



## Bridging the Gap

50 farmers gathered at the Bridging the Gap conference, March 23 & 24th to search for solutions to farm succession challenges. The event organized by Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture and Nova Scotia Young Farmers was jam packed with information and things to think about. One participant said, "It got us thinking about some new areas we should have addressed many years ago." The conference speakers posed some very tough and important questions to the participants. Bob Ross, Owner-Operator of Ross Holm Farms Ltd, Ontario, Associate of George Morris Centre (GMC) and Coordinator of Canadian Total Excellence in Agricultural Management (CTEAM) program opened the conference with a look at Planning for Succession. He told the group "The first and most important ques-

tion senior farm owners must answer early in the succession planning process is, Are we committed to seeing this farm business succeed beyond our lifetime?" Without a strong yes to this question, a fully effective farm succession will be severely hampered.

Farm Succession is not an overnight process; it evolves over months and years. Remembering that each farm family member and farm business is different, understanding generational attributes, keeping everyone in the loop, seeking professional consultation and making the commitment will guide a successful transition. The one area that was mentioned in all the presentations as a key to success was the need for effective communication.

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Shown in photo, Elaine Froese, Farm Family Coach, addressing the group at Bridging the Gap, March 23 & 24th, 2012.



# viewpoint

## Passing on the Farm

### Henry Vissers

*Executive Director, Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture*

Who is going to take over the farm? That's the unspoken question on many farms and it's a tough question for many people. Lately, I seem to see numerous articles and seminars on the topic. Probably because our farm community is getting older and people are waking up to the age bomb that we're facing in the next few years.

Some of the things that I've heard lately make a lot of sense, for instance the idea that succession is not about the end it's about how we continue. Seems reasonable, if you want the farm to succeed beyond your lifetime then you must be committed to making that happen. We all want the farm to continue and we don't want to draw our last breath on the tractor, at least most of us don't. So by bringing our children or farm staff into the business, we assure its continuity and we give ourselves a way to begin to take out equity and pass on responsibility.

It is difficult to look after the needs of the farm and the retirement of the current generation. It requires planning both financially and in terms of the structure of the business. There will also be family members that do not wish to take over the business, the family dynamic is complex, it takes work to understand everyone's needs and to be fair to everyone. Farms are generally asset rich and cash poor so this can be a complex topic.

Another stat, 65% of family businesses don't make it past the first generation. This isn't just farm businesses but all businesses. Why is this so high? I'm guessing communication has to be a

big part of it, just because in your own mind, you plan to pass the business on to the next generation, if you don't share your thoughts you may get a big surprise. Share your plans with your family and assure them there is a place for them.

This is also the first time in history that we can have four generations working together at the same time, and they all have different ways of looking at things based on the different time they were born and raised. The Traditionalist, Baby Boomer, Gen X and Gen Y all have a different approach to the same task, different view on life, etc. It's important for all of us to remember that "different is just different, it's not wrong".

So how do you start the process? First determine if there is a successor that has the skill, ability and desire to operate the farm. Then determine who will lead the farm through the procedure, it can be a friend of the family, trusted professional or a consultant hired to take you through the process. A successful plan can give you and your family and farm a common view with clear goals and improve trust among family members.

One of the speakers at our weekend "Bridging the Gap" conference said that the average age of a farm widow is 56 years of age. That's a startling statistic, makes me think that the very least we should do is have an up to date will, and share our wishes for the farm. Developing a succession plan is a way to do all this and to ensure that your farm is there for the next generation.

Comments?

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# Celebrating Farm Safety Week in Nova Scotia

On March 12th, 2012 at Amber Hill Farm, the Minister of Agriculture, John MacDonell proclaimed March 11-17th as Canadian Agriculture Safety Week. Joining Minister MacDonell (shown on the far right in the photo below) were Trevor Davison, Farm Safety Nova Scotia (left), Larry Steward, Nova Scotia Department of Labour, Lloyd Yuill, Amber Hill Farm and Beth Densmore, President, Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture.



