

Grey County Beef Farmer Wins 2011 Ontario Pasture Award

FEBRUARY 23, TORONTO - The sponsors of the Ontario Pasture Award - the Ontario Cattlemen's Association (OCA), MAPLESEED and the Ontario Forage Council (OFC) - are pleased to announce that James McKinlay "Silver Springs Farms" at Ravenna in Grey County, is the winner of the 2011 Pasture Award. The prestigious award was presented today at the OCA Annual General Meeting. For his environmental and pasture improvements and management, McKinlay will receive a cash award of \$750 and a bag of forage seed, courtesy of MAPLESEED, plus a complimentary stay for one night at the OCA Annual Meeting.

James and his wife, Joan McKinlay, operate Silver Springs Farms with approximately 400 acres of pasture and 500 acres of cash crop including winter wheat, soybeans, canola, barley and corn. James is quick to point out that, in their operation, a good crop rotation is extremely important and forages play a vital role in that rotation.

James grazes about 150 cow-calf pairs, plus an additional 80 heifers are bred for herd replacement and breeding stock sales.

The cows are pastured in groups and are rotationally grazed on several different farm locations. James is a strong believer in a good rotational grazing system and states, "Keep it simple and achievable. By doing so, you will accomplish successful results. Fresh clean water is also of utmost importance, so fenced corridors have been constructed to protect the water source and provide restricted access to quality water close to each paddock."

As James says, "We recognize the responsibilities we have as food producers and ambassadors for agriculture, especially the importance of demonstrating good land stewardship to our urban neighbours who form an integral part of our local community."

Gerrit Van Keulen, Sales Manager with MAPLESEED, comments that the pasture management program being utilized on Silver Springs Farms is a model that not only makes greater use of pasture resources, but is also another good example of positive and sustainable environmental practices.

Ray Robertson, Manager of the Ontario Forage Council, said that as producers try to cope with the challenging times, the practical techniques being followed by the McKinlays are great examples that can help many producers maximize their net returns.

The deadline for applications for the 2012 Ontario Pasture Award is November 30, 2011.

For details, call the Ontario Forage Council at 1-877-892-8663 or visit either the Ontario Forage Council's Web site at www.ontarioforagecouncil.com or the Ontario Cattlemen's Association Web site at www.cattle.guelph.on.ca .

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