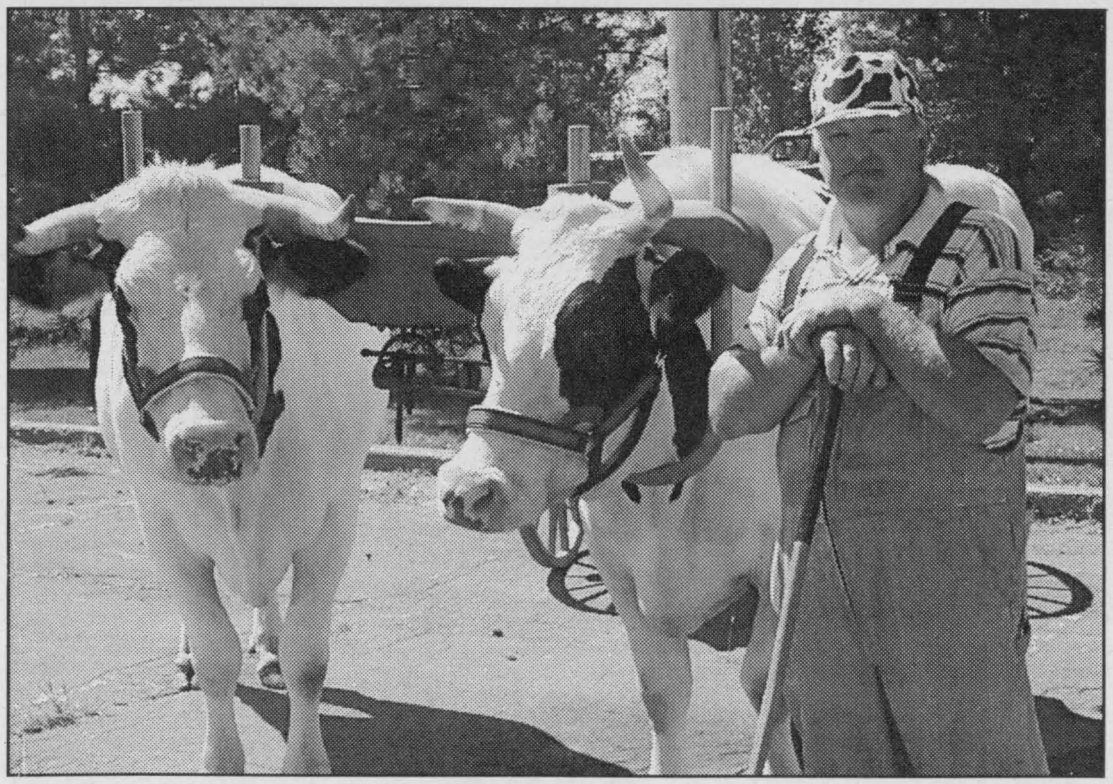
FALL FARM



Buck - Bright and Irwin

Irwin McCargar and his Holstein Oxen were evident in a variety of locales this summer. Their participtation in Plowing Matches and Horse Pulls attracted attention from many spectators. Here they prepare for South Mountain Parade fun. They are a young pair learning the ropes quickly and with little fuss. Irwin hopes to revive the use of oxen as "beasts of burden".

Chieftain Photo bySL. Johnston

Gentle Giants of Animals

by Sandra Lee Johnston
Chieftain Staff Reporter

Although pretty unique to Dundas County, there are regions in the United States where oxen are a staple of agricutural shows. They have remained a vital part of rural New Hampshire for example and in many New England states they pull as much as any horse. "They have big ox pulls down there," according to an enthusiastic oxen driver/owner we had the fortune to meet this past summer.

The only team of oxen seen by locals until this summer were the pair at Upper Canada Village. Then a beautiful pair of Holstein oxen were out and about at Dairyfest in Winchester and at South Mountain Fair and then at the Ottawa-Carleton Plowing Match. Irwin McCargar is a retired farmer from South Mountain (west of Mountain, actually) who suffers from Diabetes. Needing to exercise in order to live with his disease, Irwin utilized a love of animals to his advantage. Teaching these gentle giants provides him with the necessary exercise and the fullfilment a job well done can bring. the admiration between the animals and their owner is evident as we speak. He eludes to the idea that he would maybe like to use the team to raise funds to help research for Diabetes, perhaps the opportunity to plow with this unique team of oxen for a nominal fee would entice folks...

