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Competitive plowing has a certain pull to it

Many at IPM 2025 have been doing it for a long time

By Luke Edwards

The story of how Keith Robinson got into competitive plowing is a common one. What made his story unique as plowmen came to Niagara for the International Plowing Match last month was not the how, but the when.

"My dad took me to the local plowing match in 1949," the Cookstown man said.

The following year Robinson got a two-furrow plow of his own and competed in his first IPM.

With more than three quarters of a century experience in competitive plowing, the sport has taken Robinson all over the world. He was a five-time Ontario champion, went to the Canadian championships four times and even wore the maple leaf, representing Canada at the 1989 worlds in Norway.

The longtime dairy producer passed the farm onto his son, who has since converted the operation to beef. However, the farm wasn't the only thing he passed onto his kids. His four children plowed competitively at one time or another, with three still carrying on the

hobby. He also has a grandson who competes.

While he doesn't quite have the longevity of Robinson, Don Brodhaecker's been involved with competitive plowing for a long time himself. The Cambridge man started in 1958, winning a junior championship in 1963. And like Robinson, his three boys - Mark, Tim and Shaun - followed in his footsteps.

"They've all been junior champions," Brodhaecker said proudly. His grandson Austin Jr. also plows now.

Mark also went to two world championships, in Croatia and Lithuania.

They raise dairy on their Cambridge farm.

"Some show cattle, but we like working in the fields," Brodhaecker said about the family hobby.

About 30 years ago Brodhaecker began judging plowing matches. The job means he must keep a close eye on things.

"It's an art," he said of plowing.

While the ground was tough in Niagara, the weather cooperated, with five days for clear skies. Brodhaecker said he's been to matches where the rain clouds turned the fields into small lakes.

"But the show still goes on," he said.

That variability is a lesson Daryl Hostrawser has also learned and put to good use.

"It's never the same," he said. "You've just got to cope with what you're given."

A third-generation plowman, Hostrawser had just returned from competing at the world's in Prague, Czech Republic, where he placed 11th in the reversible plow class.

"It was great. Great facilities, great people. The weather was almost good. Extremely dry when we got there, but then the rains came and softened the ground

and made things 90 per cent better for plowing," he said.

Like the others, Hostrawser followed his dad and grandfather into the hobby. His dad competed in the worlds in 1964, and around the same time bought a plow for the young Hostrawser.

"I started chasing him around the fields with that plow," he said.

Every fall Robinson said local plowing groups put the call out for younger people to take up the sport and keep it alive. As for himself, Robinson plans to be back in the fields next year.

"If I'm still around," he said. 🌱



NIAGARA FARMS

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The fields around the West Niagara Fairgrounds were hubs of activity last month as young and old alike competed in the various classes at the International Plowing Match. ~ Luke Edwards photos

IPM 2025 plowing results

While it seems everyone had fun at the International Plowing Match last month, some competitors went home with more than just some memories. They took with them some awards. Friday night featured the Celebration of Excellence banquet, where top plowmen were honours.

Here's a rundown of the results

Class 1 - Horse and Mule pulling

Group 1, jointer plows: Winner, Robert Daniels (Berwick, Nova Scotia); Reserve, Terry Linton (Roseneath).

Group 3, sulky plows: Winner, Kim Hadwen (Belleville); Reserve, Glen Conway (Chute-a-Blondeau).

Class 2 - Tractor, two furrows

Group 1, 10-15 years old: Winner, Austin McLeod (Cottam); Reserve, James Smith (Smithville).

Group 2A, 16-21 years old: Winner, Brendan Hickey (Auburn).

Group 2B, 10-21 years old, qualifier for nationals: Winner, Dugald McIntosh (Seaforth); Reserve, Carson Little (Amaranth).

Group 3, 20-plus: Winner, Jeremy (Little Britain); Reserve, Chris Allen (Vankleek Hill).

Group 4, 20-plus: Winner, Allen (Ashton); Reserve, Mark Dowdall (Lanark).

Class 3 - Tractor, three furrows mounted or semi-mounted

Group 2, three or more years experience: Winner, Anthony Bertrand (St. Mary's); Reserve, Nicholas Sanders (Puslinch).

Class 5 - International championship tractor class

Group 1, conventional plows: Winner, Brian Davenport (Owen Sound); Reserve, Barry DeGeer (Thornton).

Group 2, reversible plows: Tom Evans (Tiverton); Reserve, Mackenzie Reinhart (Teeswater).

Class 6 - Antique tractor

Group 1, drag plows (minimum 125 points): Winner, Ken Milligan (Strathroy); Reserve, Jean-Marc Dessaint (Sarsfield).

Group 2, drag plows (minimum 115 points): Winner, Mark Lane (Caistor Centre); Reserve, Richard Pepper (Chesley).

Group 3, mounted plows: Winner, Paul Hodgson (Parkhill), Reserve, Michael Mitchell (Hagersville).

Group 4, mounted plow one furrow: Winner, Jonathan Marcy (Burford); Reserve, Mike Lassam (Tillsonburg).

Group 5, mounted or drag plows, 10-21 years old: Winner, Calyssa Dougherty (Scotland); Reserve, Holt Marcy (Burford).

Special Award Winners

Organizers also handed out several special awards.

Lloyd VanDusen award for best overall walking plow team: Robert Daniels (Berwick, Nova Scotia).

IPM Champion Horse Plow Person award: Champion, Robert Daniels (Berwick, Nova Scotia); Reserve, Kim Hadwen (Belleville).

Fred and Helen Davenport Memorial award for highest aggregate score in classes 2, 3, and 4 for competitors under 16 years of age: James Smith (Smithville).

Barb McAllister Memorial scholarship: Brendan Hickey (Auburn).

IPM Champion Tractor award for highest total points in classes 2, 3, 4 and 5: Champion, Brian Davenport (Owen Sound); Reserve, Brendan Hickey (Auburn).

John S. Moffatt Memorial trophy for top drag plow: Mark Lane (Caistor Centre).

IPM Champion Antique award for highest total points in class 6: Champion, Mark Lane (Caistor Centre); Reserve, Richard Pepper (Chesley).

Brian Fried Memorial trophy for Ontario resident with highest aggregate score in classes 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6: Brian Davenport (Owen Sound).

Floyd Willis and Family Special for those qualifying to compete in Canadian national junior and senior: Conventional - Champion, Brian Davenport (Owen Sounds) and reserve, Barry DeGeer (Thornton); Reversible - Champion, Tom Evans (Tiverton) and reserve, Mackenzie Reinhart (Teeswater). Junior champion, Cameron Vos (Alvinston). 🍀

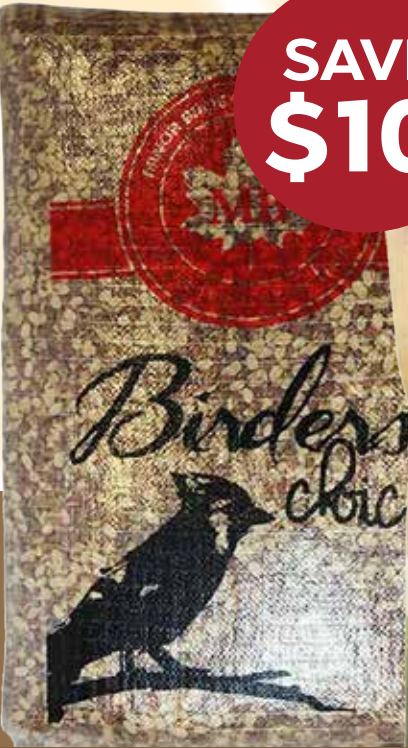
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Victoria Kolb named Queen of the Furrow

By Luke Edwards

A surprise win has the new Queen of the Furrow excited about the year ahead.

Victoria Kolb took home the crown at last month's International Plowing Match held in Niagara. Representing the Peel-Dufferin region, Kolb will take over the royal duties from outgoing Queen of the Furrow Taylor Legge.

"It's really exciting. I was not expecting it at all," said Kolb as she began her reign on the final day of IPM 2025.

While she grew up on a Holstein operation in her hometown, Kolb is currently studying math at the University of Waterloo. The 20-year-old was encouraged to compete in the contest by 2024 winner Melissa Karpenko, who also hails from the Peel-Dufferin region.

Kolb said the experience was amazing and was excited to be able to spend time in Niagara.

The competition sees contestants representing different Ontario regions participate in a variety of events to demonstrate their public speaking skills and dedication to Ontario agriculture. During the match they got up on their respective tractors to test their plowing skills, and also took part in interviews with a panel of judges and gave short speeches.

On the Friday of the IPM during the Celebration of Excellence banquet, finalists were required to answer an impromptu question on the spot.

Kolb said the contestants all got along well, which made the competition aspect easier.



Victoria Kolb was crowned the 2025-2026 Queen of the Furrow last month. ~ Corinne Bosch photo

"It didn't feel like we were competing with each other," she said.

Much like Legge did in the months leading up to the Niagara match, Kolb will spend the next year touring Ontario in a special Queen

of the Furrow car, promoting the 2026 match that's set to take place in Bruce County.

