

New Liskeard Cattlemen win prestigious Environmental Award

February 24, 2004 (Toronto) – Mark and Carol Wilson of Westrock Farms were presented with the 2004 Environmental Stewardship Award at the annual meeting of the Ontario Cattlemen's Association (OCA) today in Toronto. The Wilsons raise 60 cows and their offspring on their farm at R.R.#1 New Liskeard, Ontario.

The award is sponsored by RBC Royal Bank and the Ontario Cattlemen's Association. Presenting the award to the Wilsons was Sheila Smart on behalf of RBC Royal Bank. The environmental program being implemented on Westrock Farms focuses on a number of areas. Restricting cattle from watercourses and from bush areas has been their top priority over the last number of years. They have also constructed a covered winter manure storage and feeding areas to improve efficiency; have worked to contain manure run-off through a series of settling ponds and berms and use a rotational grazing system to improve pasture efficiency. The Wilsons have also implemented a comprehensive health and vaccination program for their cattle to ensure that the cattle leaving their farm are as safe and as healthy as possible.

In a number of locations, they've also implemented buffer strips as soil filters and stabilizers. Other environmental projects have included completion of an Environmental Farm Plan and participated in a nutrient management planning workshops; wellhead enhancements and construction of a concrete covered fuel storage system. The Wilsons test their water supply biannually and their soil annually to ensure that their water supply is safe and to determine nutrient requirements for their crops. They have also planted more than 250 trees on their property over the last decade.

In a letter supporting the Wilsons' nomination, area veterinarian Dr. Lance Males, described them as model candidates. Said Males, "In my opinion, Mark Wilson embodies the ideal of a farmer being a steward of the land. He continues to market premium stock, while being environmentally conscious and leaving his farm in much better condition than when he started."

The Wilsons will go on to represent Ontario at the National Environmental Stewardship Award competition to be held next August in Calgary, Alberta.

The deadline for applications for the 2005 Environmental Stewardship Award is November 19, 2004. For details visit the OCA website at www.cattle.guelph.on.ca

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