

Meet the Skinners

Some people believe that farming in the 'the good old days' was more environmentally friendly than farming carried out today. As people in general have become more aware of the environment and more research has been directed that way, farmers too have adopted practices that are better - both for the environment and for the neighbours.

Larry Skinner farms near Listowel with his wife, Nancy, and three children, Stuart, Donald and Kathleen. Several years ago, the family completed an Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) a process in which they evaluated their operation, identified environmental strengths and established ways of operating their farm in a more environmentally friendly manner

As well as being concerned with the environment, the Skinners also take care to maintain good relationships with their neighbours. "We try to do the little courtesies," Skinner says, adding that they notify their neighbours before spreading manure and try to complete the job as quickly as possible.

The Skinners have also taken advantage of technology that helps reduce the odour from pig manure as it is spread. They use an aeration windmill whose blades introduce oxygen and keeps the solids in suspension. Skinner explains that this device changes the nature of the odour and results in something with "kind of a peat-moss like smell".

The Skinners are looking to the future with optimism. Larry and Nancy have made a conscious effort to keep their children involved in the farm and they will soon be reaching an age to decide if farming is in their future.

Larry sums up the challenge that farmers have known for generations, "I know we have done our jobs right if we can pass our farm to the next generation of farmers in better shape than when we took it over."