It's something she said she's very much looking forward to.

"Getting a chance to see my province, it's really awesome," she said. 🍏



Several contestants from across the province vied to become the newest Queen of the Furrow. ~ Corinne Bosch photo



As part of the Queen of the Furrow competition, contestants had to plow a few furrows of their own. ~ Luke Edwards photos

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Ceremonial first furrow offers a tribute to the future

Carly Packham received the honour to kick off International Plowing Match

By Luke Edwards

Considering that almost a century had elapsed between the last time Niagara hosted the International Plowing Match and its return in 2025, history was a common theme in the lead up to the September showcase.

But when it came time for the rubber to hit the road, or in this case for the furrow to hit the soil, organizers chose not to look at the past but instead into the future.

Carly Packham, a 13-year-old from Smithville, received the hon-

ours of the ceremonial first furrow as IPM 2025 kicked off last month.

Ontario Plowmen's Association director Anne Thompson said choosing Packham was a great opportunity to think of the next generation of plowman and farmer.

"We need to cultivate and honour our future," she said during the ceremony, calling Packham "a young plowman, who represents the future."

For Packham, she said the selection was a huge honour. She's a newcomer to competitive plowing, with her 4-H friends convincing her to sign up in 2023. Her dad restored an old John Deere tractor, which the teen now uses.

"It's totally relaxing. I find it fun and comforting," she said.

She was slated to attend the IPM beginner competition classes at the event.

Outside of plowing, Packham helps out on the family's cash crop operation. While she's still young, Packham said she could see herself taking up a career in agriculture.

Organizers thanked Rick Keunen for offering up his land for the first furrow. Typically it takes place at the IPM site, but since it was West Niagara Fair weekend, they moved it.

Renate McGillivray, chair of the local host committee, said the ceremony was also a chance to honour the hard work of the volunteers that put in countless hours in the months leading up to the IPM. The

local committee faced some extra challenges with a younger team with many who still worked full time along with potential plowing properties that were lands rented to farmers by owners from urban centres.

She said she was proud of the work the team put in.

"I'm very happy to be on this team and very proud of this team," she said.

West Lincoln Mayor Cheryl Ganann said the match would be a chance to remind the rest of Ontario of Niagara's rural roots.

"It's an opportunity, from our perspective, to really be honouring the farmers who really drive our economy," she said. 🌱



Carly Packham was selected to perform the ceremonial first furrow that kicked off the International Plowing Match. ~ Luke Edwards photo





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IPM celebrates the ‘heart and soul’ of the province

Dignitaries come together to offer their support to rural Ontario

By Luke Edwards

Aside from the colours of their respective tractors as Ontario’s political party leaders took part in the VIP plowing match, politicians kept things as non-partisan as possible for the kickoff of the International Plowing Match. Instead, they said they wanted opening day and the event itself to be a tribute to the hardworking farmers that put food on our tables.

An opening parade and speeches signalled the start of the five-day event that was being held last month in Niagara for the first time in nearly a century. During opening speeches politicians thanked farmers, rural Ontarians and the volunteers and sponsors who helped make IPM 2025 possible.

“Rural Ontario is the heart and soul of our great province,” Premier Doug Ford told the crowd.

There were some political messages sent during the parade and opening ceremonies. Signs opposing Bill 5 could be seen.

NDP leader and leader of the official opposition Marit Stiles also made reference to fears of loss of

farmland and agricultural opportunity.

“(It’s a) life that sometimes feels threatened,” she said.

However, for the most part they struck a cordial tone, saying everyone at Queen’s Park wants to support farmers.

“Ontario is blessed with the best farmers in the world and some of the best farmland in the world,” said Green Party leader Mike Schreiner.

Jeff Harrison, chair of the Grain Farmers of Ontario, expressed his thanks to the dignitaries and audience.

“This shows that agriculture matters to all of you,” he said, adding the plowing match is “not just our heritage, it’s our future.”

Renate McGillivray, chair of the local organizing committee, said the match was a chance to “showcase the beautiful townships and wonderful people” that make up rural Niagara.

“Witness the beauty, value and innovation that agriculture has to offer,” she said.

Following the parade and opening speeches, the party leaders went out to the fields to take part in the traditional VIP plowing match. With tractors matching the party colours - the premier in a blue New Holland, Stiles in an orange Kubo-

ta, Liberal MPP Ted Hsu in a red Case, and Schreiner in John Deere green - they took turns making a couple passes at a field near the West Niagara fairgrounds.

Melvin Switzer, president of the Ontario Plowman’s Association,

admitted there may have been one mistake made in bringing the IPM to Niagara in 2025.

“It’s been 99 years since it was on the Niagara Peninsula, and I hope we don’t have to wait another 99 years,” he said. 🌱



The Lincoln and Welland Regiment led the opening parade for the International Plowing Match into the West Niagara Fairgrounds. ~ Luke Edwards photos



Outgoing Queen of the Furrow Taylor Legge greets the crowd at IPM 2025.



Provincial politicians take the day off from debate at Queen’s Park to participate in the opening day of IPM 2025, including Premier Doug Ford.

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While it was a jovial opening parade, there were some political messages shared during the first day of IPM 2025.



The Canadian Cowgirls were waving the maple leaf as they entered the fairgrounds.



Premier Doug Ford takes part in the traditional VIP plowing.



NDP's Marit Styles, leader of the opposition at Queen's Park, plows a few furrows as supporters cheer her on.



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Logging a lot of hours at IPM 2025

**Beamsville's Brayden Holubowsky
part of the Great Canadian
Lumberjacks show**

By Luke Edwards

With a snap, Brayden Holubowsky was suddenly holding an axe handle and nothing else, the business end of the lumberjack tool having fallen to the ground.

"That wasn't part of the show," the Beamsville native said, with a laugh, following one of the Great Canadian Lumberjack shows held at the International Plowing Match in Grassie last month.

The lumberjacks were a popular draw throughout the week, running regular shows that offered a fun glimpse into the world of competitive lumberjacking as well as the grueling job it once was before the advancement of power tools.

Holubowsky, who runs Rope N' Wrangle Tree Services, was excited to join the Great Canadian Lumberjacks for the IPM shows for a few reasons. For starters it was right in his own backyard.

But it also brought him back to his own competitive lumberjacking days. While attending Fleming College in Kawartha Lakes, Holubowsky and a couple friends joined the school's lumberjacking team.

It took them around the country competing in a sport that has a devoted following further north where lumberjacking has a more entrenched history.

"After that I just fell in love with it, it's such a unique sport," he said.

The IPM show focused more on fun than competition. With some hijinks sprinkled in, the show highlighted the basic process of lumberjacking in the old days, from using notches and springboards to prep a standing tree, to the underhand chop and teams of two employing a crosscut saw.



Beamsville's Brayden Holubowsky was one of the Great Canadian Lumberjacks who performed regular lumberjacking shows at the International Plowing Match in Niagara last month. ~ Luke Edwards photos

Lumberjacks also raced up a pole to see who could climb the quickest or risked getting wet on the log rolling competitions.

Power tools weren't strictly forbidden either, as competitors busted out a few chainsaws to showcase the difference between manpower and horsepower or to create a chainsaw piece of art.

Holubowsky said it was a fun time, and the audiences seemed to enjoy it.

"It's a really good time, and a good group of people," he said.

He said he hoped the lumberjack shows helped raise awareness about the sport of competitive lumberjacking. Though fun, he re-

membered the training back at Fleming College as being rather gruelling.

Between his college days and his current job, Holubowsky said he's pretty good at the underhand chop and the pole climbing. However the show also introduced him to an event he hadn't much experience with before.

"I'd say I'm better at underhand, but this was my first ever springboard and I really liked it," he said.

Overall, the IPM and the earlier West Niagara Fair were great events, he said, that brought people out to witness the beauty of the area.

"It's just been bringing so much stuff to Smithville and the surrounding area," he said. 🌿



The Great Canadian Lumberjacks routinely drew big crowds for their shows at last month's International Plowing Match.

IPM beautification contest winners announced

By Ann Marie Chechalk

The International Plowing match was in Niagara. Taking place Sept. 16-20 in Grassie at the West Niagara Fairgrounds and surrounding farms, it was the first time it had been in the area in nearly 100 years.

The beautification contest encouraged the best roadside garden displays. Different categories, including residential, farm/rural, big bale, townships, business/commercial, school/church/senior residence and 4-H participant were judged by two astute people.

Top placements each earned one of three cash prizes, first place got \$300, second place got \$200, and third place got \$100. Judges looked for use of sign that promoted the IPM, use of theme colours, green and purple, originality, cohesiveness of design and curb appeal.

Here are the results

- Church - First, Smithville Presbyterian.
- 4-H - First, Benjamin Chechalk; second, Paige Hanes; third, the Kelly family.
- Business or Commercial - First, Lowden's Feed and Supply; second, Ag and Turf Power Service; third, Oneida New Holland.