Beth Densmore, NSFA President welcomed all those who came out to raise awareness to this being farm safety week. Beth said, "Farm Safety is important to farmers today and every day." "As we get into our busy season, this week serves to remind us to think about safety."

Lloyd Yuill owns and operates Amber Hill Farm in Old Barns, N.S. and the location for the 2012 safety proclamation. Lloyd indicated that, "it is important to promote farm safety and as farmers we are becoming more and more conscious of it." Minister MacDonell highlighted the three-year campaign developed by the Canadian Agriculture Safety Association (CASA). The campaign "Plan ~ Farm ~ Safety" which began in 2010 with the theme "Plan", highlighted safety walkabouts and planning for safety; continuing in 2011 with the theme "Farm", included implementation, documentation and training. The 2012 Agricultural Safety Week campaign will promote the theme, "Safety", which will focus on assessment, improvement, and further development of safety systems as the next step toward establishing a practical farm safety program for farmers and employees.

Farm Safety is important. Accidents and injury can seriously affect farmers, their families and their employees. Farm Safety Nova Scotia has developed a Health and Safety Manual and are currently holding workshops to guide farmers through Occupational Health and Safety regulations and provide an on-farm checklist to assess and mitigate safety risks. The manual is available online [www.farmsafetyns.ca](http://www.farmsafetyns.ca) or contact Trevor Davison, Farm Safety Co-ordinator at 902-893-2293.

## Nova Scotia Tractor Safety Certification Course

A Nova Scotia Tractor Safety Certification Course will be held at the NSAC Farm May 5 and 6, 2012.

This course is intended for, but not limited to; youth aged 14-16 who hold a valid NS Class 8 (Tractor) Driver's License. Topics such as safety, highway regulations, pre-operation checks, safe starts and stops and connecting and hauling various implements will be covered. Those who successfully complete the course will be eligible to have a Condition 15 Endorsement added to their license, thereby allowing

them to haul trailed implements on Nova Scotia Roads.



Please note: this course will not teach you how to drive! For more information please visit our website [nsac.ca/cde](http://nsac.ca/cde)



# Trudging Through Mud?



It's that time of year when the snow is melting, the ground is thawing and it's still raining or snowing. You may find yourself trudging through barnyard mud just to get through chores. Mud is not just unsightly; it can provide an ideal habitat for flies and other insects. Mud harbours pathogens that can cause diseases, makes for unsafe footing, and can lower an animal's body temperature, causing increased feeding requirements. It can lead to erosion and muddy streams, can cause an increase in odours and it makes chore time difficult. There are ways to reduce this mess and increase safety for employees and animals on your farm.

**Install eaves troughs and downspouts** on buildings. Ensure your system is designed to handle the amount of rainfall we receive. Divert roof water away from the barn yard, manure storage and livestock confinement areas. If you have eaves troughs already on building make sure they are clear of debris and working properly.

Get that back hoe in! **Construct ditches** to divert clean surface water away from the barn yard, manure storage and livestock confinement areas.

**Install concrete** in areas where manure accumulates and in areas where silage is stored (e.g. ma-

nure storage, livestock yards and silo bunkers). This will make removing manure and feed easier.

If you have water entering buildings **use weeping tile and/or French drains** around barns to help prevent water from entering the buildings.

**Install catch basins and underground pipes** to collect and divert water.

For areas that receive a lot of snowfall, **install windbreaks or a shelterbelt** of trees or shrubs to manage snow accumulation.

Put that tractor or skid steer to use! **Remove manure** every 1 to 3 days from pens, livestock yards and outdoor arenas. Scrape up areas that have silage and feed waste too.

**Use gravel in high traffic areas.** If the area is really soft, **geotextile fabric** may need to be used before gravel is installed. Gravel will help to drain surface water and make for harder surface for large equipment to travel over.

Sunny, warm and maybe some dry weather will be here before you know it, but in the meantime try to reduce that muddy mess and manage the surface water running through your barnyard.

