

LOCAL NEWS

Local farmers facing tough times

Just how hard up are farmers in Northumberland?

Sales at Hoard's Station livestock sale barn near Campbellford have dropped by \$3-million over the same three month time period this year to last year, owner Dave Denure reports.

From May 20 to Aug. 20, 2002, 6,160 beef animals were sold for an estimated \$3.2-million, an average of \$517 per animal, Mr. Denure reported. During the same period of time in 2003, the number had dropped to 3,900 beef animals for total sales of \$1.25-million, an average of \$320 a head. In the same time period of 2002, 630 dairy animals sold for an average \$820 a head compared to only 224 animals this year at \$680 a head.

"That represents a decrease of around \$3-million," Mr. Denure noted, "and in western Ontario it's a much larger amount (in losses)."

This summer, the cheapest animal sold at auction brought a mere 3 cents per pound, Mr. Denure said, "an animal that would formerly sold for 15 cents a pound."

"I had one couple come up to me after the meeting and told me they could no longer afford to send their daughter to university," MPP Doug Galt said the day after the Warkworth Beef Information rally.

Campbellford's Bob Mark Ford manager Andy Svetec said his three-year-old business will just



Ontario Cattlemen's Association board member Kim Systma during Friday's beef information rally in Warkworth. PHOTO BY TED AMSDEN

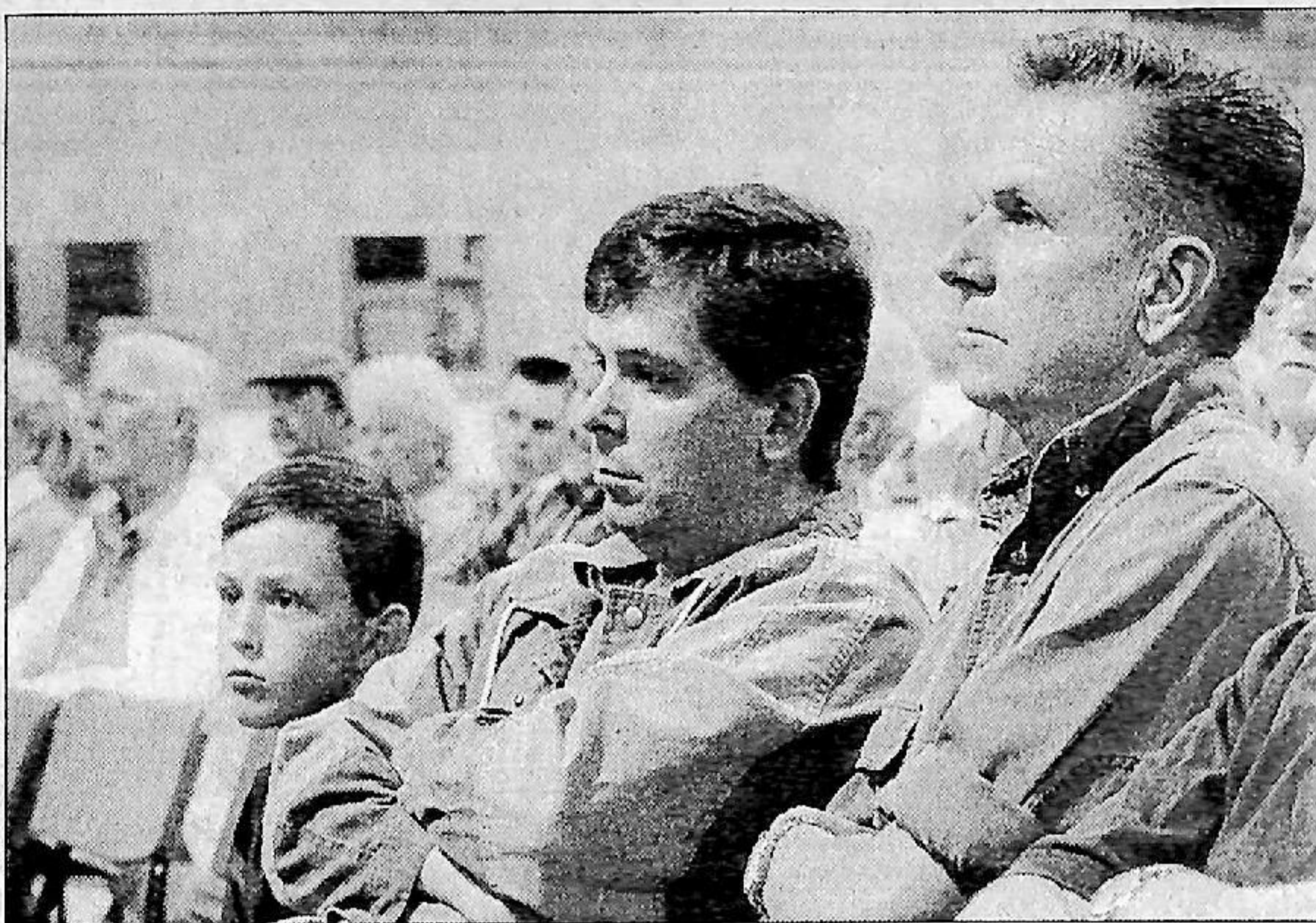


PHOTO BY TED AMSDEN

Andrew, Mark and Norm Lovshin — three generations of the family — listen to speakers at Friday's beef information rally in Warkworth.

begin to feel the crunch in the coming months.

"Andy, your business depends on us — global partners," Syd Atkinson, a beef producer and director with the Northumberland Cattlemen's Association said Friday night. He observed the \$3-million sale barn shortfall in the Campbellford community is "quite a piece of money. Andy is not the only one tightening his belt."

The federal-provincial emergency compensation package - extended to September 5 for cattle slaughtered - pegs compensation rates weekly Ralph McCarkney of the BSE program with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture outlined. Funding is 60 per cent federal, 40 per cent provincial. Compensation is based on 45 per cent of the going American price per pound for the week. So, if the going U.S. price is \$1 per pound average, and a 1,000-pound Canadian head is slaughtered and sold, compensation would be \$450. To date, there have been 2,600 applications for compensation representing a \$29-million value.

Compounding the Canadian conundrum is the added question

of meat inspections. With a dearth of qualified inspectors, bookings for slaughter and certification of beef are up to two months long, one cattleman said, well beyond the September 5 deadline for application for compensation.

And more than one producer at Friday night's rally observed the meat packers don't seem to be passing on any of the price breaks to the consumer: the producer is selling at less than cost, the consumer isn't getting any significant price break on the beef, so where's the money going, several asked.

While Canadians have been barred from selling live heads of cattle to the U.S., the Americans never lost their right to ship beef into Canada. By trade agreement, U.S. beef can account for up to 40 per cent of the beef sold in Canada. With summer traditionally being barbecue season, many of the steaks and barbecue cuts of beef are actually American-produced.

"Man, it is tough. We haven't felt the pain yet," Mr. Atkinson says.

- Mandy Martin,
with files from Suzanne