- Township Contest - First, Township of West Lincoln; second, Town of Grimsby.
- Big Bales - First, Chausser's Farm; second, Vaughan Farms.
- Residential - First, Tony Oudshoorn; second, Kevin Brain; third, Kathy Whybourne.
- Farm or Rural - First, Scott Duff; second, Robyn Marshall; third, Loretta Shields.
- This IPM event was sponsored by Flow-erful Canada and Flowers Canada Grow-ers. 🌿



Chausser's farm placed first in the big bale category. ~ Ann Marie Chechalk photos



Benjamin Chechalk placed first in the 4-H category for the IPM's beautification contest.

A rare feat as three generations compete at the same IPM

By Luke Edwards

As a sophomore competitive plowman, Keith Marcy was fortunate to have some more experienced competitors he could call on for help at the International Plowing Match last month, such as his son Jonathan or 13-year-old grandson Holt.

While a passion for competitive plowing is often passed down from generation to generation over the years, the Marcy family achieved a rare feat last month, with three generations all competing in the same IPM. And the journey to get there was somewhat surprising.

"Jonathan started to plow competitively first, and then when Holt was 10 he started. And I was the (last to start). This is only my second year," said Keith.

While he may have been one of the older people to take up competitive plowing, the Burford man has no shortage of experience, having plowed all his life as a farmer who grows primarily strawberries.

Jonathan was the first of the three to get into the sport, with his own grandfather signing him up for the local match when he was around 10 years old. He then plowed competitively until he went away to college before resuming around five years ago.

They've had some success at the IPM. Jonathan won his class last year and followed that up with another win this year in Class 6,

Group 4 - Antique tractor, one-fur-row mounted plow.

Holt, meanwhile, was reserve champion in Class 6, Group 5 - Antique tractor, mounted or drag plows for youth 10-21 years old.

But for Holt, success at their local matches or even at IPM takes a backseat to one of his favourite parts of plowing.

"Well, I get to go against my dad," he said with a smile.

Keith said he should have started competing earlier in life, calling it a nice diversion from the daily chores.

"I always enjoyed plowing," he said.

However, the sport has become such a strong family tradition that when the Marcys get together for a family event there are usually a couple tractors and plows that make an appearance and they have their own little plowing match.

Conditions at the Niagara match were challenging due in part to the severely dry summer we had, but also to the clay soil. Jonathan said it tested the plowmen's perseverance and attention to detail. It also tested their patience, Keith added.

They were prepared for the challenging conditions, though. Keith has a friend who farms in nearby Haldimand with its similarly tough soil.

"He always said that's what separates the men from the boys in farming," Keith said.



Keith, Holt and Jonathan Marcy all competed at last month's International Plowing Match. ~ Luke Edwards photo

At the end of the day, Jonathan said competitive plowing is really a competition against yourself.

"You always want to beat your competitor but you're really just trying to beat what you did yesterday," he said.

"Learn from your mistakes yesterday and get a little bit better."

It's also a sport with great camaraderie, Keith said. For instance, in Niagara he needed some weights to help dig into the hard ground.

"And all the way here I'm wondering how I'm going to lift these weights on," he said. But as he arrived in the tractor park a competitor parked next to him quickly offered a helping hand.

"That's the nice part of it. Like in every sport there are people who are really competitive. But generally from what I've seen, it's a very congenial atmosphere."

Jonathan agreed.

"Everyone's very competitive until there's a breakdown or a problem, and then most people come and help," he said.

Even as the trio of Marcy men wrapped up their plowing, there was another member of the family waiting her turn atop the tractor. Jonathan's daughter Avery was set to compete in Saturday's junior plowing competition. 🌿

‘It’s 30 seconds of aggression’: IPM grape stomp highlights uniqueness of Niagara agriculture

MPP Sam Oosterhoff and his Ontario caucus team wins first ever plowing match grape stomp

By Luke Edwards

One competition held at last month’s International Plowing Match in Niagara was a far cry from the usual.

Where plowing competitions require patience and attention to detail, the grape stomp held at the West Niagara Fairgrounds was nothing more than quick bursts of energy.

“It’s 30 seconds of pure aggression,” said Niagara West MPP Sam Oosterhoff, still dripping with grape juice after his team of Ontario PC caucus members took top prize in the IPM’s first ever grape stomp.

Oosterhoff’s team went up against competitors that included staff and councillors of West Lincoln, local fair and IPM volunteers, Queen of the Furrow Taylor Legge, and even outgoing Grape King Jeff Duc, who received some lighthearted jeers the following day at the Grape Growers of Ontario luncheon when it was revealed that his team didn’t come out on top.

It was all in good fun though, and offered a reminder of Niagara’s varied agricultural sector.

“It’s a good way to showcase some of what makes Niagara unique and obviously it’s a very ancient tradition,” said Oosterhoff.

“One of the best things about hosting it (IPM) in Niagara is to show the breadth and the depth of agribusiness, agriculture and agritourism. Niagara’s a real microsystem that’s unique.”



The Ontario PC caucus team led by Niagara West MPP won the first ever IPM grape stomp. ~ Luke Edwards photos

With around 200 commodity groups in Ontario’s ag sector, Oosterhoff said most, if not all, are represented in Niagara. From grains to dairy, hazelnuts to tender fruit, the MPP said Niagara has it all.

“And that’s a testament to the farmers, who are evolving and changing as market conditions are changing. And they are always doing so

with tenacity, with passion and ultimately with a caring heart for the community and the land they work for,” he said.

Whether the young MPP gives up on his political career for a future in competitive grape stomping remains to be seen. Oosterhoff joked that he’d have to talk to his agent and see what the scouts say first. 🍇



The pressure was on Jeff Duc as the reigning grape king participated in the IPM grape stomp.



Competitors got messy as they stomped the grape juice.

No Canadian Triple Crown as Runaway Again wins Prince of Wales Stakes

By Niagara Farms Staff

A surprise horse ran away with the 90th Prince of Wales Stakes, ending Mansetti's bid for a Canadian Triple Crown.

Jockey Ryan Munger rode Runaway Again to victory at the early September race in Fort Erie. Marking the second leg of the Canadian Triple Crown, Runaway Again came in with the second longest odds in the field.

"He's a quirky horse," said winning jockey Munger after the race. "You can't bully him. He doesn't like to be told what to do, so you have to kind of treat him like your wife or your girlfriend. You have to be very, very nice to him, and he'll be nice back to you."

After winning the King's Plate earlier this year, Mansetti came in as the favourite and held a lead at the far turn. However, it couldn't hold off Runaway Again, passing the favourite to capture the win. Mansetti finished second ahead of Faber.

Runaway Again belongs to Stronach Stables, and was trained by Sid Attard.

Munger said he turned Runaway Again's inexperience - the Prince of Wales Stakes was the horse's third ever race - into an advantage.

"This horse, he's got no miles on him," said Munger. "So the other horses, they've maybe got some aches and pains, but ours was physically perfect."

It was also a successful day for jockey Sofia Vives, who took home back-to-back wins in the Ontario Sire Heritage Series Stakes races. Takemybourbonneat brought her first across



Runaway Again edges out the favourite, Mansetti, by half a length to win the 90th Prince of Wales Stakes at Fort Erie Race Track. ~ Michael Burns Photography photo

the finish line in the Rondeau Bay Stakes for owner ICON Racing Stables and trainer Anthony Adamo, followed by a win with Go Kart Mozart in the Lake Erie Stakes for trainer Robert Tiller and owner Frank Di Giulio.

The 2025 racing season in Fort Erie wraps up later this month, with racing continuing until Oct. 21. For more information visit FortErieRacing.com. 🌱

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🌿 AT THE MARKET 🌿

Country Crust shows the versatility of sourdough

By Luke Edwards

If at first you don't succeed, bake, bake again. That's how Bev Klassen turned a desire to eat healthier into a home business, with Country Crust Sourdough. Featuring a wide variety of breads and pastries using all sourdough, Klassen made her market debut this year in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

"I love talking to people and love supporting local," she said.

Years ago the Willoughby woman was having some health issues and decided to look at her diet. She wanted to eat a little better and created her own sourdough starter.

"I had made a starter but I didn't understand how that worked because there really was no information online back then. So my first loaf was literally like a hard rock of a pancake," she recalled with a laugh.

"Once I understood and it was explained to me better it started turning out better."

As her skills improved, friends and family began asking for her sourdoughs. About two years ago she began selling her bread.

Now she has quite a menu, from classic loaves to pizza crusts, scones, cookies and more.

Once she had the base knowledge and understanding of how the fermentation process worked, Klassen said she could begin experimenting. Her personal favourites are the focaccia sourdough and the cookies, but her family is always asking for extra scones.

She uses organic flour and as many organic ingredients as possible, and likes to incorporate produce from her fellow market vendors.

Klassen said the secret to a good sourdough comes down to four things.

"A good culture, time and practice and patience," she said.

With the NOTL market wrapping up for the season later this month, bread lovers will still be able to find Klassen's creations at Honeyfields or Cheese Secrets in Niagara-on-the-Lake, as well as Niagara Food Co. in St. Catharines.

Fans can follow Country Crust Sourdough on Facebook and Instagram.



