

Farm tour plants ideas for continued future farming

by Donna Danielli

The Halton Agricultural Advisory Committee (HAAC), hosted its annual Farm Tour on Thursday, September 27. The theme of this year's tour was "Keeping the Farmer on the Farmland" and it focussed on three farm operators who have established agri-businesses or diversified farm operations in response to increased pressures in the agricultural industry.

The annual Farm Tour is intended as an information forum for elected officials as well as regional and municipal planning staff provided by HAAC which is a volunteer group that is involved in the agricultural industry and provides advice to Regional Council on issues related to that industry.

The agricultural industry in Halton is facing a variety of increasing pressures and issues today. Principal occupation farmers, who rely solely on the agricultural industry for their income, are not only finding it increasingly more difficult to do so, but are also facing the threat of not having a next generation to pass the family farm down to.

Local farmer Harold Middlebrook pointed out that "You have to save the farmer before you save the farmland. You have to have young people taking on the next generation of farming."

Murray Harris agreed with the

statement and adding that "The most obvious fallout from this is the loss of community and resident ownership of Halton's agricultural lands."

The Farm Tour included three scheduled stops at Nurseland Farms in Halton Hills, Lambrick Farm Enterprises in Campbellville and Fisher Farms in Burlington, followed by a presentation by guest speaker Wayne Caldwell, and dinner at Burlington's Springer House. The three farm industries chosen illustrated the unique and creative ways Halton farmers are expanding their income base and making use of their land.

Nurseland Farms, owned by Jeff and Kenda Nurse, is home to a dairy herd of 75-80 registered purebred Holsteins, 35-40 milking cows, six Clydesdale horses, and a small flock of sheep. The Nurses own 150 acres of land and rent an additional 100 acres for the purpose of growing alfalfa, corn and mixed grains for cattlefeed. Approximately 20 percent of the farm's income however, comes during the Christmas season, when the Nurses hook their horses up to sleighs and take families from all over the area on sleigh rides out to cut down Christmas trees.

"My father was strictly dairy," explained Mr. Nurse. "Either we wanted to take on some more cows or find another way to expand, I

thought this was a good way to expand and a good fit for us. I think everyone identifies with the horse days gone by and likes to come out for a horse drawn sleigh ride."

It takes Mr. and Mrs. Nurse approximately ten years from the time a tree is planted until it is of cutting age and "the pruning can be a lot of work," Mr. Nurse said with a laugh.

Peter and Liz Lambrick of Lambrick Enterprises, own six acres and rent an additional 1,300 acres throughout Halton. They farm approximately 300 acres in corn, 500 acres in soybeans, 300 acres in wheat, 100 acres in barley and oats, and an additional 100 acres in hay. Lambrick Enterprises is also an authorized seed establishment. A full quarter of the farm's income is derived through the cleaning, bagging, tagging and preparing of seeds for sale. Mr. Lambrick isn't shy about expressing the need for municipal and regional planners to understand and work with the agricultural industry.

"We have a fairly good rapport with the planning authorities in the Region and we appreciate that," says Mr. Lambrick. "But one of the things we might be looking at is whether we need an Agricultural Development Officer in the GTA. There are many cheese factories and food producers in the GTA



Photo by Donna Danielli

Councillors Carol D'Amelio and Joan Lougheed, Regional Chairman Joyce Savoline, Jeff Nurse, owner of Nurseland Farms in Halton Hills, Halton Hill's Mayor Kathy Gastle, Regional Councillor Barry Lee and Rick Craven.

and it's to our best interest to access that market efficiently."

Regional Director of Planning Pat Murphy commented on the value of that position as something the Region is looking into. Mr. Lambrick also reminded the elected officials and planners of the need for their official plans to not only protect agricultural lands but also to be flexible.

"Golf courses now have a large foothold in agricultural land" he commented "I hope the new official plan will be bombproof against golf courses and the O.M.B. There is no one size fits all where agriculture is concerned. It's going to have to be done on a one to one plan. I

don't think you're going to fit everyone the same under the official plan."

The last scheduled farm to tour was Fisher Farms, owned by fourth generation Halton farmer Peter Fisher. Mr. Fisher purchased his property in Burlington in 1933 and for many years it was part of a 500 acre farm operation in fruit and vegetable production. Portions of this farm property have been leased to Terra Greenhouses and to Burlington Topsoil, and 50 acres are currently planted with Bosc, Anjou, Flemish, Beauty, Bartlett, Clapp's Favourite and other pear

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