value is over \$150 million. These breakfast muffins contain the protein rich superfood, and are great for busy workdays because they can be made in batches ahead of time and taken out of the freezer for a nutritious breakfast stand alone, or as pictured here with a well-balanced plate.

Protein-Packed Quinoa Breakfast Muffins
1 ¼ c. cup whole wheat flour 1 t. Baking soda
½ t. Baking powder
1 t. Cinnamon

½ cup brown sugar
¼ cup strawberry jam
2 eggs, beaten
¼ cup plain yoghurt
¼ c. oil
1 t. Vanilla
¾ c. pumpkin puree
½ c. cooked quinoa

Cook quinoa (I like using the microwave because it never burns to quickly get quinoa ready). Mix all other ingredients in a mixing bowl and add in quinoa. Pour into muffin containers and bake in a 350 oven 25-35 minutes, or until fork prick comes out mostly clear. 🌱





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