Coming across an ox shoe on his farm years ago sparked something within him. "I had proof that oxen had once been used on my farm to work the lands, a theory I had harboured for many years." When he retired and dispersed his herd, he kept two males to raise as pets as well as to train. A bovine is born a bull and once gelded becomes a steer. At the age of four years, a steer becomes an ox. As Irwin explains, "Any four-year old is technically referred to as an ox if used as a draught animal. Any steer of this age will be trained, otherwise it would have been slaughtered for meat long before

Please turn to page 5

Really Big Rabbit Show

By Theresa Roach
Chieftain Staff Reporter

The 2002 edition of the "Really Big Rabbit Show" sponsored by the Eastern Ontario Rabbit Fanciers' Club was held at the Spencerville Fairgrounds on Saturday, September 28.

The show featured slightly over 500 rabbits and a wide range of breeds, about 35 different ones. Rabbits and their owners came from as far away as Southern Ontario, Quebec and the United States.

This show is the largest ARBA sanctioned show in Ontario and featured eight ARBA rated judges to assess the merits of the large variety of rabbits. The show has been held in Spencerville for over 10 years and the reason for this is because of how close it is to the 401 and the bridge to the United States.

The judging included each breeder carrying their rabbit to the show table according to breed, color and age class. The judges then handled the rabbits and examined the health, closeness to breed standards and overall condition of the rabbit, before choosing class, breed and overall champions.

The Champion this year was a Californian (meat breed) and the reserves were a Florida White (pet breed) and a Mini-Rex (pet breed.) The 2001 Champion was a New Zealand White (meat breed), with reserves presented to an English Lop with 12 inch ears and a Mini-Rex (pet breed.)

Some of the breeds at the show included Netherland Dwarf, Mini-Rex, Polish, New Zealands, Californians, French Lop and Flemish. Those who came out also got the opportunity to buy top quality breeding stocks or nice pets.

"Everything went very well and the weather was good for us. We had a number of people who dropped in from the Spencerville and Kemptville areas to view the rabbits and see what the show had to offer," said Eastern Ontario Rabbit Fanciers' Club Secretary, Bernice Watkin.



A very rascally rabbit in show *Chieftain Photo by D. Leeson*



Antique Farm Equipment *Chieftain Photo by S.L. Johnston*

Reg Gibson (rear) had two antiques in the Williamsburg Fall Festival Parade this year. The cultivator which was a part of the first tractor was unique and seems like a great idea for farming small plots. The big units used today dwarf this style.

Celebrating Ontario Agriculture

By: Jack Wilkinson
President Ontario Federation of Agriculture

Making preparations to celebrate Ontario Agriculture Week this year has certainly been easier than some of the previous years. While the industry has always had a lot to celebrate, recent funding announcements by both Federal and Provincial governments have made celebrating easier.

Ontario Agriculture Week was first proclaimed by the Provincial Legislature five years ago, following introduction of legislation by Perth-Middlesex MPP Bert Johnson. Now, the event is automatically marked during the week leading up to Thanksgiving.

At a special breakfast at Queen's Park on October 8th where MPPs and leaders of Ontario agriculture were together to enjoy some products of Ontario agriculture, the point was made that farmers in this province have been producing great food for decades, and finally their efforts are getting official recognition.

Our Minister of Agriculture and Food, the Honourable Helen Johns, told the breakfast crowd that more needs to be done to ensure the general public is more aware of how valuable the agri-food industry is to this province.

That's what Ontario Agriculture Week is all about, bringing awareness of our industry to a higher level.

Minister Johns pointed out that a number of new and extremely important pieces of legislation are working their way through the process at Queen's Park. These will impact most farmers in Ontario as government responds to the needs and demands of society to deal with enviromental issues.

Ontario Agriculture Week is important for the job it is intended to do-making the non-farm population of Ontario more aware of our industry and the huge contribution it makes to the provincial economy. The agri-food industry adds 32.1 billion to the Ontario economy each year and provides jobs for more than 650,000 people. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture and a number of its commodity partners organized a special program for the people of downtown Toronto as part of Agriculture Week-staged at Nathan Phillips Square on October 9th. The poster developed by OFA for Ontario Agriculture Week has placed the focus on the excellence of Ontario agriculture and the people who make up the industry.