Janette McDonald, EFP Coordinator

# EFP On-Farm Water Monitoring Project



A project was initiated last year to monitor on-farm water use from drilled wells for livestock farms and horticultural operations in Nova Scotia. The project will provide and install a water meter and data logger for the farm, and monitor water consumption for the next year. The data collected will be used to help baseline agricultural water use in the province.

Farms using more than 23,000 L/day should have a water withdrawal permit from Nova Scotia Environment. If participating farms are found to exceed the daily limit, the project will also assist those producers to obtain their permit and/or evaluate conservation opportunities to lower their daily use. If you would like to participate, or have additional questions about the project, please contact Trevor Davison, EFP Coordinator, at 899-5097.



# Farm Safety Nova Scotia - Stay Safe This Spring!



Canadian Agricultural Safety Week was March 11th to 17th, 2012. I wanted to thank Lloyd Yuill, Amber Hill Farm, Old Barns, for hosting an event

at his farm to proclaim safety week. I would also like to acknowledge Agriculture Minister John MacDonell, Department of Labour and Advanced Education Inspection Officer Larry Stewart, and Beth Densmore, NSFA for their participation in the event. As we enjoy this period of warm weather marking the first days of spring, it is important to continue to implement and review farm safety policies and practices as we get ready for another growing season.

Farm Safety Nova Scotia (FSNS) has been active in organizing First Aid and WHMIS training for Federation members. For farms with more than one, but fewer than 20 employees regularly employed, at least one employee needs emergency first aid training (7 hours of training). When there are 20 or more, but fewer than 100 employees, at least one employee must have standard first aid training (13 hours of training). For 100 or more employees, at least one person must have advanced first aid training (35 hours of instruction). If an employee is working in a situation where there is no one available to administer first aid or seek assistance within a reasonable length of time, that employee should also have emergency first aid

training. Recertification is required every three years.

FSNS can also organize training for offshore workers. A First Aid training course in Spanish was organized for five farms last year. If your farm is using Spanish speaking workers for the season, it is important to ensure that they receive the proper training as they arrive. If you have any questions, please contact the Farm Safety Coordinator, Trevor Davison, at the NSFA office.

WHMIS (Workplace Hazardous Material Information System) training is a 3.5 hour course that can be completed in a classroom setting or on-line. Any employee involved with the handling, storage or use of a controlled product should receive training. Employers must ensure that MSDS (Material Safety Data Sheets) are available for all controlled products on the farm. These need to be updated every three years. Contact the product supplier or the Farm Safety Nova Scotia office if you are having difficulty locating this information.

Farm Safety Nova Scotia is partnering with CASA (Canadian Agricultural Safety Association) to have a Nova Scotia FarmSafe Advisor work with Nova Scotia farmers one-on-one to help them develop a farm safety program for their farm (1 year term). If you would like more information on the program, please contact the Farm Safety Nova Scotia office for more information.

## NSFA e-News Break

Do you receive the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture's Electronic Newsletter? Our goal for the e-News is to provide information to members in a timely and efficient manner. This e-News Break is produced weekly and distributed to any interested parties who have provided us with their email address. A new feature of the e-News is a Classified section where you can advertise, free of charge, something you have for sale for the farming community. If you are not receiving this informative newsletter, you can subscribe by calling the office at 893-2293 or by emailing [smackenzie@nsfa-fane.ca](mailto:smackenzie@nsfa-fane.ca) and we will add you to the list of recipients.



## Bridging the Gap continued

How many farm families have regular meetings? Do you know if your children even want to take over the farm? Have you looked at which one of your children has the ability and skills needed to continue the farm business? As Elaine Froese, Family Farm Coach, presented on Saturday morning, she stated that "21% of farm businesses are more profitable if you sit down and talk." Communicate about what is going on in your part of the business. It makes us uncomfortable, but we need to have those tough conversations about things like retirement, family conflict, losing control and death. Ever given thought to who gets the farm and when? What if... Dad passes away unexpectedly tomorrow? There is no will and no succession plan in place. You have been farming alongside Dad for several years and there are non-farming siblings. It is complicated and complex. The Bridging the Gap conference has brought a lot of reasons to the forefront for future dialogue and to

work towards helping farmers through the process of farm succession. Watch for more to come through our communication channels or contact the NSFA Office if you want to get information to get started right away. As farmers we are not alone in the dilemma of business transfer, 65% of all family businesses have not even discussed succession planning with their kids. Only 10% of business owners have a formal written succession plan.

