

## 2009 Ontario Pasture Award Winner

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February 24, 2009 (Toronto) - The sponsors of the Ontario Pasture Award - the Ontario Cattlemen's Association (OCA), MAPLESEED and the Ontario Forage Council (OFC) - are pleased to announce that Ken & Rosemary Mitchell of Mitchell Farms at RR 1 Annan, in Grey County, is the winner of the 2009 Pasture Award. The award was presented today at the OCA Annual General Meeting. For their environmental and pasture improvements and management, the Mitchell's will receive a cash award of \$750 and a bag of forage seed.



*Winner of the 2009 Ontario Pasture Competition, Ken Mitchell (centre) pictured with Gerrit Van Kuelen Sales Manager, MAPLESEED (right) and Ray Robertson,*

Ken & Rosemary farm 700 acres in Grey County, about 10 miles NE of Owen Sound near Annan. Their operation consists of 7 farms of which 6 have some pasture land. They have about 120 cow/calf pairs and also breed an additional 40 – 50 of the heifers for sale or herd replacements. The steer calves are sold as stockers or finished depending on market conditions as well as custom feeding an additional 50 steers. 300 acres of cash crops are grown annually with the other 400 acres devoted to hay and pasture. Three of the farms are less than 1000 feet from Georgian Bay and have some of the highest heat units in grey County. Some of the fields on these farms have a very productive silt/clay loam and are prone to erosion, making frequent hay crops, permanent pasture and grass ways a must. Ken has participated in

the EFP Program and has fenced the livestock out of the water ways, providing fresh water for the livestock either at suitable controlled access points, or portable water troughs in further out fields.

Almost all fencing is single strand electric and all fields are rotationally grazed. The permanent pastures are fields close to the barns, water sources or wet / stony fields. Some of the fields have not been broken in over 50 years and have evolved to a clover, bluegrass, orchard grass, trefoil mixture. Ken frost seeds 2 lb/ac trefoil seed every 2 or 3 years and remote pastures get P/K fertilizer every 4 or 5 years, while closer fields get manure periodically.

"I believe the intensive rotational pasture system, combined with clean water that is closely accessible at all times, has contributed greatly to improved herd health, improved weight gains and sustains more animals per acre", Ken comments".

Gerrit Van Kuelan, Sales Manager with MAPLESEED, thinks Ken's application is an excellent example of the benefits of an intensive rotational pasture system

Ray Robertson, Manager of the Ontario Forage Council, said "The Mitchells are very worthy recipients of the 2008 Pasture Award", because they have been practicing good stewardship methods that can be a great example for other farmers wanting to maximize their pasture yields per acre".

The deadline for applications for the 2010 Ontario Pasture Award is November 27/09.

For details, call the Ontario Forage Council at 1-877-892-8663 or visit either the Ontario Forage Council's Web site at [www.ontarioforagecouncil.com](http://www.ontarioforagecouncil.com) or the Ontario Cattlemen's Association Web site at [www.cattle.guelph.on.ca](http://www.cattle.guelph.on.ca).

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