Ontario's Outstanding Youth Farm Family, John and Eadie Steele of Peterborough Count, won their title this past spring and are featured on the poster and at the Nathan Phillips Square event-an Opportunity for agriculture to feature a dynamic young farm family that makes use of technology to make their farm successful.

The poster also places a focus of the effort Ontario farmers put into ensuring the best quality products are available to consumers, and the efforts so many farmers make to preserve and protect the environment and the soil on their farms.

These posters have been put on display across the province and were distributed to several hundred people during the event at Nathan Phillips Square, and before that at recent farm shows. While all this has taken considerable effort and resources.. much more will have to be done by farmers and their organizations to get the message of Ontario agriculture to consumers.

It's a huge challenge, and right now OFA is proceeding with its *Contract With Consumers* initiative. This is another step in reaching out to consumers with information about an industry that far too many people are willing to take for granted.

We don't want agriculture to continue to be ignored by the masses. It's too important to the people of Ontario and the people of Canada. OFA hopes everyone will strive to learn more about agriculture-the industry that fees then and is still the second largest economic force in Ontario's economy.

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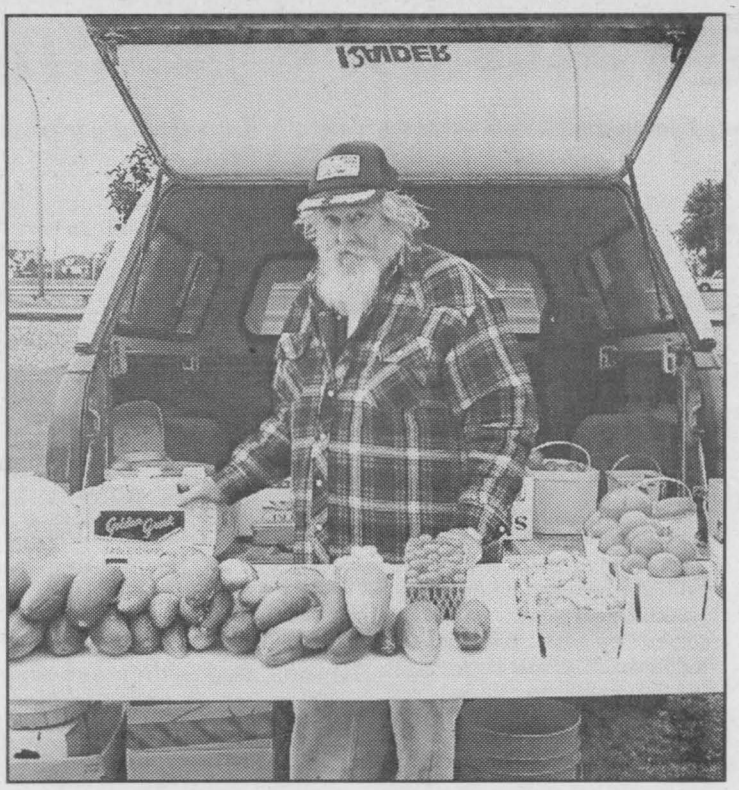

Farmers Market

James Sayeau was selling his produce this fall in Cardinal along with others who grow some nice vegetables. This weekly event provides fresh local produce for buyers. There is a market in Morrisburg and Iroquois as well as Prescott each fall.

Chieftain Photo by S.L. Johnston

Crop rotation viewed as best management practice

Producers across the country are realizing new methods in farming that increase resource-efficiency, open up new opportunities and at the same time, help reduce soil erosion, nutrient loss and greenhouse gas emissions.

"To properly manage a farm, you have to think 50 years into the future," says Kevin Ferguson, from Osgoode, Ontario. Kevin runs a small poultry farm and produces spring wheat, corn and soy. "We actually grow the wheat for the value it provides to the soil, and not so much for its crop value."

Many producers are experimenting with various combinations of crop rotations to see what thrives best on another crop's residue – and it is clear that many are seeing the real value of the process. "It's good for the soil to change crops," said Kevin. "The key is to discover what crops grow best on different types of residue. Soy does well after corn." Kevin grows wheat, followed by corn – and then soy – in one-year rotations.

