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Thursday, August 21, 2003

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PUMPED UP: Colborne's Olco gas station remained open until after 11 p.m. during the August 15 power outage. Powered with three generators, it was all hands on deck pumping gas for the lineups that formed at the King Street East station. Inside the store, "They were buying anything that wasn't nailed down," coowner Brice Cotter, right, reports. Helping out Monday were Bruce Cotter, right and Tammy LaSalle.

PHOTO BY MANDY MARTIN

Community first during blackout: Cramahe businesses

Beef farmers losing money

By Karen Lloyd

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"It's hard to imagine how one cow has caused so much grief and turmoil."

That's what Eugene Brahaney, a Campbellford-Seymour Township cattle/calf farmer, said Monday about the mad cow disease disaster affecting Canada's beef industry.

Mr. Brahaney sells his calves and young cattle to area feed lots, where they finish off their life cycle before being shipped to the slaughterhouse or live to the United States.

But with beef trades on hold between the U.S. and Canada, his calves will likely be given away or sold for less than half of what they're worth.

"We're certainly not making a living off of it," Mr. Brahaney said. "If it wasn't for my wife's nursing job, we'd be starving."

Canada's beef industry injects \$30 billion a year into the economy. That was slashed to practically nothing when beef exports to the U.S. — this country's biggest customer — and 33 other countries were halted on May 20, after bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) was discovered in one cow in Alberta.

No other cases of the disease have since cropped up in Canada.

Gaye Hoskin, president of the Northumberland Federation of Agriculture, is a good example of just how much money has been lost individually.

Mr. Hoskin said he sold seven steers this year for a total of \$2,600. Last year, each steer would have been worth \$1,500.

"I don't think people realize how hard farmers are getting hit by this," he said. "It's hard to say what's going to happen in the future."

Sid Atkinson, president of the Northumberland Cattlemen's Association, said the situation in Canada is pathetic.

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