Bev Klassen started Country Crust Sourdough a couple years ago and enjoyed her first year as a vendor at the Niagara-on-the-Lake market ~ Luke Edwards photo

To nominate a local vender for our monthly "AT THE MARKET" feature, contact Luke Edwards at luke@granthaven.com

Plenty of ways to preserve produce as autumn farmers markets arrive

By Michelle Seaborn

Summer officially ended on Monday, Sept. 22, but the farming season is still going strong. Every week we see new varieties of some of our favourite market produce. These late season produce last well with a bit of care.

Apples will last for months if lightly washed and stored in a cardboard box with a few sheets of newspaper between rows. The chemical that rotting food puts off is absorbed by the paper preventing the spoilage of the whole box of apples. Apples like so many other late-season produce like it cool and dark. Usually, a cool place in the basement, garage or garden shed will be suitable.

Squash of all shapes and sizes store well. Select squash that have no blemishes, blemish-

es only get bigger during storage. Squash does best when it is first cured which reduces the water content. Set the squash in a sunny place for 7 to 10 days right after harvest. Squash also likes a cool, dark place to overwinter. If the proper conditions are met, you can enjoy your squash for up to 4 months.

Other longer lasting crops have their own preferences for storage. Potatoes like a cool, dark place within a paper bag, whereas onions prefer room temperature in a well-ventilated container. Cruciferous vegetables such as cauliflower want to be in the refrigerator in a perforated bag but carrots prefer the refrigerator in a closed plastic bag. Too much to remember, just google your favourite vegetable and you'll get lots of great tips for storing your vegetables.

As we close out the Ontario growing season, expect to find a good supply of carrots, broccoli, cauliflower, corn, field tomatoes, cucumber and peppers, as well as potatoes, onions and a variety of squash. Apple, pears and plums will still be available, as well as ever bearing strawberries and raspberries.

Many local farmers' markets will close for the season between Thanksgiving and the end of October. You may still find your favourite market open year-round offering a variety of preserves, baked goods and breads, and carrying the many long-lasting vegetables and fruit.

Fall is a great time to get out and enjoy the fall colours and the incredible bounty that awaits you at your favourite farmers' market. 🌿

~ Michelle Seaborn is the Grimsby Farmers Market manager

Grand champion competitors show great class

By Ann Marie Chechalk

After a spring and summer of preparing for the show ring, 4-H Members from the Niagara Goat Club, Lincoln Dairy Club and the Niagara Poultry Club were well equipped for the grand champion showperson competition.

The event happens after each club's achievement day. The top showman from each club is the representative for this auspicious challenge. The winner of the competition would receive the trophy sponsored and created by Frankie's Goats, (Scott and Joanne Battersby and family) and Fine-Line Woodwork and Design Inc (Jeff and Tricia DeBoer and family). This trophy also accommodates the names of the winners from the past twenty-four years- two are missing due to the COVID-19 years: 2000 - Caroline Vaughan, dairy club; 2001 - April Grabell, beef club; 2002 - Laura McDougall, dairy club; 2003 - Justin Evans, dairy club; 2004 - Stephanie Forbes, mini horse club; 2005 - Nicole Famelos, mini horse club; 2006 - Katie Young, mini horse club; 2007 - Andrew Chechalk, goat club; 2008 - Janice Zijlstra, mini horse club; 2009 - Karen Booker, beef club; 2010 - Sophie Butler, mini horse club; 2011 - Andrew Chechalk, beef club; 2012 - Katie Chechalk, goat club; 2013 - Christine Armstrong, Lincoln dairy club; 2014 - Ashley Young, Lincoln dairy club; 2015 - Jonathan Dugdale, goat club; 2016 - Josiah Lodewyk, goat club; 2017 - Stacey Leppert, Lincoln dairy club; 2018 - Jessica Raffaele, Niagara mini horse club; 2019 - Ali Campigotto, Niagara beef club; 2023 - Morgan McGee, Niagara goat club; 2024 - Tyler Gilbert, Niagara cavy club.

To achieve the status of grand champion showman each member must show an animal from all the different clubs and be judged on a score out of 50 with a variety of judges. A member may only win this competition once showing the same breed of animal. Members may compete again showing a different breed.

With many anxious parents and siblings and 4-H leaders in the audience they began showing the goats, birds, and dairy calves.

The competition took place this year on Friday evening, Sept. 5 in the Richardson Building at the West Niagara Fair. Emily McGee from the goat club, Hadessah Lodewyk from the poultry club and Brad Jansema of the Lincoln dairy club were all pleased and excited to show off their showmanship skills.

After a very long day of showing in their achievement programs and then handling tired and strong willed animals the showmen were still in excellent form and tried their best with animals and ring procedures.

The results were tabulated while anxious parents, friends and competitors waited for the outcome. The grand champion showperson for 2025 must be congratulated for confidence in the show ring. Emily McGee was very pleased to accept the title and the trophy from Joanne Battersby.

"I really liked showing the poultry," said McGee.

"All competitors did an outstanding job. As well, all competitors scored incredibly well. All scores are kept secret and never revealed," said coordinator Jonathan Dugdale.

Equally impressive as the winning of the trophy was the good sportsmanship of the other members who smiled, and congratulated McGee on her win. A job well done! 🍀



Emily McGee was the Grand Champion Showperson at the West Niagara Fair. ~ Ann Marie Chechalk photos



Brad Jansema, Emily McGee and Hadessah Lodewyk competed for Grand Champion Showperson.

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McGees lead the way at goat club achievement day



Emily McGee and Liam Kelly placed first and second in the intermediate class of the 4-H Goat Club Achievement Day. Emily went on to represent the club in grand champion showmanship. ~ Ann Marie Chechalk photo

By Ann Marie Chechalk

On Friday, Sept. 5 members of the Niagara 4-H Goat Club were welcomed to the West Niagara Fair for their achievement day. The weather was windy but sunny as the competitors prepared for their achievement day. A great crowd of parents, siblings and grandparents came out to cheer on these young people.

Judge Tanya Vickers of Caledon, a goat breeder, showman and judge was pleased to come to Niagara.

Judge Vickers made sure the novice, junior, intermediate and senior members knew the goat's breed and ages and that the members had been working with their goats all summer so that they were well trained for the show ring.

Vickers made the 4-H members work very hard before choosing the winners.

Members were asked to manoeuvre their animals from place to place and to change animals with each other. This ensured that the goats were used to being handled and not by just one person. Moving throughout the show ring she was watching to see who moved their animals smoothly, kept their eyes on the judge and set up their animal quickly and calmly.

The novice showmanship was very competitive as a group of very well trained goats and well-dressed showmen were ready for anything the judge would ask them. Gavin Vooys placed first and Aiden Vooys placed second.

In junior showmanship, members were nervous but very attentive to the judge. Placing first was Jack Kelly and second was Zhianna Bacon.

In intermediate showmanship the smooth and calm skills of Emily McGee earned a first place ribbon and Liam Kelly was second.

Morgan McGee placed first in the seniors.

Returning to the show ring the top winners of each class competed for rosettes and the honour of being grand champion goat showperson at the achievement program. Morgan had previously won the title of grand champion showperson so the reserve champion Emily McGee would go on to represent the goat club for grand champion showman later in the evening.

Thanks go out to all the parents, and families that encouraged the young showmen and to the West Niagara Fair for sponsoring the classes. 🍀

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Grape king throne heads west, as Tawse vineyard manager receives honour

Augusta Van Muyen installed as 2025-2026 grape king

By Luke Edwards

Her name is reminiscent of Roman emperors, but Augusta Van Muyen is more than thrilled to simply be the king.

The vineyard manager at Tawse Winery was all smiles as she was named the newest grape king last month by the Grape Growers of Ontario. Van Muyen is relatively new to the Niagara wine scene, having cut her teeth in Prince Edward County.

“To be recognized and honoured and be given a voice in our industry is huge,” she said shortly after being installed as grape king in an event at the winery following the GGO celebrity luncheon.

“Agriculture is so important to Ontario and Canada and the more we know about it the more we talk about it, the more people know about the opportunities.”

Van Muyen’s family had a welding company in Prince Edward County, and it was through that business that the young Van Muyen was first introduced to grape growing. As the county began planting vines, Van Muyen said the growers needed ploughs and other equipment that her family’s company could provide.

At 13 she began working at Norman Hardie Winery and Vineyard, where she soon fell in love with the world of grape growing.

“Just being outside every day and having a passion for the land and watching things grow, I think, is the best part of the day,” she said.

With supporters like Kimball Lacey, her passion and understanding of grape growing quickly grew. Van Muyen studied at both Brock University and Niagara College, the latter of which opened a door to Tawse, where she worked in 2009 and 2010.

Following that short stint at Tawse, Van Muyen went abroad, working in Germany’s Rhine-Hessen region before returning to Canada to work in the Annapolis Valley of Nova Scotia.



GGO chair Matthias Oppenlaender offers a toast to new grape king Augusta Van Muyen following her installation last month. ~ Luke Edwards photos

tia. She returned to Tawse in 2013 and became vineyard manager in 2021.

