

# Only cows in pasture survive McCowan Road barn fire

BY KATHLEEN GRIFFIN  
Staff Writer

Brian Lewis stood surveying the smoldering ruins of a McCowan Road barn Friday afternoon, the barn in which his 35 Holstein calves perished in an early-morning fire.

"If this had happened during the day, there might have been a chance of saving some of them," he said, shaking his head.

"The only ones to survive were the 15 that were out to pasture. Now, the biggest problem is rounding them up."

About 3:30 a.m., a York Regional Police officer on patrol saw flames shooting from two barns connected by a corrugated-tin roof behind McCowan Antiques, a small business just south of Elgin Mills Road.

He stopped to alert residents inside the house.

"By that time, the roof had already collapsed and there was no chance of saving anything," Det. Keith Freemantle said.

While the investigation is continuing, he said the fire does not appear suspicious.

Each calf is valued at about \$700.

"It was an old barn, we weren't going to use after this



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

Markham firefighters connect a hose to a tanker truck to douse smoldering hay in a barn fire on McCowan Road, just south of Elgin Mills Road early Friday.

year," Mr. Lewis said.

"Most of the cattle we've already moved up to the other farm."

The Lewis family farms just north of the area where the fire occurred; it rented 100 acres and the now-destroyed barn from an out-of-country landlord.

The owners of McCowan Antiques also rent the house and property.

They were not available for comment Friday, but police estimate more than \$40,000

worth of merchandise was destroyed after the fire jumped to the second, attached barn.

"We're still not sure how it started because the damage is so severe," Det. Freemantle said. "We may never know."

He's pegged the damage at close to \$200,000.

Markham fire officials remained on scene late Friday as smoke continued to rise from the smoldering ruins.

"I guess it will be levelled. I'm not sure what happens now," Mr. Lewis said.

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