

W.G. Oulton & Sons Ltd. - The Oulton Family 2011 Winners of the Environmental Farm Stewardship Award

The Oulton farm sits on the crest of a hill, with rolling pastures, orchard, and woodland all around the property. A sign at the end of the long sweeping driveway announces “Mike Oulton Quality Meats” and as you drive up to the farm, you realize that this is not your “typical” farm. In addition to beef cattle, sheep and free-range turkeys and chickens, the farm also has other poultry including quail and partridge, several types of deer and elk, and other exotic animal species including emu and yak. The farm also consists of a provincially inspected abattoir and poultry processing plant and employs 16 fulltime and 10 seasonal workers.

The Oulton family has been farming this land for four generations, and all of the current members of the farm—Mike and Dianne, son Wayne and wife Nicole, and son Victor and wife Novadawn—take pride in their dedication to using sustainable agricultural and environmental practices in all aspects of the operation. The farm’s mission is to use sustainable agricultural and environmental practices and be exceptional caretakers of livestock in order to support the future generation and to provide a quality meat product. Whether they’re pasturing a new type of livestock or considering how to best store fuel on the farm, they research all projects to make sure they’re up to date with new technologies. The family works constantly to make the farm greener with less labour input and to have improved working conditions for everyone on the farm.

In recent years, the family has reduced the amount of fertilizer needed in their orchards by doing yearly soil and leaf analyses and using more organics from their livestock operation. A nutrient management plan has also been developed for all the farm fields and the orchard is under an integrated pest management program. There are numerous ponds located on the farm property, which provide habitat to waterfowl and other wildlife. All ponds on the property are fenced to reduce erosion from livestock, which are now watered by wells. The family works cooperatively with the Canadian Wildlife service, participating in the wild duck-banding program every winter for the past three years.



The Oultons have also developed an Agricultural Biodiversity Conservation Plan with the NS Department of Natural Resources. This plan identifies current farm practices and potential activities that support plant and animal biodiversity.

With a thriving farm market and butcher shop on the property, the Oulton family welcomes visitors to their farm daily. Mike believes this is a vital way to educate others about agriculture. “Having the public learn and understand agriculture and agricultural practices is a vital step to the ‘buy local’ initiative, and helps more people to value and maintain rural communities,” he says. Wayne agrees with his father’s vision. “We want as many people to come here as possible so they understand our passion for farming and for producing good, healthy foods.”



For their efforts, the Oulton family has been named the 2011 Farm Environmental Stewards of the Year. This award was established to highlight producers who make land, water and habitat stewardship a significant part of their farm operations. Eligible farmers are participants in the Nova Scotia Environmental Farm Plan, a voluntary program that helps farmers identify, assess, and reduce environmental risk on their farms. Since the program’s inception in 1999, more than 1600 farmers have become involved and developed Environmental Farm Plans for their farm businesses.

The Farm Environmental Stewardship Award is a part of the Environmental Farm Plan Program. It was created through a partnership of the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the NS Environmental Farm Plan Team and the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture. The Environmental Farm Plan Program is an initiative under the Canada-Nova Scotia Growing Forward Agreement.