One of her priorities as vineyard manager is sustainability, and leaving the land better than she found it. Tawse practices organic growing, avoiding synthetic fertilizers, insecticides or pesticides. It requires constant attention, something Van Muyen is happy to provide.

“There’s nothing better than walking through the farm on a gorgeous sunny morning – the birds are singing, the bugs are out, everything feels alive and vibrant,” she said.

Van Muyen is a member of the GGO’s Next Generation Committee and is on the board of directors of Farm and Food Care Ontario.

Lincoln Mayor Sandra Easton congratulated Van Muyen at the installation event,

“We’re proud of you as a community,” she said. “And we’re proud of you to add your name to the other women (who have been named grape king).”

Van Muyen is the fourth woman to become grape king since the tradition began back in

1956. She also brings the title to West Niagara, ending a run of five consecutive Niagara-on-the-Lake kings. She’ll be taking over from Jeff Duc, whose reign as grape king ended with Van Muyen’s installation.

“Augusta has accomplished an enormous amount in her time as vineyard manager at Tawse. She is the fourth female grape king to be honoured, and her knowledge of grape growing is the perfect blend for our industry’s ambassador,” said GGO chair Matthias Oppenlaender.

As grape king, she’ll spend the next year participating in events and promoting the province’s grape growers and winemakers. She said she wasn’t sure what to expect, but was looking forward to the opportunity to lend her voice to build on the increasing awareness of the importance of Ontario’s grape and wine sector.

“We’re getting better at talking about what we do, but there’s always room to grow,” she said. 🍇



Augusta Van Muyen, vineyard manager at Tawse Winery, will spend the next year representing Ontario’s grape growers and winemakers as the 2025-2026 grape king.

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Being the best in the world, and the best for the world

Grape Growers of Ontario celebrity luncheon features a heavy dose of maple flavoured patriotism

By Luke Edwards

A lot of Canadian sports fans remember where they were on Feb. 14, 2014 as Canada's Olympic hockey teams competed in their respective gold medal games at the Sochi Olympics.

While watching the women's game they would have seen hockey legend Hayley Wickenheiser competing in what would be her final Olympic appearance. But as the Canadians stared down a 2-0 deficit to their rival American counterparts late in the third period, Wickenheiser's mind was somewhere else.

In fact, it was on the other side of the world, atop Apex Mountain in Penticton, B.C. Months earlier, as the team wrapped up a gruelling 50-day training session, their final task was to make the climb to the top of Apex using a collection of ratty old mountain bikes.

With only a few minutes of game time left in the gold medal game, Wickenheiser realized one thing: This was their Apex mountain.

And like they did months before, the team rallied and answered the call. First, a bit of a lucky goal credited to Brianne Jenner. Then, with less than a minute left, Marie-Philip Poulin tied it up.

In overtime, goalie Shannon Szabados stood on her head, keeping the Canadians alive until Poulin once again found the back of the net, defeating the Americans 3-2.

"Sometimes you've got to trust your teammates," she told the audience at the Grape Growers of Ontario celebrity luncheon last month as she recalled the gold medal game.

Even for Wickenheiser, who'd been through battle after battle with the maple leaf on her back, she had to remind herself of simple lessons in the heat of the game.

"Take a breath, do your job, because everyone else is," she remembered thinking.

Though she called the opportunity to wear the maple leaf on the Olympic stage the honour of her life, it isn't just Canada's hockey prowess



Hayley Wickenheiser was the celebrity guest speaker at the Grape Growers of Ontario luncheon last month. ~ Luke Edwards photos

that makes her proud of the Great White North. As her hockey playing life drew to a close, Wickenheiser took up another of her passions: medicine. She entered medical school at 38 years old, walking into a modern class where everyone else pulled out their laptop to follow the lecture and take notes.

"And I have a notebook and pencil," she said. "I had to learn how to learn again."

A few years later as her medical career was beginning, COVID-19 arrived. Wickenheiser was working when one of the first cases in Canada came into hospital. Once again, the spirit of teamwork took over, with Wickenheiser being asked to get PPE for the staff who were going to care for the patient.

As the pandemic took hold, PPE became impossible to find. Wickenheiser put out a call

on social media, which somehow came across the feed of Canadian actor Ryan Reynolds, who offered to amplify the message. All of a sudden, Wickenheiser was helping to lead a group called Conquer COVID-19 that in short order raised \$2.25 million to purchase PPE for healthcare workers.

It was around that time she learned a lesson that couldn't be taught on the rink.

"It's one thing to be the best in the world, but it's another thing to be the best for the world," she said.

And with a wine fridge at home stocked with Canadian wine - a declaration that received a warm welcome from the crowd - Wickenheiser urged those in attendance to not just strive to be the best grape growers and winemakers in the world, but to do their best for the world. 🍷



Outgoing grape king Jeff Duc shares some thoughts at the luncheon.



Following her presentation, Wickenheiser posed for pictures and signed autographs for fans.

Submit your story ideas to:
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Lincoln shines at inter-county dairy show

By Ann Marie Chechalk

The 4-H inter-county dairy show is an annual event, first started at the Lincoln County Fair many years ago.

The amalgamation of the two fairs, Lincoln and Smithville, saw the inter-county show take place at the West Niagara Fair grounds in the warmth and comfort of the Richardson Building away from the traditional rain on this day. The day, Saturday, Sept. 5, showed up with great weather.

To start, the showmen escort their calves in to the showing, to be judged by Mr. Ian Mathers of Consecon, Ont.

Under his watchful eye, Judge Mathers welcomed clubs from Haldimand, Lincoln, and Wainfleet. 4-H members came with their calves to compete in conformation, showmanship and herdsman classes. These finely dressed showmen, with their groomed calves, put a lot of hard work into the training of their project calves over the spring and summer. There were 50 4-H members participating in the show along with 11 pee wee participants.

Novices of nine to 11 years of age enter the showing first. Calmly and capably they walk their well-groomed animals all the while keeping an eye on the judge. The top first and second place showmen - Juliet Van Wely and Adrian Sikking, of the Lincoln Calf Club - will return to compete for grand champion showperson later in the show. Mathers commended the way the showman in first had the most control of her calf and set her calf up quickly.

"The showman in second had her calf set up correctly every time I looked over," Mathers said.



A group of four calves won by the Lincoln Dairy Club and sponsored by the Romagnoli family. ~ Ann Marie Chechalk photos

Next the juniors from 12 to 14 years of age bring their animals into the ring. Kaylee Hart of the Lincoln Calf Club places first and Sadie Morgan, also of Lincoln, places second.

"The first place showman," said the judge, "had good control of her calf and you could tell she had spent a lot of time working with this calf to prepare for the shows. The second place showman gets the feet and legs set up well."

They now get a short break to relax as the intermediate members from 15 to 17 enter the show ring.

The top first and second place intermediate showmen Kate Kemper of Lincoln and Allison Heastony of Haldimand will return to compete for grand champion showperson.

"The first place showman got her heifer set up quickly and correctly. The showman in second place also set up well with good control," the judge declares.

The next group of members 18 to 21 years of age have spent many years in 4-H honing their showing skills and learning to calm their nerves and their calves while doing the best job possible before the attentive judge. Mathers takes his time as he must choose the top two from an outstanding group of 4-H showmen. He selects Brad Jansema of the Lincoln Calf Club as he is calm, smooth and comfortable in the ring. Kevin Angle of the Wainfleet Dairy Club is also relaxed in the show ring. These showmen will also return for the last showmanship class of grand champion.

The eight competitors enter the show ring once again. All calves are being led slowly, all eyes are on the judge. Mathers chooses junior showperson Kaylee Hart as the 2025 grand champion showperson and senior showperson Brad Jansema receives the honour of reserve champion showperson.

"Our top showman is calm and composed," says the judge, "she is paying attention and has her animal set up correctly."

Grassie's John McDougall and family sponsored the award for this deserving showman.

Although the next classes are conformation classes and the judge is now looking at the calves and not the showman, a skilled showperson sets his calf up so the judge can see to their best advantage all the conforming qualities of a well grown animal.

The first and second place winners of the spring heifer calf class born between March 1 and May 31, 2025 are Adrian Sikking with Braejan British Marshmallow who had style and strength in the front end, and Charlotte Cousineau with Astra Mile Lady Whistledown.

The first and second place winners of the winter heifer calf class, born between Dec. 1, 2024 and

Feb. 28, 2025 are Chloe Mous-Hili with Radomere Duran Recharge who had style and width overall and Brookelyn Eggink with Spiro Valiant Dropbox Crime.

The first and second place winners of the fall heifer class, born between Sept. 1, 2024 and Nov. 30, 2024 were Brad Jansema with Braejan Master Rozanna who had style and overall length and Jaela Smith with London Major Luck.

The first and second place winners of the summer yearling born between June 1, 2024 and Aug. 31, 2024 were Kevin Angle with Brookturn Eye Candy who carried herself more stylishly and Emily Knutt with Feederlane Bullseye Titanic.

The first and second place winners of the spring yearling born between March 1, 2024 and May 31, 2024 were Jared Schuurman with Mindview Lamda Lavender with power and dairy strength and Emma Smith with Mapletier Cheerful Royal.

