

Meet the Robinsons

Rose and Bob have raised five children and thousands of pigs on Vista Villa Farm near Stratford, Ontario. The Robinsons' farm is a typical example of a diversified agricultural enterprise that has grown with the family and is now home to 1700 sows and their piglets. Scott, Brent and Jeff returned home after completing their post-secondary education to work on the farm.

Together with the seven people they employ, each family member specializes in a different aspect of the operation: caring for pigs, managing manure, growing crops, marketing their crops and pigs, or working in the office to keep this innovative business growing.

“Some of our land has been in the family for three generations,” Brent explains. “It’s our job to leave the farm in better shape than it was when we took over, for all of our children. Canadian farmers are more environmentally aware now than in the past. We are making better decisions with the new management tools and scientific information available today. As our farm has grown, so has our investment in the environment.”

To them, manure is, and always has been, a valuable natural fertilizer. With crop prices remaining low, keeping associated costs down is important. Soil tests and computer software can match the amount of manure required for each crop, which reduces or eliminates the need to buy fertilizer. Some neighboring farmers who don’t own livestock arrange to have some of the Robinsons’ manure applied to their fields.

The Robinsons use the latest spreading techniques to make the best use of their manure, control odour and prevent water contamination. They have also made major financial investments in expanding their manure storage to ensure they can wait until conditions are right for spreading. Like many pork producers, they are considerate of their neighbours’ needs and try to keep odours down.

Everyone in the area knows the Robinson family as active volunteers in their local community. They communicate with their neighbours all the time.

Brent explains, “Caring for the environment is a part of our business and our way of life. The bottom line is that we live in our workplace. Our actions affect our farm, our neighbours and my family directly, for today and tomorrow.”