

Outstanding Young Farm Competition won by Ontario Sheep Producer

On April 6th, 2002, John and Eadie were fortunate enough to participate in, and win the Outstanding Young Farmer Competition for the Ontario Region. This unique program was designed to recognize farm couples that exemplify excellence in their profession. The program also strives to promote agriculture among the urban population. This is the first time in the history of this program that a sheep farm has been awarded this title. They will represent Ontario at the National competition at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair in November, 2002. We appreciate the generous sponsorship of this program by Pioneer, BASF and Growmark companies. Photos by Gary Struthers, OFA.



John Steele gained a considerable amount of sheep experience having farmed in partnership with his father in England. Together, John and his father ran the 200-ewe "Persnore" flock of Pedigree Suffolk sheep along with a 1500 ewe, recorded commercial flock. This flock was used as a progeny testing platform for the Suffolks. Notable successes were winning, both in 1987 and 1988, the National Lamb Carcass Competition at the English Royal Show.

John and Eadie emigrated from England in May of 1990. By June of 1991 they had their first 67 commercial ewes on rented pasture. The ewes were Dorset, Suffolk and Romanov crossbreds and they used Suffolk rams. In April 1993, John and Eadie purchased the Metcalfe family farm from Eadie's parents, south of Norwood, in Peterborough County, Ontario.

John worked off-farm, full-time for the Royal Bank and then the CIBC until October 1997. In 1996, John and Eadie were one of five farms selected to take part in the Ontario Lamb Improvement Breeding Strategy as Replicating Breeders. Their first shipment of 48 OLIBS ewes arrived in December, 1997.

John and Eadie managed two separate flocks under strict biosecurity regulations and by November 1999, they had enough OLIBS ewes to sell their previous commercial flock and breed strictly from the OLIBS flock. In November 2000, John and Eadie



implanted OLIBS ewes with Texel embryos in an effort to provide health matched terminal sires for complete commercial breeding stock packages. To add to this small flock, they have also purchased 127 Texel embryos from New Zealand. These embryos were implanted in September 2001 and the resulting lambs were born in February, 2002. The 38 ewes and 26 rams give them an excellent foundation for their purebred flock.

The present farm consists of 300 acres with 230 workable. Productive land is split between 115 acres of pasture and 115 acres of haylage and corn for silage. The 850-ewe flock, with accompanying rams, is comprised solely of animals bred from the OLIBS program.



John and Eadie have completed numerous environmental stewardship projects. They have worked closely with the Wetland Habitat Fund, the Peterborough County Rural Water Quality Program, completed Ontario's Environmental Farm Plan and their farm is a Best Management Practices demonstration site for the Ontario Sheep Marketing Agency.

John and Eadie's farming operation is a combination of British, American, Australian and New Zealand technologies and production systems, adopted to suit Ontario conditions and markets. (They also acquire ideas from other commodity groups i.e. nutrition from dairy, brooder heaters from poultry, greenhouses from horticulture and feeders from swine industry.) Whenever John and Eadie travel, they are constantly looking for new ideas that can be worked into their own operation.