Growing shelterbelts, or strategically-placed rows of trees on otherwise flat landscapes, is another idea that provides remarkable benefits: they shelter crops, livestock and buildings from the wind (which makes for healthier animals and greater energy-efficiency); they help disperse and control snowdrifts in the winter; they provide new habitat opportunities for wildlife; and they trap carbon in the ground which mitigates the impact of greenhouse gases.

Another key practice that's being adopted by farmers across the country is called precision farming; a method where they test their soils, crops and manure to determine the exact amount of nutrients required to achieve maximum yield.

Crop rotations, precision farming and shelterbelts are just three of a growing list of 'best management practices' designed to work in unison to increase production efficiency and help maintain the richness of the soil.

Other management techniques include conservation tillage – where nutrient-rich residue from one crop is left in the field when the next crop is planted, covercrops to protect against erosion and to store the carbon in the ground, and a host of others that deal with livestock and manure management.

The Climate Change Action Fund (CCAF) Agriculture Awareness Partnership has assumed the challenge of identifying these innovative ideas and sharing them with others. "We have several initiatives", says Stephen Broad, Acting President, Soil Conservation Council of Canada. "October is Agriculture Awareness Month – an important time of year where we try to increase awareness of the issues – and we have the ongoing efforts of our Partnership, whose members are constantly working with producers, the government and the media to demonstrate the potential in using these proven best management practices."

Canada has a proud agricultural heritage and is known around the world for innovation and excellence. The Partnership was formed in 1998 to build on this momentum and its members include the Soil Conservation Council of Canada, the Eastern Canada Soil and Water Conservation Centre, The Canadian Cattlemen's Association, Agriculture and Agrifood Canada (PFRA) and the Canadian Federation of Agriculture.



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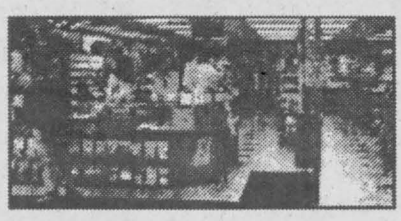

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Fall Plowing

A farmer is caught in the act of plowing this fall. A cash cropper, he had a lot of field ahead of him on this autumn day. A pile of Sea gulls follow a rig like this and at times the turned, black earth was almost white with birds. Sea gulls seem to travel quite far north when the plows start to turn sod. This big Ford tractor does a great job and short work of a lot of acres.

Chieftain Photo by S.L.Johnston

Electricity rates up & down after industry deregulation

Ontario's electricity industry was de-regulated earlier this year, and as predicted, prices for electric energy have taken wide swings, especially during the hot days of this past summer-almost all upward swings.

The OFA fought hard during restructuring discussions to endure that rural rate assistance was maintained. This assistance is to keep rural power costs close to the Ontario average, but it's difficult to calculate of this is happening on today's market.

As mentioned, swings in the price for power were expected. What was not expected was a rocketing up of power bills because of other added charges. Bills on average are up to 21 percent across the province, but we have received calls from members who have seen their power bills double.

The Ontario Energy Board has approved new rates for transmission and local distribution. In all areas of rural Ontario, that cost used to total 1.1 billion dollars. With the new rates, that total is now 1.5 billion dollars as Hydro One added its profit of half a billion dollars.

Hydro One has made other changes as it attempts to increase profits. Cutting costs by reducing maintenance and service is the most obvious. For residents of rural Ontario, including farmers, this has translated to longer, more frequent periods without electricity.

The changes also include a new charge as the electricity sector attempts to pay off Hydro's accumulated debt of more than 30 billion dollars. This levy has gone from seven-tenths of a cent to one percent per kilowatt hour.

For farmers, a relatively large increase in their bill comes from the basic monthly service charge for farm account without rural assistance-up from 455 dollars per month to 101 dollars per month.

A number of factors have resulted in the market price of electric energy going from 3.5 cents per kilowatt hour in May to 7.5 cents in August., Much of that increase was caused by high demand during the heat of the summer months, but there could be other causes behind the jump.

We understand one of the generators at the Bruce Nuclear Station was under repair for most of June, July and August and power had to be imported to satisfy demand. At the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, we're attempting to find out if the repairs were done as quickly as possible, or drawn out to keep prices high.

We have also found out that the electricity auction rules allow all generating companies to get the highest price, rather than the price they bid. This has the impact of increasing returns to the generating companies when "accidents" cause shutdowns, and the longer the repair period, the longer the increased returns carry on for the generating companies.

