

"This is a BSE meeting to show how much concern we have that one animal could do so much damage ... to Northumberland County," said NFA chair Gaye Hoskin in introducing the panel of speakers.

In his opening remarks, Hoskin said ruminants were now selling at "three quarters of the price of four months ago ... 20 to 25 cents a pound."

"That's prices from the 1950's," he said. "Farmers are losing \$400 to 600 an animal for fat cattle, and they're asking a lot of questions."

Those questions include why US beef was still being imported after the border closed; could the BSE crisis mark the end of Canada's cow-calf industry; will the US issue enough export permits to meet an excessive Canadian supply; who is making "huge profits" as wholesale prices plunge while retail prices have lowered very little; and are Canadians aware of

(APF).

The APF is a five-element agreement that would provide sustainable funding to the agriculture community in the areas on food safety and quality, environment, renewal, science and innovation, and business risk management. A "transition measure," funding would be advanced "equal to a portion of a producer's expected payment for this year" until the new Canadian Agricultural Income Stabilization Program (CAISP) comes into force.

Ontario has not signed the APF, in part because the province's farmers are worried that other federal agricultural assistance programs will be cancelled once the APF is accepted.

While Dr. Galt said black-mail "is a very strong word to use," he confirmed that Agriculture Minister Helen Johns would sign the APF "whenever she is told to."

Barkey said it was a time for farmers and lenders to

stead, farmers are worrying about how to pay for the equipment they have now.

"I'm seeing a high degree of anxiety in the customers I'm dealing with," he said. "I can see in the months to come it is going to be difficult (as business drops off across Canada)."

"But we've got to stay positive and work with our leaders to get through this crisis," Svetec said.

However, it was hard for anyone in attendance to be positive after listening to DeNure present livestock sale prices.

DeNure works with livestock every day he goes to work. Because he is in the cattle auction business, DeNure was able to present statistics comparing sales from May 20 through August 26 for this year and 2002.

During the three month period in 2002, local OCA members moved just over 6,000 animals, representing \$3

DeNure said that May 13 prices at Hoard's Station were in the "upper 50 cent to 60 cent" range, but had dropped to a high of 17 cents per pound at the August 26 auction. The border opening announcement resulted in calf prices "coming back up" slightly, but "stockers have been on a roller coaster ride all summer," he said.

The veteran livestock manager urged farmers to invest in vaccinations for their herds to give animals higher value at market.

Dr. Galt said the tainted meat scandal emerging in Aylmer, Ontario was the last thing farmers needed now, and the latest in a series of crises faced by his government this summer.

"We've barely had time to catch our breath between crises," he said.

Dr. Galt said Ontario has invested more than \$50 million in beef recovery programs this year, and Premier Eves

a virtual standstill. That is why the federal and Ontario governments are offering compensation through BSE recovery programs, amounting to about 45 per cent of the "predetermined US reference price."

The program has received about 2,600 applications to date, totalling \$29 million in "deficiency payments," he said. A further \$17.5 million has been earmarked for a "set aside" program to encourage farmers to "hold back" a minimum of 45 head of finished cattle for up to eight weeks.

That Ontario initiative, ending September 5, would provide compensation in the amount of \$400 per head, McCartney said.

"Clearly there's a lot of pain in our community," said Macklin.

Northumberland's federal representative said it was important for government and farmers to recognize "there is potential for other cattle infected in North America that

49 times with Japanese and American counterparts to gain concessions, but there is still "a long way to go" to demonstrate to the world that our animal production system is safe.

"As a government, we're not happy. This is not a done deal," he said. "I'm hopeful that it won't be much longer before we get the (US) border open to live animals under 30 months." Macklin agreed with other presenters that "these deficiency payments are not going to be enough."

Dr. Hayes said our science is sound, and has proven there is no BSE risk to consumers.

"We believe Canadian beef under 30 months of age does not present any risk of BSE," he said.

Dr. Hayes said CFIA agents are "working virtually around the clock" to open international markets to Canadian products. "These steps may appear to be small steps and time consuming, but that's the business we're dealing with," he said.

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THE INDEPENDENT

SPORTS



### Karate champ teaches locally

*Steve Hails was a tough guy until he took up karate. The martial art made him a more formidable foe, certainly, but it also gave him a healthier outlook on life where he no longer felt it necessary to punish others with his fists.*

*Two weeks ago, nearly 50 people joined Hails in a three-day Karate summer camp at Presqu'ile Provincial Park. Hails teaches Ishinryu Karate, a system in which there is "definitely no attitude", he says.*

*The British native, and now Grafton resident, has earned three Canadian karate championships, and four provincial titles. Hails teaches karate at the Cobourg YCMA, and his wife Esther (also a black belt) will teach the course in Brighton when the YMCA satellite opens there.*

John Campbell photo