The conference was made possible through funding sponsorship of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Farm Credit Canada, Canadian Young Farmers Forum, ThinkFarm and Patterson Law. A gracious thank you to Tim Hennigar, Tipac Farm for his pledge at the Federation's November Annual General Meeting to move forward with finding solutions to farm succession challenges.



*One of the many highlights was hearing about successful farm succession transfers. Shown in the photo (l to r) is Kelly Adams, Barrington Wealth Partners Inc, William Allaway, Acadian Maple, Kimberly Stokdijk, Stokdijk Greenhouses and our conference facilitator, Debbie Lawrence, Abundant Living. The 3 panellists shared their own stories for the challenges faced in farm succession. The message was strong that farmers must map out a plan and not to wait until something happens to force you into farm succession. Farm Succession starts the day you take over a farm!*

## Nova Scotia Farm Environmental Stewardship Award 2012

The Nova Scotia Farm Environmental Stewardship Award will be open for nominations on April 22, 2012 (Earth Day). This Award showcases farms that have adopted practices or undergone projects that protect soil, water, and wildlife habitat. The winning farm will receive up to \$2000 for activities that further enhance the farm operation as well as a farm painting done by a local artist. Last year's winners were W.G. Oulton & Sons, Hants County.

# Workplace Education Communications Course

Recently a number of Agriculture professionals and NSFA staff completed a Communications Course through Department of Labour's Workplace Education. Through the 40 hour course, topics included communications styles, email etiquette, persuasive writing, understanding generational differences in the workplace and effective team building. "It was a great opportunity for us as a staff to gain an appreciation for each other and learn how we can communicate effectively to strengthen our team." said one of the participants. "It is important to continue to educate ourselves and freshen our approach on how we deal with day to day operations."

The Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture is also offering workplace education programs to farmers across Nova Scotia. The current programs in Financial Management and Marketing are being offered at different locations around the province and we expect to continue programming in the fall with new sessions. The training is based on an organizational needs assessment and are offered free of charge to the farm community. If you have suggestions of training or skills development area that you would like to see offered, let us know. Watch the newsletter for upcoming details!



Shown in the photo (l to r) is Donna Langille, NSFA Operations Manager, Sonya Lorette, General Manager of Turkey Farmers NS, Ruth Ward, Turkey Farmers NS, Debbie Lawrence, Instructor, Beate Acker, Agri-Commodity Management Association, Henry Vissers, NSFA Executive Director, Wanda Hamilton, NSFA Communications,

Krista Vroegh, NSFA Financial Services, Brent Jackson, Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) Coordinator, Shelly MacKenzie, NSFA Administration, Paul Brenton, EFP Team Leader and Melissa Fulton, EFP Information Coordinator.

## 2013 Nuffield Farming Scholarship Applications Open

The Canadian Nuffield Farming Scholarship Trust is accepting applications for their 2013 program. Applications are due by April 30, 2012 and forms can be downloaded from the Nuffield Canada website at <http://www.nuffield.ca>. Three scholarships of \$15,000 each are available for 2013.

Nuffield Farming Scholarships are awarded to enthusiastic individuals, with a passion for agriculture and a desire to expand your knowledge, pursue new ideas and to share your findings with others. Applicants should be in mid-career, be between the ages of 30 and 45 (although exceptions are made) and must have a minimum of five years agricultural business or farming experience plus the management ability to step away from their current duties. The Scholar must travel for a minimum of ten weeks, with a minimum leg of six consecutive weeks. Scholarships are not for those involved in full-time

studies or for the purpose of furthering research projects.

A key part of the scholarship is the opportunity for winners to study a topic of interest to themselves throughout their travels. Scholars must complete their project within two years of winning the award and are expected to produce a written report and present their findings at the Nuffield annual general meeting as well as to others in their industries.