Because the cost of electricity and its delivery to farms in Ontario is such a significant part of a farmer's cost of production, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture is sorting through the new de-regulated system in search of answers. There should be reasonable answers to the questions OFA has raised, but so far the aren't obvious.

When the cost of energy is allowed to continue to rise in rural Ontario, more than just the farmers end up paying. These higher costs make rural Ontario less attractive for businesses looking for a place to operate. Without new businesses coming to rural Ontario, job opportunities for our youth disappear. As the rural economy shrinks, property taxes are forced higher for farm and rural residential owners.

OFA will continue to monitor the situation, develop our case, and push for acceptable solutions.

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Giants

his fourth birthday."

This docile pair have proved they can pull their share, since they have drawn 4000 pounds at the Horse Pull at South Mountain this past spring in a special exhibition class.

Telling us what the various terms are he uses with the team, Irwin introduced us to Bright and Buck who are around five and ahalf years old. The names were chosen since these were the same names used by Irwin's maternal grandfather for the last team of oxen he owned. An aunt of his recalled the team and the names. "Every team has a nigh ox and an off ox. Bright is the nigh ox, the one on the side closest to him when he is leading them. Buck is the off ox, the one who walks on the outerside of the team."

Walking along side the oxen team, slightly ahead where they can see him with his goad, which is a long wooden pole or cane telling the oxen to "Gee" and "Haw" referring to right and left, exactly the same as horse drivers and dog sled mushers use. "You can lead a good pair of oxen without saying a word. The best teams will stop when the driver places the end of the goad on the ground and start walking again whrn the goad is picked up." The goad is also used to give directional taps on the oxens' legs when required to turn the team around.

When a team of oxen are fully trained they are said to be "Handy." Irwin guesses Bright and Buck are "Semi-Handy", the main reason being there is simply not enough real work for them to do. Slightly out of step and perhaps not as toned as he would like to see them, once he gets them plowing this fall he will no doubt reach this goal.

He is hopeful as well that he can cultivate an interest in oxen in eastern Ontario. He sees the gentle giants as pergect 4H CLub projects for the young people involved in the program. Suggesting that any kid can have a team of oxen since they are inexpensive to purchase and easily kept in any barn or shed, he shows off the five sizes of yoke Bright and Buck have outgrown. "I built these myself for the team using pictures from an old 4H manual I had stored away for reference," he laughingly says.

Stroking their heads as we visit, he tells how even though as they cart youngsters around the grounds at Dairyfest, slowly plodding along, they are quite able to run. "If they are in the field and do not wish to be caught, they sure can run, and fast in the opposite direction!" As they nuzzle his hand the bond between them is evident and certainly must contribute to the working relationship man and beast have.

Beautiful Bantams

The evolution of bantams began over 150 years ago, only in the latter half of the 20th century have they become popular and refined.

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One of the oldest British breeds, there are two varieties, Golds and Silvers, both very charming birds to look at, and quite unique in build and colour. They are not particularly robust, and can be difficult to reproduce. The males are "hen feathered," unlike other breeds. Strutting and jaunty, when presented on top form they have a good chance of top honours.



South Mountain Fair's Best Sebright.
Chieftain Photo by Rebecca Comfort

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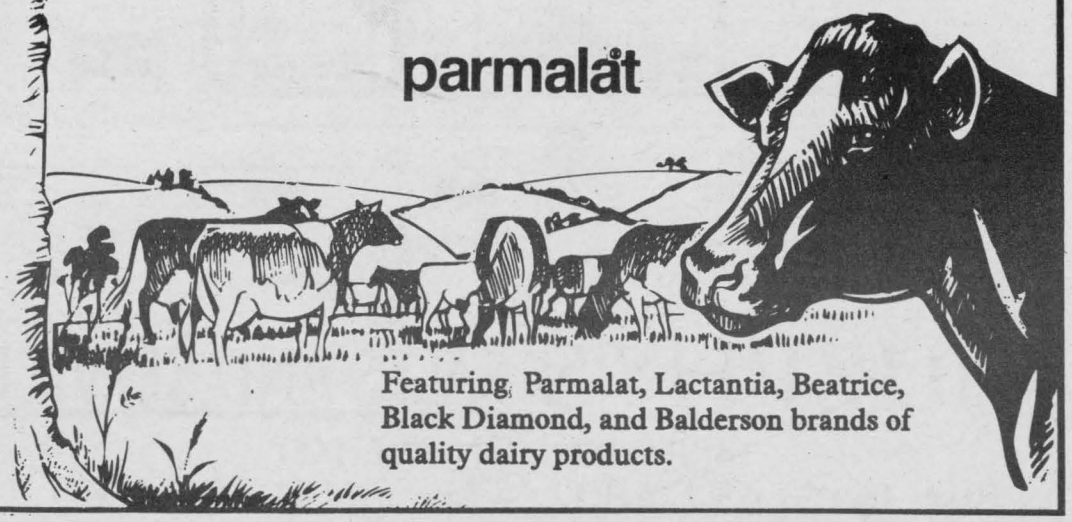