The first and second place winners from each class then return to the showing.

The Grand Champion Calf is "to be commended for her dairy strength and straightness in the hind legs and depth of flank," said the judge. The grand champion calf for today will be Chloe Mous-Hili with Radomere Duran Recharge and the reserve champion calf will be Brookelyn Eggink with Spiro Valiant Dropbox Crime.

Freurehaven Farms of Wellandport sponsored the prize to the winning calf.

The best group of four calves and the Romagnoli family prizes are taken home by the Lincoln Dairy Club.

In the herdsman competition the first place winner is the Wainfleet Club. They receive a cash prize from the West Niagara Agricultural Society. 🌱



Novice showmen at the 4-H inter-county show held at the West Niagara Fair were Juliet Van Wely and Adrian Sikking.

‘I wish I would have done it sooner’: AALP participants tour Niagara

By Luke Edwards

It took some convincing to get Paige Handsor to sign up for the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program. But after the first week of activities in and around Niagara she quickly discovered she'll soon be the one convincing others.

“I wish I would have done it sooner,” she said. “Anyone who’s looking to step up in their career, it’s a great program.”

Offered through the Rural Ontario Institute, AALP invites those in the agriculture and food industry to take part. It offers an experiential learning style that’s tailored to each cohort’s background, experience and goals.

Handsor is a sixth-generation farmer from Wallaceburg who also works in land sales with a focus on agriculture.

“For years I’ve been told to take AALP,” she admitted. Finally she followed the advice and was accepted into Class 20, which held its first of six site tours in Niagara early last month.

While in the region, the group took part in several seminars that mainly focused on introspection and getting to the core of what their own strengths and weaknesses are.

It then wrapped up with a day of tours to ag sites across Niagara. They stopped in at Kai Wiens peach farm in Niagara-on-the-Lake where son Dylan is an AALP grad. They also toured Niagara College’s Food and Beverage Innovation Centre, its Horticultural and Environmental Science Innovation Centre, and the Wine Visitor and Education Centre.

From there they went to the Vineland Growers Cooperative in Jordan Station, where they heard from the Niagara Region’s Matthew McGinty and Sean Norman about some regional agricultural projects before Vineland Growers president Michael Ecker gave them a tour of the site.

Handsor said the visit to Niagara was eye opening and invigorating. And being around a group of like-minded people is inspiring.

It didn’t take long for the group to gel either, which could be surprising since it was a collection of strangers from all over the province thrown together.

For Liam van Steekelenburg, even though he was staying right at home for the first session the week was still valuable. Having taken on more leadership roles at CosMic Plants, which his dad Mike and uncle Neil founded, the younger van Steekelenburg got to be host for the Niagara leg.

“It’s already had a meaningful impact for me,” he said.

Some of the introspective work, which included both self reviews and having colleague evaluations, really opened his eyes, he said.

One of his biggest lessons in the first few days was about confidence.

“Being confident and feeling confident is not the same thing,” he said.

Van Steekelenburg agreed that the group quickly formed a close bond.

“We go really comfortable (with each other) really fast,” he said.

The AALP curriculum will take students on around 45 days of in-session programming along with various virtual activities. The study tours will take them across Ontario and even international. Study topics include govern-

ment and political systems, national and international trade, communication and organization skills, self-awareness and interrelationships, negotiation and problem solving, consumers and

social license, media relations, agri-food trends, globalization and the dynamics of change.

For more information on the program, visit ruralontarioinstitute.ca/aalp.



Liam van Steekelenburg and Paige Handsor were two of the participants in the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program when the newest cohort toured Niagara last month. ~ Luke Edwards photo



Michael Ecker, president of the Vineland Growers Cooperative, gives AALP participants a presentation on the history of his organization.

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Fair kicks off busy month at West Niagara Agricultural Centre

By Luke Edwards

There were chickens and goats and cows, oh my.

As Rachel and Gage Etherington, along with Aubrey Jarvis, held a tiny chick, they thought about all the things they were going to see and do at the West Niagara Fair. The young birds are usually a big attraction.

“They’re so cute,” said young Aubrey, who in addition to seeing all the animals was eager to check out the rides at the midway as the West Niagara Fair came to Grassie early last month.

The annual tradition came just days before the fairgrounds were set to become the hub of the International Plowing Match.

Animals were a big draw for many. Emily Olvic brought daughter Petra to the fair and were making their way through the Richardson building when Petra stopped to feed a sheep some hay.

“We try to get here every year,” said mom. “I like to see the 4-H shows, especially the dairy.”

Outside of the animals and midway, there was plenty else to see and do, including tractor pulls, farmers olympics, demolition derbies, music and more. 🍃



Children enjoy the thrill of one of the midway rides at the West Niagara Fair. ~ Luke Edwards photos



Jayce Bressette, from St. Catharines, finished third in his age group for the doughnut eating competition.



Kylie and Owen Jacobi, from Wellandport, likely hadn’t seen a tricycle as big as the John Deere device they found at the fair.



Rachel (left) and Gage (right) Etherington, with Aubrey Jarvis (middle) get up close with a young chick.



The West Niagara Fair is a big event for many 4-Hers.



Petra Olvic offers up some hay to a sheep.



The horse ring was busy with activity during the Saturday of the West Niagara Fair.



Maddie and Donna Cluney visit with one of the goats at the West Niagara Fair.



A goat welcomes visitors to the West Niagara Fair.

First year in the books for Niagara’s 4-H poultry club

This was the first year for Niagara 4-H to have a poultry club. Led by Jessica Rooker and Kristen Leppert, members learned how to care for a bird, how to wash and show a bird and how to cook with eggs.

A much diversified club, “it was a lot of fun and I really like chickens,” shared Carson Van Marrum.

Dressed very elegantly in their white lab coats at the club’s achievement day, Judge John Beamer, APA and ABA recognized asked each member individually to come onto the stage with their bird. He watched how they handled their bird, its cleanliness and asked the members questions on body parts and breed specifics.

Coming back onto the stage to choose a winner was Haven Stec and Hadessah Lodewyk. Choosing Lodewyk as champion sent her on to the grand champion showmanship competition later in the evening to compete against other winners of the many livestock clubs. 🌿



Carson VanMarrum with his bird. ~ Ann Marie Chechalk photos



The Niagara 4-H Poultry Club at their achievement day.

A good thing growing in Wainfleet

By Luke Edwards

It may have been a day off school, but for hundreds of kids in Wainfleet last month it was a chance to learn important lessons outside the classroom.

The return of the Wainfleet Fall Fair saw three days of fun and agriculture in the heart of the village. As usual, Friday was a day for the school kids, though with it being a PA day for some schools, organizers offered free admission to families for a portion of the day.

“We really promote the schoolkids coming,” said Sharon Svob, a member of the Wainfleet Agricultural Society.

This year’s theme was “We’ve got a good thing growing” and exhibitors didn’t disappoint. From giant pump-

kins to adorable young farm animals, there was plenty to see and do.

While Svob said her favourite part was touring the arena to see all the exhibitors with their award-winning produce and homecrafts, for others it may have been the demolition derby, car and truck show or ATV mud bog.

Svob said it’s the fantastic community support that makes the fair a success each year. The society puts in a lot of work, but Svob pointed out there were also dozens of high school students volunteering during the fair, as well as support from local businesses like Minor Bros. and community groups like the Niagara Antique Power Association.

The fair also featured poultry, cattle and goat shows, as well as a Saturday morning pancake breakfast. 🌿



Sariah Saunders, Valentina Stirpe and Kelsey Sidey get up close and personal with a young chick at the Wainfleet Fall Fair. ~ Luke Edwards photos



Mattia Stirpe heads off on a tour courtesy of the Niagara Antique Power Association.



Graeme and Finley Bissett were wowed by the giant pumpkins on display.

A ‘hoppy’ day for rabbit club achievement day winners

By Ann Marie Chechalk

The members of the Niagara 4-H Rabbit and Cavy Club joined together to show their projects at the West Niagara Fair on Friday, Sept 5. With some nerves they came onto the stage in the Livestock building to show their skills in front of the judge Andrew Chechalk and many parents and fairgoers in the audience.

Each member owned a different breed of rabbit and Evelyn Green showed off her guinea pig as a novice member. Showing a rabbit depends on a lot of patience on the part of the showman and the rabbit. Leader Lori Mann suggested “that the larger breed of rabbit are a little easier to handle and to show.”

Training your animal and learning the steps of showmanship were learned at 4-H meetings and practiced at home. Coming down to two experienced showmen, the judge asked Morrigan Mason and Lily Wiley both to show one more time to conclude the winner. Wiley placed first for being very confident at showing and handling her rabbit. ‘Curious’ also placed first in the confirmation class being a little older than the others and well matching the breed specific. 🌱



Members of the Niagara 4-H Rabbit and Cavy Club held their achievement day at the West Niagara Fair last month. ~ Ann Marie Chechalk photo

Provincial and federal governments providing \$4.77M for 48 research projects

Intake for commercialization stream of OAFRI is open through end of October

By Luke Edwards

The announcement of \$4.77 million in support for 48 research and innovation projects is being billed as one way the provincial and federal governments are helping Canada’s agriculture sector weather the ongoing U.S. tariff war.

