

Waterloo Region Farm Innovation Tour

Attendees to the fifth farm innovation tour visited Floradale Feed Mill, Martin's Family Fruit Farm and Heritage Hill Farms (dairy) March 24. The tour is a part of a series from Farm & Food Care, providing an opportunity for government employees and agricultural policy makers to witness innovations in the areas of environmental stewardship and animal care on Ontario farms and agribusinesses.

Floradale Feed Mill

Floradale Feed Mill Limited offers a complete line of feeds and feeding programs to meet the nutritional needs of a wide variety of species including poultry, swine, ruminant, and specialty livestock (deer, elk, horses, rabbits, rartites). Its nutrition department works closely with its sales & service feed specialists offering technical advice on feeding & nutrition, management and related animal health matters to meet customer needs.

- Attendees toured the mill, learning about feed combinations and how Floradale turns corn, canola, soy, barley and other ingredients into nutritious feed for nearly any livestock, even alpacas.
- Floradale discussed its HACCP certification and commitment to non-shared antibiotic compliance (no antibiotics in feed that are approved for human use).
- Attendees asked questions about the varieties of feed the mill can make, learning that the Floradale has over 1,000 active combinations currently.

<http://www.ffmld.com/>

Martin's Family Fruit Farm, Waterloo

Located in the heart of Ontario's celebrated apple growing region, the orchards offer some of the most flavourful, richly colourful, extra-crisp apples available. Martin's Family Fruit Farm has grown to become one of the largest growers, packers, and shippers in North America.

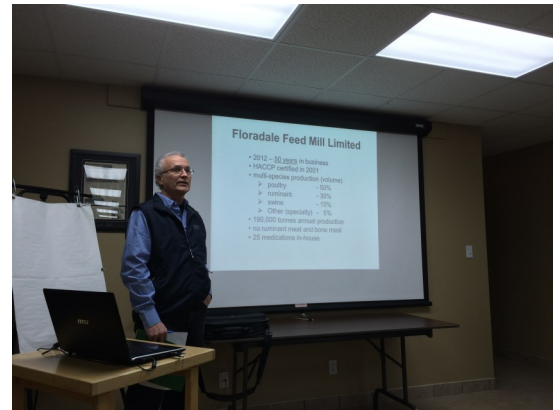
- Attendees toured the processing plant, and learned about how the business has progressed from 100 trees in the 1970s to over 700 acres.
- Martin's staff discussed how apples go from field to store, including selection, cleaning and innovative technology such as a box creating robot that saves labour and improves efficiency.

<http://www.martinsapples.com/>

Heritage Hill Farms, New Dundee

The Johnston and Doré families have built success in New Dundee with an innovative dairy barn that houses 65 cows, and considers animal care as a top priority on their farm.

- The innovative approach to raising cows for milk was obvious to attendees, from composted manure used for bedding to a milking parlour that can milk 65 cows in an hour.
- Mary Ann Doré, one of the farm owners, explained their nutrition program, their use of grey water to clean parts of the barn.
- Mary Ann also explained the minimalistic approach to spreading manure on their field using a drag hose instead of a tanker to reduce compaction and speed up the process.



Paul Brubacher explains food safety is top priority at Floradale Feed Mill.



A Car wash for apples? Yes, it exists at Martin's Family Fruit Farm!



Attendees learned about calving, toured a brand new heifer barn and saw an innovative free-stall dairy barn.

Farm Invention Challenge

The winners of Farm & Food Care's Farm Invention Challenge were announced in March. Winners received up to \$1,000 for inventions in categories of animal care and environment. The contest was designed to share farmers' inventions and recognize their ingenuity in improving animal care and the environment.



- Animal Care: Sarah and Kevin Wolters of Belleville created a portable, group housing system for their calves. (First prize)
- Animal Care: Josef Theiler of Winchester combined a robotic sweeper arm with his automated feeding system. (Second prize)
- Animal Care: Maaik Campbell of Warwick Township utilized bait stations inside hollow doors to safely control rodent populations in the barn. (Third Prize)
- Environment: Tom Brayford and the Innisfill Creek Water Users Association in Alliston have created a community group focused on solving water use issues on farms and golf courses. (First prize)
- Environment: Andrew and Julie Dawson of Lanark introduced a portable watering system for their cattle in order to accommodate a rotational grazing system. (Second Prize)

Pollinator Health

Pollinator health is a top priority for farmers who have been working diligently since 2013 to reduce risks to pollinators from crop protection products, mainly neonicotinoids. Recently the Great Lakes Agricultural Stewardship Initiative (GLASI), a funding program administered by OSCIA, has offered funding for dust deflector technology for qualified planters. This, along with many other measures such as awareness, planting pollinator-friendly flowers and plants and providing innovative technology to limit the dust from planting treated seed will reduce the exposure to bees from crop protection products. Farm & Food Care submitted comments to the Environmental Bill of Rights regarding the proposed action plan and is closely monitoring regulation as it is proposed.

Carbon pricing (Under Ontario Climate Change Policy)

The Ontario government has committed to delivering a carbon emissions reduction initiative in the form of a carbon tax or cap and trade system in the spring of 2015. Currently, British Columbia has a carbon tax in place and Quebec uses a cap and trade system. This strategy is listed under the *Ontario Climate Change Discussion Paper 2015* and calls on key sectors, agriculture included, to be part of the solution to emission reductions in carbon. The carbon pricing structure (not currently determined) will have implications for Ontario agriculture, including possible increased costs of inputs such as fuel. Farm & Food Care will continue to be part of the conversation about carbon pricing in Ontario.

Ontario Pesticide Survey 2013-2015

The Ontario Pesticide Survey has closed its data submission portal and is working with statisticians to tabulate the information. Data analysis is underway and a report will be available in the summer of 2015. All Ontario field crop, vegetable, fruit and specialty crop farmers were asked to fill out a confidential, anonymous survey of pesticide use. Surveys have been conducted every five years since 1973 and are used to track trends in pesticide use. Government, commodity boards and researchers use the information to help improve minor use pesticide registration lists, work toward safer use of pesticides and to understand trends in use and the types of pesticides used.

Issues on the Horizon: Great Lakes

Farm & Food Care's environment team is actively involved with Great Lakes issues. Currently, the team is working with Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association and others to ensure agriculture is well represented in planning for future Great Lakes policy decisions and possible regulations. The environment team will be part of upcoming meetings with these industry groups and work to be involved with government, industry and conservation authorities to ensure farmers prosper and water resources are protected.

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