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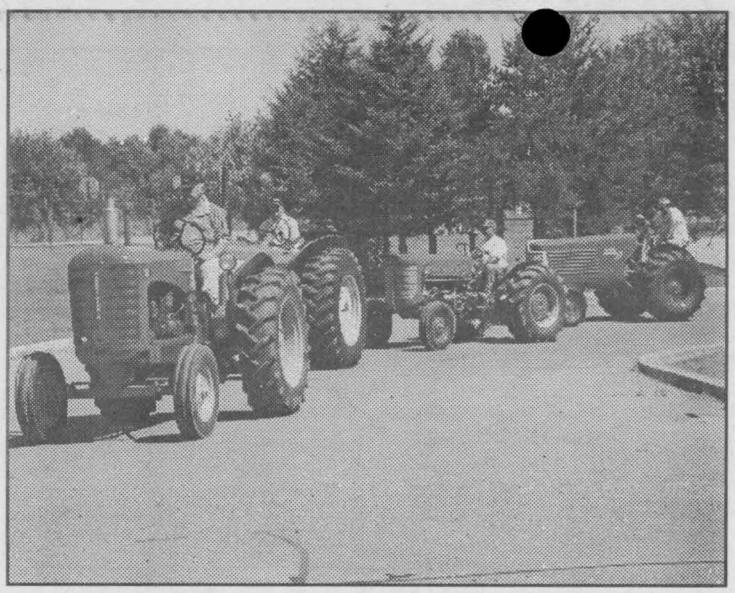

Tractors-Tractors-Tractors

A parade of antique tractors drew a few second glances in the South Mountain Fair Parade this summer. They were part of the S.D. Antique Festival hosted at Matilda Hall as well. They run as good as they looked too. Collectables of our heritage.

Chieftain Photo by S.L. Johnston

LETTERS

Hay Drive Thank You

Dear Editor,

The Dundas County Hay Drive is finished. It was a success from many points of view. Agricultural county organizations came together to coordinate this effort. Dundas County farmers donated over 1000 bales of hay, not including the many bales that left the county before the Hay Drive started.

We have received "Thank-you" notes from Western farmers. The Saskatchewan Cattle Feeders Association send us a note, "Every day we receive calls from men and women who've received hay-many who are almost in tears, asking us to send messages to producers in the east. For some, this hay was a last resort and will hold them over until feed sources are found. For others, portions of their herds have already been sold and this hay will result in them keeping what livestock they have left, along with their pride".

In this week of Thanksgiving, I want to give thanks and appreciation for all the support we received in the Dundas County Hay Drive. A big Thank You to the farmers who donated hay to the telephone coordinators, Carole Mc Dermott and Susan Klein-Swormink, the depot coordinators Brian VandenBerg and Stephen Mellon Derrick Richmire, Alvin Runnalls, Nick Thurler and especially Keith Durant for arranging transportation. Thanks also to Robert McMenomy, Peter Guy and Keith Baker for their help with loading. Last but certainly not least a big round of applause for the trucking companies who transported the hay to the train depot in Smiths Falls, Gordon Stewart, Winchester, Tim Backes, Winchester, Peter Noort, Kemptville, Jack Durant, Chesterville, Greg Carruthers, Chesterville and Ed Duncan and driver Henry Luimes, Mountain.

Dundas County as a rural community can be proud of its volunteers and the spirit of working together to help where it is needed.

Corry Martens,
President
Dundas Federation
of Agriculture.