A press release from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada said the 48 projects, including support for 20 companies, will come through the Ontario Agri-Food Research Initiative (OAFRI). The funding is part of the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership and will help farmers and agribusinesses adopt new technologies and advance commercialization in the face of economic uncertainty.

“It takes innovation to build a successful agri-food sector in Ontario and across the country. By investing in companies that bring

forward bold ideas and practical solutions, we’re helping the sector seize new opportunities and stay competitive and resilient,” said Federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Heath MacDonald in the press release.

OAFRI funding comes in five streams, with intake for the commercialization stream now open and remaining available until the end of October.

One of the projects being supported will see work conducted on new growing strategies to boost grape yield, quality and food safety for Ontario table grapes.

Other projects include work on robotics and AI.

“We want to ensure Ontario’s farmers and agribusinesses have access to the latest technology and innovative solutions to grow and strengthen their businesses. Through OAFRI, we are helping them prepare for the future, take advantage of new opportunities and stay competitive and resilient in the face of economic uncertainty,” said Trevor Jones, Ontario’s



One of the projects supported through OAFRI is research aimed at improving yield, quality and food safety for Ontario grown table grapes. ~ Farmphotos.ca photo

minister of agriculture, food and agribusiness.

An additional 20 new companies have also joined the Grow Ontario Accelerator Hub, which helps Ontario companies grow and bring their innovations to market.

While the hub is fully subscribed for the 2025-2026 year, applica-

tions are being accepted for OAFRI’s commercialization stream. The intake remains open until Oct. 30, with the results expected to be announced over the winter.

For more details on eligibility and how to apply, visit bioenterprise.ca/programs/oafri. 🌱



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Pump up your fall meals with these ‘gourd’ recipes

While some will be used as a canvas to create fun and spooky Halloween decorations, many of the pumpkins now coming off the fields will be turned into pies and other treats.

The pumpkin pie may be a Thanksgiving staple, but there are plenty of other ways to enjoy the classic orange squash. Here are a couple, courtesy our friends at Foodland Ontario.



Pumpkin ravioli

Ingredients

- 1 cup (250 mL) Ontario pumpkin purée
- 1 tbsp (15 mL) butter, cut into tiny pieces
- 1-1/2 tsp (7 mL) cornmeal
- 1 tsp (5 mL) crumbled dried sage
- 1/2 tsp (2 mL) dried thyme
- Salt and pepper
- 36 won ton wrappers
- 1 Ontario egg, beaten
- 1/4 cup (50 mL) butter, melted
- 2 tbsp (25 mL) chopped fresh Ontario parsley
- Freshly grated Parmesan cheese

Instructions

In a medium bowl, combine pumpkin purée, butter, cornmeal, sage, thyme, salt, and pepper to taste. Working with 6 wrappers at a time, brush edges lightly with egg. Place 1 heaping teaspoon (5 mL) of pumpkin mixture in the centre of each. Fold over into triangle and press the edges to seal well. Place on a baking sheet and cover with damp tea towel; repeat with remaining filling and wrappers.

In a large pot of boiling water, cook the ravioli in 4 batches, until tender, about 4 to 5 minutes per batch. Remove with a slotted spoon; gently toss with butter and parsley. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese and serve immediately.



Chicken and pumpkin rendang

Ingredients

Curry paste:

- 3 cloves Ontario garlic
- 1 large Ontario shallot
- 1 piece (1-inch/2.5 cm) gingerroot, peeled
- 1 small Ontario jalapeño pepper, seeds removed
- 1-1/2 tsp (7 mL) each ground turmeric and coriander
- 1/2 tsp (2 mL) ground cumin
- 1-1/2 tbsp (22 mL) coconut milk

Rendang:

- 2 tbsp (25 mL) vegetable oil
- 2 star anise
- 1 cinnamon stick, broken in half
- 12 boneless skinless Ontario chicken thighs (about 2 lb/1 kg), cut in half
- 1 lb (500 g) Ontario pie pumpkin, peeled and cut into 1-inch (2 cm) pieces
- 1-1/2 cups (375 mL) coconut milk
- 1/4 cup (50 mL) fresh lime juice
- 2 tbsp (25 mL) packed brown sugar
- 2 Ontario green onions, thinly sliced
- 1/4 cup (50 mL) chopped fresh Ontario coriander leaves

Instructions

Curry paste: In small food processor, pulse together garlic, shallot and ginger until finely chopped. Add jalapeño pepper, turmeric, coriander, cumin and coconut milk; purée until mixture is smooth.

Rendang: In large deep skillet, heat oil over medium heat. Add star anise and cinnamon and cook, stirring for 2 minutes. Add chicken in batches and cook turning once, until browned, about 5 minutes per side. Remove chicken to plate.

Add curry paste to skillet and cook, stirring and scraping the bottom of skillet for 2 minutes. Add pumpkin and stir to coat. Stir in coconut milk and bring to simmer. Cook, uncovered, for 8 minutes.

Add chicken to skillet along with any accumulated juices and simmer uncovered for 25 minutes. The sauce will begin to reduce and pumpkin will soften and melt into sauce. Add lime juice and sugar and cook for 3 minutes. Remove and discard star anise and cinnamon. Garnish with green onions and coriander.



Pumpkin Pie with Cookie Crumb Crust

Ingredients

- 1-1/2 cups (375 mL) crushed digestive cookie crumbs (about 16 cookies)
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) butter, melted
- Freshly grated nutmeg
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) Ontario milk
- 1/2 cup (125 mL) 35% Ontario whipping cream
- 2 Ontario Eggs, lightly beaten
- 2/3 cup (150 mL) packed brown sugar
- 1-1/2 cups (375 mL) fresh Ontario pumpkin purée
- 1 tsp (5 mL) ground cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp (1 mL) each ground cloves, ginger and allspice
- 1 tsp (5 mL) salt
- Whipped cream to garnish (optional)

Instructions

Combine crumbs, butter and a few scrapes nutmeg; press firmly over bottom and up side of pie plate at least 8-3/4 inches (22 cm) round. Bake in 350°F (180°C) oven for 8 minutes. Cool on rack.

In saucepan, heat milk with cream just until bubbles form around edge of pan. Combine with eggs, brown sugar, pumpkin purée, cinnamon, cloves, ginger, allspice and salt. Gently pour into pie shell; bake in 450°F (230°C) oven for 10 minutes. Reduce heat to 350°F (180°C); cook for 25 minutes or until tip of knife inserted into centre comes out clean.

One small Ontario Pie Pumpkin weighing about 2-1/2 lb (1.25 kg) will yield about 3 cups (750 mL) purée, or enough for 2 pies.

Cut washed and seeded pumpkin into chunks and place in large pot with 2 inches (5 cm) water. Cover and steam over medium heat until tender, about 15 minutes, adding more water to maintain level if required. Let cool; drain well and purée in blender with skin on. Freeze leftover purée in 1-1/2 cup (375 mL) measures for using later.





Pumpkin Cupcakes

Ingredients

- 1/4 cup (50 mL) butter, softened
- 2/3 cup (150 mL) granulated sugar
- 1 Ontario egg
- 2/3 cup (150 mL) Ontario pumpkin purée
- 1/4 cup (50 mL) Ontario milk
- 1 tsp (5 mL) vanilla
- 1-1/4 cups (300 mL) all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp (5 mL) each baking powder and ground cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp (2 mL) each baking soda, ground ginger and nutmeg
- 1/4 tsp (1 mL) each ground cloves and salt

Decorator Frosting:

- 1/2 cup (125 mL) butter, softened or shortening
- 4 tsp (20 mL) lukewarm water
- 1 tsp (5 mL) vanilla
- 2 cups (500 mL) icing sugar
- Food colouring

Instructions

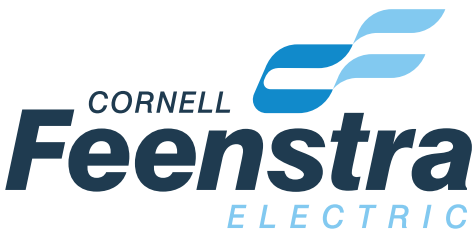
In large bowl, using electric mixer beat together butter and sugar until fluffy. Beat in egg, pumpkin, milk and vanilla.

In small bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, cinnamon, baking soda, ginger, nutmeg, cloves and salt. Add to pumpkin mixture, beating until smooth.

Spoon into paper-lined or greased muffin cups, filling three-quarters full. Bake in 350°F (180°C) oven for 25 to 30 minutes or until top feels firm and toothpick inserted into centre comes out clean. Let cool completely on rack. Frost and decorate as desired.

