

Thunderbrook Farms Brian & Joan, Mark & Isabelle, & Beth Trueman



“Even before environmental concerns became a hot topic, our farm has always been operated with a view of sustainability,” says Brian Trueman of Thunderbrook Farms. The 1240-acre mixed farm is currently owned and operated by Brian and his wife Joan along with their family, Mark & Isabelle and Beth. Their century farm is in Truemanville, Cumberland County, and has been in the family since 1817.



Currently, the Truemans have 60 head of beef cattle divided into half commercial and half purebred Hereford herd, grow forage and grain, lowbush blueberries and manage an 800-acre woodlot.

Trueman is one of five finalists in the first annual Farm Environmental Stewardship Award. This award was established to highlight producers who make good 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 1270 farmers have become involved and developed Environmental Farm Plans for their operations.

To farm with a focus on environmental considerations has long been part of the Trueman family approach to managing their land. Nearly 25 years ago, Trueman worked with Ducks Unlimited to rehabilitate a large pond, complete with fish ladder for freshwater species movement, that had been on the farm since it was established. He’s very proud of the pond’s rehabilitation and the aesthetic pleasure it gives his family and their neighbours. “The pond was the heart of this farm from the beginning,” he says. Beyond its aesthetic and historic value, the pond provides a source of water for fire protection for the farm and local community, a habitat for fish, birds and other wildlife as well as a potential irrigation source for crops.

Trueman was concerned about spring runoff that passed through the farmyard and cattle areas, so he built a catch basin to collect meltwater, which he diverted by means of buried pipe under the cattleyard. Precipitation runoff from the manure pile goes into a vegetated ditch that helps filter nutrients, and all pastures are fenced so that cattle cannot get into brooks that run through the farm.

The Truemans follow the local municipal guidelines for recycling, composting and disposing of farm waste materials such as silage plastic, old batteries, and used motor oil. Crop rotation helps reduce the risk of soil erosion, while the Nutrient Management Plan

that Trueman had done has allowed for more precise and timely applications of manure and fertilizers. Trueman is certified in herbicide application and applies treatment as needed to the forage and grain, and hires a certified custom applicator to monitor and tend to the blueberry operation. In the woodlot, the farmer has dug additional ponds for fire protection and retains wildlife corridors and protected areas around streams and brooks.

Brian Trueman says there's always room for improvement in sustainable farm management, and has a number of projects planned, including installing a new well and underground waterlines so that animals can be pastured further from the barn and for later-season grazing capability. He has begun to relocate and improve the current fuel storage system, and also will be making further improvements to his manure storage area so that there will be even less nutrient leaching from manure runoff.

As stewards of the land, Trueman and his family like to educate and encourage others to take a similar proactive approach to environmental farming. He provides walking tours of the farm to 4-H groups and the local Scouting movement, and is an active participant in information sessions designed to bring more information to the farming community. He likes being proactive in all aspects of farm operation and maintains an environmentally sustainable mindset as part of his daily can-do attitude. "Our farm is devoted and will continue to be devoted to the future and sustainability of our environment," he says. "We will continue to farm with this mindset as long as we can."

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.