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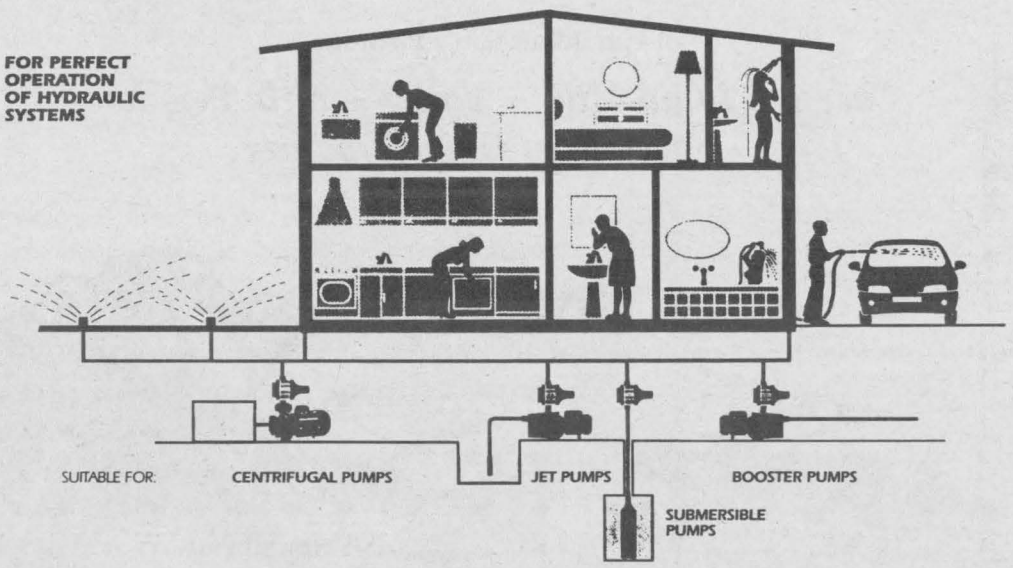

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Nutrient Management act discussed at the W. B. George Centre, Kemptville College

By Diana Leeson
Chieftain Staff Reporter

Members of the farming community, concerned residents and lobbyists converged upon the WB George Centre at Kemptville College on Friday, October 11, to have their say on the first draft of the province's Nutrient Management Act.

One of only three such public consultation meetings in Ontario, the event was well attended, with standing room only and a horde of media representatives taking account of speakers, spectators and politicians with lively facial expressions.

The Minister of Agriculture and Food, Helen Johns, was 'fogged in' and couldn't leave Toronto in time for the meeting, so the Honorable Chris Stockwell, Minister of the Environment, had to run the show himself.

The purpose of the meeting was to consult with the public on the contents of the NMA, which consists of two main parts: content requirements for nutrient management plans (NMPs) and the categories of livestock operations that will require these NMPs.

The concerns raised by the NMA were varied and extensive, ranging from Sarsfield residents upset over the proposed establishment of another hog farm in their area, to the septage issue in North Grenville, and the various personal concerns of smaller farmers inquiring as to how they will be able to afford to implement the NMPs in their individual operations.

As manager of Public Works for the Township of North Grenville, Chris Lyon spent his ten minutes of allotted time speaking about the difficulty that the township expects to face when, in five years according to the NMA, it will be illegal to spread the by-products of processed septage, also known as biosolids, on area fields.

The water treatment plant in North Grenville will have to be tested and adapted to process the region's septage, a huge undertaking that will take 5 to 7 years to complete.

Speakers had their time reduced from fifteen minutes to ten, to allow time for twelve of them to bring up individual points of concern.

Minister Stockwell made comments on the concerns raised in each deputation, promising to look at each one closely.

Representatives from: the Chicken Farmers of Ontario; the County of Renfrew; the Renfrew, Glengarry and Frontenac Federations of Agriculture; the Dairy Farmers of Ontario; the Grenville Cattlemen's Association; the Ontario Corn Producers Association; and Ontario Pork as well as the Townships of North Algona and North Grenville and individual parties were invited to speak at the consultation, after submitting their concerns in writing earlier in the month.

