

# Farmers coalition calling for environment assessment

By BOB SAVAGE  
Thomson News Service

TORONTO—Farmers may love the land, but how healthy will their relationship be in years to come?

That's the question being put to Ontario's 40,000 full-time farms by a coalition of farm groups. They're calling on farmers to conduct individual environmental assessments of their own operations, with an aim to improve areas where environmental awareness is weak.

"We are committed, as a farm community, to pursue these environmental concerns," Ontario Federation of Agriculture President Roger George told a Queen's Park press conference.

The OFA and other farm organizations that belong to the

coalition have identified 17 areas of environmental concern, including such issues as soil erosion and surface water contamination. But the coalition says it doesn't have a clear idea of the environmental strengths and weaknesses of various farming activities.

It's hoped the environmental agenda initiative launched Wednesday will pinpoint the problems.

The idea is to have farmers record work practices and potential environmental problems at their farms. The anonymous and confidential records will then go to local committees, which will attempt to find common problems that can be addressed.

In a few years' time, the coalition hopes it can work with

government to find solutions to farming practices that harm the environment. While the coalition hopes farmers will participate willingly, it doesn't rule out the use of government legislation.

The coalition hopes government will help fund the plan, although coalition members denied suggestions that the initiative is aimed to fend off possi-

ble government efforts to enforce environmental standards on the farms.

George told reporters that legislation only targets the "lowest common denominator" when it sets improvement standards. The coalition aims to actively promote higher standards for environmental protection within the farm community.

"It's going to go beyond anything (government) can do."

The coalition also hopes hard-pressed farmers will want to improve environmental practices, even if there are some costs involved. The group says it is seeking a balance between the tough economic times facing farmers today and the need to have viable farm land in the future.

## Director remains

John Porterfield, an egg producer from Palmerston, has been elected to his seventh term as a Director for the Ontario Egg Producers' Marketing Board.

Mr. Porterfield will continue to represent the 40 egg producers in the Counties of Wellington, Halton, Peel and the East half of Waterloo, who elected him to the Board January 28 in Moorefield.

Mr. Porterfield has been an egg producer since 1969. His background also includes several years as a tree surgeon in Ontario Hydro's Forestry Division.

Policies and operations of the Ontario Egg Producers' Marketing Board is the responsibility of 15 producer-elected directors. Thirteen of these are elected by egg producers in 13 zones, or areas of the province; two are elected by pullet producers, or farmers who raise chicks to egg-laying age.

In each zone, producers elect a set number of Committeemen who then elect a Director for that zone. Pullet producers elect Committeemen to vote for a pullet producer Director for each half of the province. Directors are elected for a one year term.

## Agreement reached

The Ontario Cattlemen's Association and Better Beef Ltd., Ontario's largest beef processor, are co-operating in a joint project which will allow cattlemen to sell small lots of cattle on a carcass weight and grade basis. Until now, this option has not been widely available to cattlemen.

Many cattlemen with only a few cattle to sell at one time would like to sell on a carcass weight and grade basis in order to obtain data on the quality of cattle they breed and feed. The upcoming change in the beef standard, due for implementation in early April, will likely increase demand for this selling option for small lots of cattle.

Better Beef Ltd. will purchase and supply a special ear tag for such lots of cattle. The tags will be available to cattlemen or their agent truckers from the Ontario Cattlemen's Association. The cattle must be tagged by the seller or his trucker/agent before the cattle are delivered to Better Beef. As well, a manifest must be completed and accompany the cattle. Manifests can be obtained from the OCA office with the ear tags.

Cattlemen wishing to use this option can call the buyers office at Better Beef to obtain a price quotation and grade/weight discounts for cattle that will be processed the following day. All small lots of cattle delivered to Better Beef will be processed at the end of the day using additional staff on the processing line to ensure tag transfer and retention.

To offset additional processing and handling costs, Better Beef will charge a fee of \$2.00 per head which will be deducted from the proceeds of sale on small lots.

The tagging option will also be available to sellers of load lots of cattle who want to match identity of live cattle and carcasses.

Dale Pallister, Chairman of the OCA Marketing and Grading Committee said "We have been talking about this selling option in OCA for several years. While we have examined sophisticated electronic identification systems,

they are costly for both packers and cattlemen. I am pleased that Better Beef has agreed to co-operate in this low cost project and that we can finally move forward to explore the practical aspects of providing this service."

## 4-H leaders

The Arts of Empowerment was one of the many timely subjects presented at the Provincial 4-H Leaders Conference in Toronto. Attending the Conference from the Region of Halton were Carol Brownridge and Jean McLean.

David Guthro of the Consulting Edge told us how to disempower ourselves. The 4-H Program is all about empowering others. Self-esteem forms the basis for self-empowerment. Good self-esteem is important before we can empower others.

The Ontario 4-H Program is moving and input from our 4-H members is important. The National 4-H Conference offers opportunities to discuss concerns our 4-H members have about their communities across Canada. Carolyn Steegers, a 4-H member from Middlesex County, told us of her experience at the National 4-H Members Conference.

With the ever increasing awareness of child abuse it was time for us to look at child safety. The Ontario Provincial Police Specialist discussed how to recognize child abuse symptoms and what we can do to assist these families before it is too late. After discussing roles and responsibilities of 4-H leaders, it was fitting to wind down with Wayne Fleming of Yuk Yuk comedy fame. His "voices" brought us back to reality and prepared us for more "who and what is 4-H". 4-H is on the move - Are you??

For more information on the 4-H program in Halton, please call the office of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food in Milton at 878-2314.

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