

Manitoulin Farm Family Wins 2006 Environmental Stewardship Award

February 21, 2006 (Toronto) – The Ontario Cattlemen’s Association (OCA) is pleased to announce that Gerald and Anna Armstrong of Gore Bay, Ontario, are the winners of this year’s Environmental Stewardship Award (TESAward), sponsored by RBC Royal Bank and OCA. The Armstrongs operate a cow/calf farm outside Gore Bay on Manitoulin Island.

When Gerald took over the century-old family farm, it was with the goal to increase productivity and improve environmental conditions on the land. It soon became apparent to him that in order to fulfill those goals, water management was the key.

“With a farm located in an area of shallow soils with little moisture reserve in dry summers, it was important to have a large enough water supply available to aid in crop production,” he says.

The first major project was the construction of a dam that could capture and control run-off. During the first spring following construction, approximately six million gallons of water were available for habitat and irrigation. The pond was fenced to establish a buffer strip of approximately seven acres, with no access for cattle, which provided habitat for nesting waterfowl.

Gerald is also a strong believer in large scale rotational grazing. His plot sizes are approximately 150 acres and every pasturing area has a minimum of a 2-month uninterrupted rest period to allow re-establishment through self-seeding. This method extends the Armstrong’s pasturing season into early winter.

The second major farm project was the creation of a wetland swamp to serve as a water source for pasture irrigation. This project created a wetland area of approximately 60 acres, holding approximately 20 million gallons of water. The Anderson’s have already seen a wide variety of wildlife and plant species become well-established in the area. During the last growing season approximately 4 million gallons were used for irrigation purposes with the remaining 22 million gallons utilized by various species in the wetland habitat.

The reservoir also permitted the Armstrongs to increase forage yields on 17 acres through the use of subterranean irrigation. This non-mechanized irrigation system is possible because the reservoir is ten feet above the existing field. The tile drainage is used to primarily drain excess moisture, but is able to add needed moisture during dry seasons. With the increased water supply, Gerald has increased crop production through irrigation and subsequently increased his cattle herd.

The Armstrongs have also completed an Environmental Farm Plan and profiled their farm for nutrient management strategy purposes. Due to the shallow soils of the farm, both the Environmental Farm Plan and sections of the Nutrient Management Act have

identified manure storage as an area of concern on the Armstrong farm. Construction of a new barn for indoor manure storage and composting of manure is currently in progress. Gerald has contributed his environmental stewardship to the agricultural community in many ways. He has presented at Cattlemen's meetings on his two wetland projects and has encouraged other producers to participate in environmental programs. He has also hosted fencing demonstrations, and is a representative in many agri-environmental groups in his community.

The 2006 Award was presented at the 11th Annual Cattlemen's College program (part of the OCA Annual General Meeting) on February 21, by Sheila Smart of RBC Royal Bank. The Armstrong's will go on to represent Ontario at the National Environmental Stewardship Award competition to be held next August in Niagara Falls, Ontario. 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 2007 Environmental Stewardship Award is November 17, 2006. For details visit the OCA website at www.cattle.guelph.on.ca

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