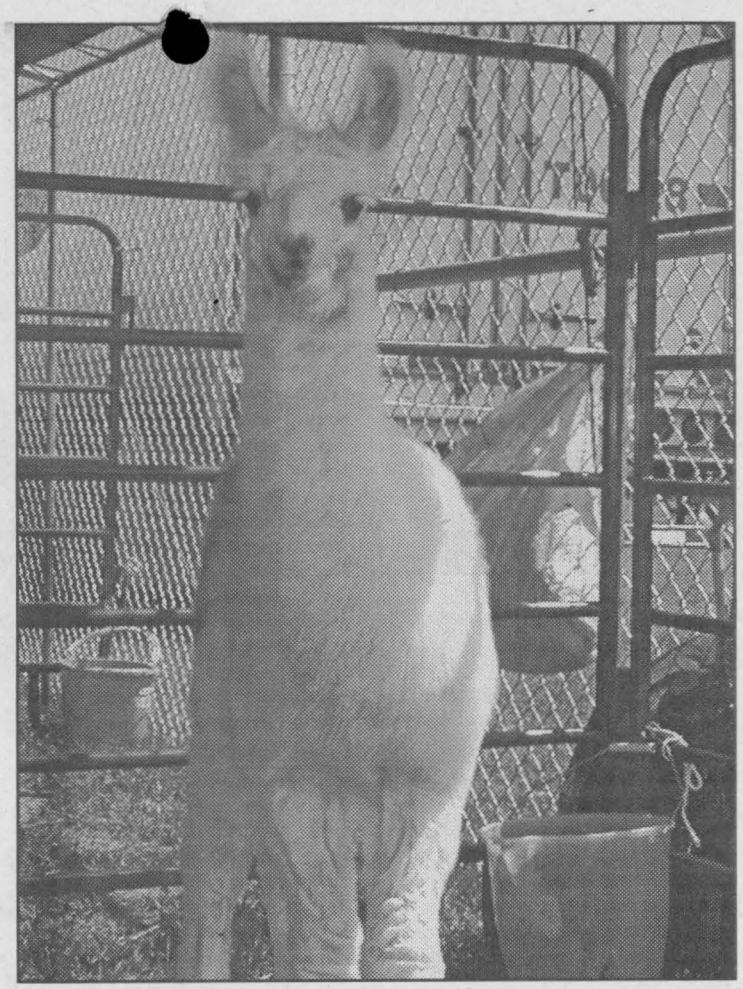
Bruce Hudson of Ontario Pork said that he hoped that the Ministry of the Environment was in close collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food in the establishment of the NMA, as the former tended to be rather 'heavy handed' with the farming community, while the latter were more sympathetic.

Stockwell replied that the Walkerton report stated that the MOE is required to take the lead in all issues related to safe drinking water, including nutrient management, and while they will be working with OMAF on the Act, all inspections and prosecutions will be the jurisdiction of the MOE.

Dairy Farmer Michael Hall of RR#3 Mountain said in his deputation that farmers want standard laws on nutrient management across the province.

In an interview earlier this week, Hall remarked that, although he feels the government has heard it all before, the public consultation on the NMA served to assist in formulating legislation.

"It (the Nutrient Management Act) is pretty good, actually," Hall stated. "They are trying to strike a balance and be practical; they are listening to what people are saying."



Llamas make an extremely unique pet.
Chieftain Photo by Rebecca Comfort

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One of the best features of a STIHL chain saw is where you buy it.

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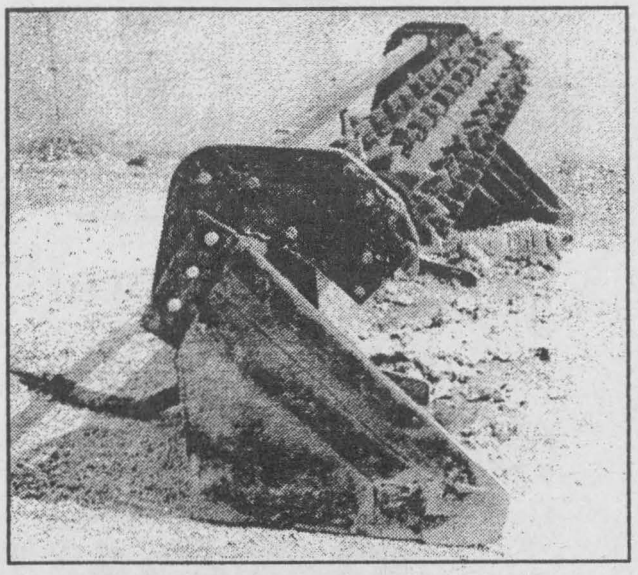

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