Canadian Nuffield Scholars are also required to participate in the Contemporary Scholars Conference (CSC) where they will meet with scholars from other countries including the United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and France to exchange ideas and experiences, and join a network of people who are at the cutting edge of primary industry.



## Homegrown Success 2012 - 2013

The Homegrown Success Suite of Programs for 2012 - 2013 are set to start on April 1, 2012. There will be no booklet mailed to registered farms explaining the programs, as there has been in other years. You can learn more about the programs by going to the website at <http://www.gov.ns.ca/agri/prm/> when the programs are available.

Another way you can get information on the programs is to contact the Agricultural Resource Coordinator in your area.

**Cape Breton** - Gary Koziel, 563-2000 or fax 563-3435 and email [kozielgj@gov.ns.ca](mailto:kozielgj@gov.ns.ca)

**Eastern** - Kevin Bekkers, 863-7500 or fax 863-7342 and email [bekkerkf@gov.ns.ca](mailto:bekkerkf@gov.ns.ca)

**Central** - Michael Kittilsen, 893-3645 or fax 893-2757 and email [kittilma@gov.ns.ca](mailto:kittilma@gov.ns.ca)

**Valley** - Brian MacCulloch, 679-6006 or fax 679-6062 and email [macculbc@gov.ns.ca](mailto:macculbc@gov.ns.ca)

**Western** - Dennis Moerman, 638-2396 or fax 638-2389 and email [moermade@gov.ns.ca](mailto:moermade@gov.ns.ca)

You can also find out more by contacting the Programs and Business Risk Management Division Development Programs - Home Grown Success Program  
Tel: (902) 893-6510 Toll-free: 1-866-844-4276  
Fax: (902) 893-7579

## More Baby News



Once again the staff of the NSFA and EFP would like to congratulate an EFP staff member on the arrival of a new baby. Erica and Tony Versteeg welcomed James Anthony into the world on March 15 weighing in at 7 lbs. 12 oz. James has two siblings at home so I'm sure the Versteeg household is a busy one. Have fun getting to know your newest member!

## Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture THE VOICE OF NOVA SCOTIA FARMERS

Meet the NSFA Executive for 2012 who are working together to make a difference in Nova Scotia Agriculture.



President  
**Beth Densmore**  
Hants County



1st Vice President  
**Dennis Boudreau**  
Digby County



2nd Vice President  
**David Young**  
Lunenburg County

### Members at large

Edna Foster, Cumberland County  
Charles MacDonald, Cape Breton County  
Chris van den Heuvel, Inverness County  
James Baillie, Pictou County  
**Past President**, Richard Melvin, Kings County



[www.nsfafane.ca](http://www.nsfafane.ca) | [www.meetyourfarmer.ca](http://www.meetyourfarmer.ca) | [www.farmsafetyns.ca](http://www.farmsafetyns.ca)

## News & Views

**NSFA News & Views** is the Newsletter of the NS Federation of Agriculture, the United, Strong & Caring Farm Organization representing the best interest of Nova Scotia's Agricultural Industry.

**News & Views** is provided free of charge to its members. We value comments and concerns from our members, please direct them to Executive members or the Office Staff.

### 2012 Executive Members:

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1st Vice President:	<b>Dennis Boudreau</b>	Phone: 769-3501
2nd Vice President:	<b>David Young</b>	Phone: 543-8748
CFA Director:	<b>Dennis Boudreau</b>	Phone: 769-3501
At Large:	<b>Edna Foster</b>	Phone: 661-4366
At Large:	<b>Chris vandenHeuvel</b>	Phone: 631-1884
At Large:	<b>Charles MacDonald</b>	Phone: 564-2080
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Past President:	<b>Richard Melvin</b>	Phone: 582-7939

**Staff:** Executive Director: Henry Vissers; Operations Manager: Donna Langille; Financial Services Officer: Krista Vroegh; Administrative Officer: Shelly MacKenzie; Communications Officer: Wanda Hamilton; Farm Safety Coordinator: Trevor Davison

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