

NEWS RELEASE

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Ravenna Area Beef Farmer Receives 2023 Mapleseed Pasture Award

February 22, 2023 (Toronto, Ont.) – The Beef Farmers of Ontario, Mapleseed and the Ontario Forage Council, sponsors of the Mapleseed Pasture Award, are pleased to announce Tom Aikins of Ravenna in the Blue Mountains area of Grey County is the recipient of the 2023 Mapleseed Pasture Award. The award was presented today at the Beef Farmers of Ontario Annual General Meeting Banquet in Toronto. For his environmental improvements and exceptional pasture management, Aikins received a cash award of \$500 and a bag of forage seed, courtesy of Mapleseed.

This year's Beef Pasture Award recipient is a relatively new farmer. Neither of Aikins' parents farmed but as a young teenager, he developed a keen interest in agriculture. The "co-op programs" offered in high school paired with his enthusiasm, respect, and willingness to apply himself, has brought him a long way. At age 19, he rented his first farm.

"I am reliant on rented land while developing my beef herd and building equity," says Aikins. "I have focused on rebuilding the soil to improve production."

Aikins is quick to recognize neighbouring farmers who have taught him a lot, and also provided part-time employment on their farms. He has a beef herd consisting of 45 cows and five replacement heifers, and also custom feeds 30 calves. Rotational grazing is a key part of his management-plan. He feeds round bales on pasture fields during winter to improve organic matter and fertility, while reducing labour costs. According to Aikins, his top five pasture management practices to best use his resources are: rotationally grazing small paddocks; electric cross fencing to manage paddock size; runways to move cattle through to farther pastures; winter feeding pasture; and hauling manure onto pastures to increase fertility.

"It's wonderful to watch a new farm enterprise evolve and develop," says Scott Fisher, Sales Manager, Western Ontario with Mapleseed. "With a concern for stewardship, combined with an appetite for knowledge, it is great to see that passion rewarded."

"The recipient is a great example of a young farmer who has followed his dream," says Ray Robertson, Manager of the Ontario Forage Council. "Tom has demonstrated his ability to effectively manage his beef and pasture operation."

The deadline for applications for the 2024 Mapleseed Pasture Award is November 30, 2023.

For More Information and Photos:

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