



CANADIAN  
CATTLEMEN'S  
ASSOCIATION



The  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
STEWARDSHIP  
Award

National Voice Of Cattle Producers

# News Release

## CCA announces 2018 TESA recipient, Circle H Farms of Manitoba

August 15, 2018

London, ON - The Canadian Cattlemen's Association (CCA) is pleased to announce Circle H Farms near Brandon, MB, as the recipient of the 2018 The Environmental Stewardship Award (TESA). Circle H Farms is a purebred cow-calf operation owned and operated by Brian and Sonja Harper and family.

Located in the black soil zone of the Canadian Prairies on predominately sandy or sandy/clay loam lands, the 500-acre operation has undergone successive transformation of animal and land management practices since the Harpers purchased the conventional mixed farm in 1990. Managing depleted soils under pressure from wind and water erosion set the Harpers on a lifelong path of continual improvement of production practices to benefit their 80 head of cattle and rejuvenate the organic matter in the soils and improve the water and nutrient cycles. They switched to rotational grazing and perennial crops and, as time and budgets allowed, installed off-site watering systems, including a solar powered winter water system, planted trees, and completed an Environmental Farm Plan. Over the years, these and other ongoing efforts earned the Harpers acknowledgements as Conservation Farm Family of the Year and Manitoba Grazer of the Year.

Always observant of the impacts of changing production practices on their land, the Harpers discovered increased productivity of their grass as soil health improved. In 2014, they adopted high stock density grazing practices, which mimics nature, given the Tall Grass Prairies developed under pressure from large herds of wild ruminants like buffalo. This practice has turned out to be one of the best and the fastest ways to improve soil health on their lands while benefitting beef production. In three years of high stock density grazing, the Harpers saw beef production increase by 9,400lbs, off the same 130 acres. Zero inputs were used, just animal density and time management.

Duane Thompson, chair of the CCA Environment Committee, said the TESA judges recognize all the nominees as exceptional stewards of the lands they manage. Soil health and enhancing carbon sequestration was a strong theme across the board this year and the judges found that very positive, he said. Care of riparian habitat, surface water quality and overall biodiversity were also key focal points of nominees.

"What set the Harpers apart in their focus on soil health and soil biology is the use of technologies, innovative management practices and keen observations to gain an intimate understanding of enhancements that most benefit their specific environment. That stood out with the judges," Thompson said.

"Their commitment to regenerating soils to improve livestock and ecosystem health demonstrates the commitment to sustainability that the TESA embodies," he added.

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The CCA is the national voice for Canada's beef cattle industry representing 60,000 beef farms and feedlots.

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Thompson and Scott Dickson, Director of Livestock Services with TESA sponsor MNP, presented the Harpers with the 2018 TESA this evening at the Canadian Beef Industry Conference (CBIC) in London, ON. Brian, on behalf of his wife Sonja and children Thomas and Kristelle, expressed sincere gratitude as he accepted the award, a sterling silver TESA belt buckle and certificate.

The Harpers were humbled at being named the 2018 recipient of TESA and look forward to continuing to improve water and nutrient cycles of their soils.

*Thank you to our Platinum Sponsor MNP for sponsoring the TESA program.*

### **About TESA**

The CCA's national annual award, TESA has recognized the outstanding stewardship efforts of Canadian beef producers since 1996. For more information, click [here](#).

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