

# Environmental Efforts Pay Off

Rodanjen Farms has come a long way

by Darlene Bowen, OCA Director

**A**S YOU DRIVE PAST RODANJEN Farms in rural northern Ontario, the complete picture is not obvious. Behind the neat yard and white board fences is an environmental story waiting to be told. The farm of Ron and Anne Bailey is a cow/calf-cash crop operation with a difference. For 20 years the Baileys have made a concentrated annual effort to improve the environmental conditions on their farm.

In 1976 they purchased the first of three farms they now own in the Wabi River Valley near Thornloe, Ontario. Environmental problems that were immediately evident included river valley pollution by unrestricted access of livestock and manure stockpiling problems. Manure had been piled and then pushed over the bank into the water-course. Serious soil erosion had been caused by years of cattle trampling the river banks and overgrazing had removed much of the protective cover.

Economic problems were caused by the low productivity of the land. This included low fertility, poor drainage and reliance on natural regeneration of pasture and hay land. Another major problem was hardware disease which claimed four cows in the first year of ownership. In order to survive and prosper, the economic problems had to be addressed immediately and the environmental issues as it became possible.

Solutions to the problems came from a variety of actions. The hardware disease was eliminated by doing a thor-



At the 34th OCA Annual Meeting earlier this year, Anne and Ron Bailey were awarded The Environmental Stewardship Award (TESAward). In it's second year as an annual event, this award was developed to recognize the outstanding environmental stewardship of an Ontario beef operation. The award is sponsored by Boehringer Ingelheim. Above, Ron, daughter Jennifer and Anne Bailey.

ough clean-up of fence lines and cattle yards. Soil fertility was improved with limes, fertilizer and a manure management plan. To increase productivity, tile draining was installed.

They also began growing productive legumes and grasses which made multiple cuttings in the same year possible. A rotational grazing system covering the entire farm was constructed. These improvements allowed them to increase productivity to the present herd of 45 purebred Charolais brood cows in addition to the associated young stock.

In 1992, the river valley was fenced to allow regeneration of that area. A stable river crossing was constructed to allow access to pastureland on the other side and is only used for six weeks during July and August.

Trees have been a major environmental undertaking on the Bailey farm and thousands have been planted in the last 20 years. The river valley has been revegetated with white spruce and jack-pine to aid in erosion control and cedar and cranberry seedlings to increase

cover for aquatic life.

This team believes that projects on their farm must be environmentally beneficial and economically feasible. To assess their situation, the Baileys completed an Environmental Farm Plan of their operation and encourage others to do the same. When asked why they source ecologically sound answers to their problems, Ron answered, "Both Anne and I believe that we must make the world a better place to live and it should be better after we leave then before we arrived."

That has been the basic philosophy that has guided them through farming and through life. The journey to environmental sustainability on their operation never ends. Future plans are always being considered. "Completing a project allows us the opportunity to evaluate another area that needs attention", says Anne. Fencing the river's edge has brought into focus the need to set aside a steep hillside below the barn. It will be fenced, restricted, planted with trees and left to regenerate.

Another goal is to establish a tree windbreak to shelter the farmstead and cattle wintering areas from the strong northwest winds that blast through the flatland during the winter months. A pet

project for Ron is the creation of an arboretum in the north west corner near the house. It would be sheltered by large white spruce transplanted from local bushlots but would contain exotic ornamental trees and shrubs.

Environmental awareness has been prevalent in both farm and family life. The Bailey's three children strongly support their parent's ongoing commitment to the environmental needs of the farm. Their oldest son, David, works for the Sudbury Nutrino Observatory. Jennifer is an environmental biologist and Jody is an environmental technician. Both daughters live in Toronto. Many ideas that have proved successful for the operation have been suggestions the children have brought home from outside sources.


Both Ron and Anne are community minded. Anne is a medical laboratory technologist and she works part-time

off the farm. She is a director for the Temiskaming Federation of Agriculture and secretary for the Catholic Women's League. Ron serves as the north eastern director to Beef Improvement Ontario and is a commissioner for the Crop

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Insurance Commission of Ontario. Locally, he is on the Board for the Temiskaming Cattle-men's Association and chairman of the Northern Evaluation Committee. In keeping with their basic philosophy, Ron and Anne believe in the right to education for everyone. Ron has served as past chair of the South Temiskaming Literacy Council and both he and Anne have volunteered their time to tutor adults learning to read.

Rodanjen Farms is a success story because of two very committed people with the willpower and determination to identify problems and implement solutions. Their philosophy has guided them in making decisions that had both

a positive effect environmentally and were socially responsible. Ron and Anne have chosen to follow their philosophy with their family, their farm, and their life. Showcasing the farm to others is their contribution and example of what can be done environmentally to help improve the harmonious existence of agriculture in the eco-system. 

## Cattle Options Pilot Project Workshops

OATI is offering workshop courses on the Cattle Options Pilot Project (cOPP). These courses are targeted to cattle feeders who have taken the cOPP seminar. Course cost is \$35.00 (4 hour workshop session). Local Cattlemen's Associations can make arrangements for a workshop in their area by contacting the local OATI coordinator. Participants should bring a calculator and their own production cost figures. For more information, please call 1-800-ONT-OATI.

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