

NEWS RELEASE

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Circle H Farms Receives Award in Recognition of Environmental Stewardship *The 2024 Ontario Environmental Stewardship Award Recipient*

February 21, 2024 (Toronto, Ont.) – The Beef Farmers of Ontario (BFO) is pleased to announce the Hyatt family of Circle H Farms as the 2024 Ontario recipients of The Environmental Stewardship Award (TESA), sponsored by the RBC Royal Bank. The award was presented to the family at BFO’s 2024 Annual General Meeting Banquet, which was held in Toronto, this week.

Circle H Farms, operated by the Hyatt family – Shawn, Tracy, Gord and Pat – is located in the Rainy River District of Ontario. There, they raise close to 250 cows, 50 bred heifers and over 130 background calves on pastureland that is also home to many trees, riparian areas, ponds and natural waterways. In an effort to improve the environmental footprint of their farm, the Hyatts have implemented various responsible management practices including rotational grazing, off-site watering systems using solar energy and bale grazing.

Since trialing a rotational grazing project on a small portion of their pastures, the Hyatts have been implementing these beneficial practices over their entire farm. Each of their pastures are now divided into several permanently-fenced paddocks and they use temporary fencing to further divide the paddocks to improve the nutrient distribution, pasture growth and carbon storage of their pastures.

“One practice we’ve experienced major success with is rejuvenating our pastures using bale grazing. We’ve seen pastures reseed with moisture held in the ground resulting in lush and plentiful pastures,” says Shawn Hyatt. “We’ve also implemented a delayed haying program on some of our fields to help create safe habitats for birds, wildlife and other critters on the farm.”

The success of their grazing and forage management program was especially evident in 2021 when beef farmers in northern Ontario were experiencing extreme drought conditions. Fortunately, the Hyatt family was able to carry their cows on pasture through to the fall.

In the spirit of continuous improvement, Circle H Farms has their sights set on some new environmental improvements. They’re experimenting with swath grazing and adding additional plant species to their pasture mix, and they’ve already updated their older manual watering systems to more efficient solar models.

“Circle H Farms is an operation that not only cares about their cattle, but the habitat they’re providing for birds and other wildlife. This is a family farm with multiple generations working together to advance agriculture in northern Ontario,” says Joe Sletmoen from the Rainy River Soil & Crop Improvement Association. “They’re passionate about what they do and are willing to share their learnings and expertise so that we can all benefit.”

TESA recognizes the outstanding environmental stewardship of an Ontario beef farmer. Special consideration is given to farmers who have taken innovative approaches to environmentally sustainable beef production.

For More Information and Photos

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