

# NOD Industries cont'd.

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Saturday, March 17, 2007

## Local firm honoured for mite control

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In the midst of the trials, NOD suffered a devastating blow. Neil Orr died. VanderDussen reassessed and kept going, and with the support of Orr's widow, worked to develop Mite-Away II.

The product is a vapour-release pad that is placed in the hive. Over three weeks, while baby bees are raised, it releases formic acid, an organic material found in natural foods such as fruit. It is lethal to varroa mites, but not bees.

Mite-Away II shifted the focus of VanderDussen's life. He still has River Valley Honey, the company he founded at age 21 after moving to Stirling to be an apiarist. But the monthly "honey runs" to Toronto — taking honey to Toronto to sell retail — have stopped. The business of raising nucleus colonies for starter beekeepers — perhaps 14-year-olds with the same passion he discovered — has also diminished. Mite-Away II is shipped from his Frankford office. It's approved for the U.S. and Canada.

VanderDussen learned of the Premier's award Feb. 27, about a week before he went to the province's third Agri-Food Summit in Toronto to accept it. His friend had filled out the application. He got the news via a phone call from Agriculture Minister Leona Dombrowsky.

"I'm glad I was sitting down," he said. "After something like that happens, you sort of hang up and say 'What just happened there?'"

The \$100,000 will allow NOD to develop two projects that have so far been on the back burner, said VanderDussen, who is married and has three children. One is a high-speed honey production tool. The other is a calf-feeding supplement that uses formic acid to prevent the milk they are fed from souring.

"With a demand feeding system, calves grow better and stronger," he said.

There was also a \$50,000 Minister's award and 55 regional awards of \$5,000 each, which have yet to be announced. Dombrowsky said VanderDussen's innovation impressed her.

"I believe it's important to reward people who have been innovative, who have taken risks and who have made positive contributions to agriculture."

In his speech at the summit, VanderDussen thanked family, which he said is the heart of farming. He thanked his own family, Orr's family, and his 10 employees at the rectangular building near Frankford that produces the life-saving product.

The award was "overwhelming" for everyone, said sister-in-law and business administrator Liz Corbett.

"I thought back to 2002, when we were sitting around a kitchen table trying to make a decision about whether or not to keep going," she said. "It's a scary prospect to keep going. But this is affirmation."