

Crop concerns plague Georgetown farmers

BY FRANCES NIBLOCK
The Georgetown Gemini

A late, wet and cooler than usual spring is to blame for a host of crop problems for Georgetown farmers, who had to plant late and now are hoping and praying for a late frost.

"It's been a frantic spring with lots of crop problems due to the rain," Richard Hendry, a soil and crop advisor with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs explained on Monday.

The Ontario Climate Centre reported 123 mL of rain in May and 109 mL in June, both measurements well over the usual amounts of 68 mL and 73 mL respectively. Some farmers are calling it the wettest spring since the 1960s.

All the rain in April and May meant that crops went in late including soya beans, which this year had one of the latest plantings ever in Halton Hills.

Farmers have also been slower getting the hay off because of the rain and Ministry spokesperson Marie McNabb, at the Ministry's Georgetown office, said the rain also delayed spraying, so weed growth is now a large problem.

"The quality of hay has decreased because it hasn't been harvested as early as normal. It gets to a point where the quality and feeding value drops and that's what has happened here," McNabb explained in a recent interview.

"In the fields, when we did get to the hay, it went to waste because of rain damage - it basically rotted in the rows - so quality is an issue."

Along with hay problems, area farmers are paying 30 to 40 per cent more for grain - soya bean, corn, oats and barley - so feed costs are up substantially.

"It's a global thing. Soya bean stocks are at their lowest ever in the United States

and the demand is driving up the price of what's coming off the fields," McNabb said.

Last year in Halton Hills the crop yield was average but prices were what McNabb described as "phenomenal."

"This year we're not even sure if we will get average yields - it will depend on how the summer goes and how late we get a frost."

Gross crop and food production in Halton was worth \$120 million last year with approximately \$30 to 35 million coming from Halton Hills crops. Roughly 40,000 acres of land in Halton Hills is cropped each year.

McNabb said as bad as the rain has been, farmers who planted beans last week were happy with recent warm light rains.

"Although the weather is a concern, it's amazing how optimistic some farmers can be. If they weren't, they would drive themselves around the bend," McNabb said.



BIDDING FOR THE BIRDS: John and Mary Duncan bid on a bird house at an auction held last Saturday during the Georgetown Agricultural Society's fourth annual beef barbecue. It was a fundraiser for this year's Georgetown Fall Fair. (Eve Martin photo)

Optimist golf day is Aug. 27

The Optimist Club of Georgetown is hosting their annual Mayor's Golf Tournament on Tuesday, Aug. 27 at the Georgetown River's Edge Golf & Country Club. A shotgun start is slated for 1 pm.

Tournament organizers are looking for sponsors for

each of the tourney's 18 holes, at \$100 each. They also are looking for items and products that could be used as prizes.

A program will be printed listing the names of companies, associations and individuals who have made do-

nations and sponsorships.

The 15th annual scramble tournament is limited to 160 participants, so register early.

For details on registration or sponsorship phone Tournament Chair Scott Campbell (873-7991) or Co-Chair John Fendley (877-2931).

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