Decorator Frosting:

In medium bowl, using electric mixer beat together butter, water and vanilla until smooth. Gradually beat in icing sugar until smooth. Add colour as desired. Pipe or spread onto cupcakes.. 🍃



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Niagara hosts one of final RAM Rodeo tuneups before championship finals

By Luke Edwards

The bulls were bucking and the horses were running at the International Plowing Match last month. Cowboys and cowgirls took part in the match, where the RAM Rodeo Tour held several shows. Throughout the summer the tour hosts shows

across the province, with participants competing for cash prizes and preparing for the championship finals. Those finals are set to take place later this month just up the road in Ancaster. The RAM Rodeo championship finals run over three days, starting Friday, Oct. 17 and

wrapping up Sunday, Oct. 19. They take place at the Ancaster Fairgrounds, 630 Trinity Rd., in Jerseyville. For more information, including ticket info, visit ramrodeoontario.com. Discounts are available by purchasing tickets ahead of time online. 🍀



The RAM Rodeo Tour held several shows during the International Plowing Match, with competitors vying for top spot in events like barrel racing and bull riding. ~ Luke Edwards photos

Peaire’s perfect pastries propel him to butter tart fame

By Ann Marie Chechalk

It must be fate! Two years ago when emails were sent out to find sponsors for the Home-craft classes, Liz Currie replied. She would like to sponsor a class of butter tarts at the West Niagara Fair in memory of her mother, Eva Durham.

The West Niagara Fair is still unsure how her email got placed on the patron list and invited to be a sponsor. It must be fate!

Eva (Haws) Durham grew up right across the road from the West Niagara Fairgrounds on the Haws Farm. “She led the life of a farm girl,” said Currie. “She went to all the plowing matches and entered all the classes at the fair. She excelled at making butter tarts and English biscuits. She won everything. Perhaps it was from baking on a wood stove.”

When Eva married she didn’t move far, just over to Thirty Road to the Durham farm, where she raised her family and where Elizabeth grew up.

Elizabeth was not going to just offer the usual \$10 or \$20 dollars that most classes earned. She was going to offer a really nice amount so lots of competitors would enter. Elizabeth suggested a prize of \$250 for first place, \$150 for second place and \$100 for third place. That would get the bakers of the area excited. What a nice prize! Then after many conversations it was also decided that the bakers could make a variety of butter tarts, to really show off their skills. And so the Butter Tart Trio came to fruition.

Special butter tart trio prizes: 1st - \$250, 2nd - \$150, 3rd - \$100, kindly supported by Elizabeth Currie In memory of Eva Durham who won many prizes at the old Smithville Fair.

The butter tart trio rules are as follows: Six butter tarts – two each of three different flavours (nuts and raisins can be used). They must be full-sized tarts, no mini tarts. Tarts are to be displayed on a clear study plate, inside of a sealable plastic bag. Judging is based on the following criteria: 40 point for crust, 40 points for filling and 20 points for appearance.

In 2024 there were over 25 entries, in 2025 the class dipped a bit welcoming just 24 entries. And who won, with the best tasting butter tarts?



Shawn Peaire with his winning butter tarts and Liz Currie, who sponsored the butter tart trio class in memory of her mother Eva Durham. ~ Ann Marie Chechalk photos

A young man from Wainfleet who likes to farm, invent and fix farm equipment and who also likes to bake. Shawn Peaire, entered but did not win in 2024, so all throughout the year he worked to perfect his crust and his fillings.

“I baked over 30 dozen in the past year, changing things, slight nuances,” Peaire said. He listened to his tasters and appreciated their feedback. He reached out to a chef friend for advice on pastry, and learned to always use really cold unsalted frozen butter and really cold water.

And he had a little fate in his life also. “One night when I was baking, and it might have been around one in the morning and I was out of corn syrup, so I googled what to replace corn syrup in a recipe. Suggested to me was



Shawn Peaire not only knows how to make winning butter tarts he can grow giant pumpkins. On the soil in Wainfleet his pumpkin endured wind and drought but still grew to over 600 pounds. His pumpkin was entered in the West Niagara Fair and the Wainfleet Fair.

maple syrup. I had maple syrup from Mazzoca-to Maple Farm and it made my butter tarts so delicious.”

“For this competition I entered two plain butter tarts, two pecan butter tarts and two raisin butter tarts. I made 30 tarts and picked the best six with the right ratio of filling to pastry. I had a really good feeling about them this year.”

Currie and Peaire got to meet at the West Niagara Fair, as she came down to the family farm for the weekend. For her journey home, she had a little snack, some of Peaire’s winning butter tarts. 🍂



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AG EVENTS ON THE HORIZON

It's a month to give thanks for the summer, the harvest and hopefully a reasonable winter ahead. With September in the books, we're now fully into fall mode. There's still work to be done on the farms, but for those who have a free minute or two, here are some things to do in the coming weeks.

OCTOBER 8 & 9

CANADIAN GREENHOUSE CONFERENCE

Once the excitement of September is over, there will still be plenty to do in October. One of the big events is the two-day Canadian Greenhouse Conference, which returns to Niagara Falls on Oct. 8 and 9. The conference features a trade show, two days of sessions, along with a few networking events. It takes place at the Niagara Falls Convention Centre. For more information visit canadiangreenhouseconference.com.

OCTOBER 10 TO 13

BALL'S FALLS THANKSGIVING FESTIVAL

One of the biggest harvest festivals around returns to Ball's Falls Conservation Area this year. Running from Friday, Oct. 10 to Monday, Oct. 13, the event celebrates heritage, culture and family traditions. For more information on the festival or for ticket information, visit thanksgivingfestival.ca.

OCTOBER 15

CAISTOR PLOWING MATCH

If IPM 2025 didn't scratch your plowing match itch, local events are set to take place, including the 136th annual Caistor Plowing Match. It runs on Wednesday, Oct. 15, beginning at 10 a.m. on the farm of Bob Smith, 7573 Hwy 20, in Smithville. There will be a refreshment booth on the grounds and lunch will be provided to all competitors. For more information call president Dennis Tice at 905-774-3276 or secretary Ross Bush at 905-957-3460.

OCTOBER 17 TO 19

RAM RODEO CHAMPIONSHIPS

The RAM Rodeo tour has made its way through southern Ontario this summer, all leading up to the championships this month in Ancaster. Taking place from Friday, Oct. 17 to Sunday, Oct 19, some of the province's top cowboys and cowgirls will compete for fame, glory and cash at the Ancaster Fairgrounds. For the rodeo schedule and ticket information, visit ramrodeoontario.com.

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8 cyl, 5.7 L, auto, Check Website for Options, 113,948km
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\$52,595
*348.36/biweekly



2022 Ram 1500
8 cyl, 5.7 L, auto, Check Website for Options, 139,167km
CERT.#450949

\$46,995
*311.26/biweekly



2023 Chevrolet Silverado 1500
4 cyl, 2.7 L, auto, Check Website for Options, 31,980km
CERT.#450533

\$46,695
*309.28/biweekly



2021 Ford Ranger
4 cyl, 2.3 L, auto, Check Website for Options, 40,512km
CERT.#450502

\$41,495
*274.84/biweekly



2022 Nissan Frontier
6 cyl, 3.8 L, auto, Check Website for Options, 63,176km
CERT.#451067

\$42,995
*284.77/biweekly



2022 Ford Ranger
4 cyl, 2.3 L, auto, Check Website for Options, 43,747km
CERT.#450970

\$39,995
*264.90/biweekly



2024 Ford Maverick
4 cyl, 2.0 L, auto, Check Website for Options, 69,717km
CERT.#450472

\$38,995
*258.28/biweekly



2024 Ford Maverick
4 cyl, 2.5 L, Variable speed, Check Website for Options, 29,640km
CERT.#450859

\$37,695
*249.67/biweekly



2021 Ford F-150
6 cyl, 3.3 L, auto, Check Website for Options, 73,754km
CERT.#451094

\$38,995
*258.28/biweekly



2021 Chevrolet Colorado
6 cyl, 3.6L, auto, Check Website for Options, 91,192km
CERT.#450751

\$37,495
*248.34/biweekly



2021 Chevrolet Colorado
6 cyl, 3.6L, auto, Check Website for Options, 89,566km
CERT.#451021

\$35,695
*236.42/biweekly



2021 Ram 1500 Classic
8 cyl, 5.7 L, auto, Check Website for Options, 131,812km
CERT.#450999

\$34,995
*231.78/biweekly



2019 Ford F-150
6 cyl, 2.7 L, auto, Check Website for Options, 127,277km
CERT.#450603

\$34,995
*231.78/biweekly

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How to calculate your monthly car payment.

(Note: example based on 6.99% interest. All financing is on approved credit. Licensing fee extra.)

Example Vehicle Price:
\$10,000

(All vehicle prices shown include a
full Safety, E-test & Certification -
unless noted otherwise)

Amount to be financed:
\$10,000

5 YEAR TERM:

(Total cost of borrowing: \$1877.60)..... **\$197.96**

6 YEAR TERM:

(Total cost of borrowing: \$2271.68)..... **\$170.44**

7 YEAR TERM:

(Total cost of borrowing: \$2673.92)..... **\$150.88**

*All loans are open and can be paid of at any time during term.
Posted interest rate based on time of printing & subject to change.



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