

Guelph Farm Family Wins 2007 Environmental Stewardship Award

February 21, 2007 (Toronto) – The Ontario Cattlemen’s Association (OCA) is pleased to announce that Dave and Connie Spencer are the winners of this year’s Environmental Stewardship Award (TESAward), sponsored by RBC Royal Bank and OCA. The Spencers operate a cow/calf farm near Guelph, Ontario, and were nominated for the award by Tracey Ryan, Supervisor of Conservation Services with the Grand River Conservation Authority.

The Spencer’s operation, Rife Creek Farm, is located on a well-traveled route between Guelph and Cambridge. A tributary of the Speed River, runs through their property and for years before the Spencers bought the farm, there was concern about livestock in the watercourse and manure runoff to the stream. Shortly after Dave and Connie took over the farm, they began to implement changes to reduce the impact of the operation on the environment. This included completing an Environmental Farm Plan.

“This award is a surprise and an honour for us,” says Dave Spencer. “While our herd size is relatively small, we knew when we purchased the farm that a number of improvements needed to be made. We had a lot of help and input from various parties and we’re grateful for that. The bottom line is that a farm shouldn’t be detrimental to the natural ecosystems around it and we wanted to ensure that our operation was as environmentally sound as possible.”

In 2001, the Spencers fenced the stream to prevent their cattle from wandering into it, and planted trees in the buffer. The project was completed with the financial assistance of the Rural Water Quality Program. The Spencers are extremely proud of this project and the ecological improvement that they have seen in the stream. A year later, they constructed a roofed storage building for solid manure. This means that manure is no longer piled in the yard on bare ground or spread during the winter. In conjunction with the manure storage they also completed a nutrient management plan.

The Spencers also changed some of their yard management to reduce the amount of run-off generated from the earthen yard. These changes included purchasing a mobile round bale feeder so that they can rotate feeding areas in the yard and paddock. They also undertook eavestroughing and land shaping to divert clean water away from the yard, and built a cement pad on which to mount their fuel tanks. Financial and technical assistance for the manure storage, nutrient management plan and clean water diversion were provided by the Wellington – Guleph Rural Water Quality Program.

The Spencers have hosted a number of tours on their farm, showcasing these practices, including a group of water resource managers from China.

In her nomination letter, Tracey Ryan writes “I am very confident that the Spencers are worthy recipients of the Environmental Stewardship Award. They are wonderful spokespersons for agriculture and the beef industry’s role in environmental stewardship. In addition to what the Spencers have completed already, they continue to think of new

projects that they can implement to not only improve the environment but also enhance their farm”.

The 2007 Award was presented at the OCA Annual General Meeting on February 21, by Sheila Smart of RBC Royal Bank.

The Spencers will go on to represent Ontario at the National Environmental Stewardship Award competition to be held on August 13-18, in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

TESAward recognizes the outstanding environmental stewardship of an Ontario cattleman. Special consideration is given to producers who have taken innovative approaches to environmentally sustainable cattle production.

The deadline for applications for the 2008 Environmental Stewardship Award is November 30, 2007.

For details visit the OCA Web site at www.cattle.guelph.on.ca after February 15th.

-30-

For more information contact:

Lianne Appleby, Ontario Cattlemen’s Association: (519) 824-0334

Dave Spencer, TESA Winner: (519) 766-9542

Sheila Smart, RBC Royal Bank: (519) 376-2441