

Amherst Island Family Receives 2025 DLF Sheep Pasture Award

October 31, 2025 - Gayla Bonham-Carter and Scott Bade of Footflats Farm on Amherst Island are the recipient of the 2025 DLF Sheep Pasture Award. The award, sponsored by DLF, the Ontario Forage Council, and Ontario Sheep Farmers was presented yesterday at the Ontario Sheep Farmers Annual General Meeting and Lamb Banquet in Cambridge. For their exceptional pasture management, Footflats Farm received a cash award of \$250 and a bag of forage seed from DLF.

Gayla and Scott took over Footflats Farm from her grandparents, Mark Ritchie and Cherry Allen, four years ago. In addition to the 180 acres at the home farm, they lease several other pastures. Amherst Island, near Kingston, has a lot of marginal land with heavy clay soil, which means a lot of pasture land for those willing to fence it. Pastures are fenced in 4-wire electric and rotated through with the ewes and lambs. Their flock of 1,200 ewes is now entirely New Zealand Coopworth and Gayla notes that they chose the Coopworth for their strong maternal instincts out on pasture with minimal inputs. They target the light lamb market at around 70lbs. The Coopworths are a medium-sized sheep, which is a good size for great feed conversion. Ewes are wintered outside and there is a feedlot at the home farm to finish lambs on. Gayla attributes part of their success to their Prattley mobile handling system, which can be taken out into the field to sort, drench, dock, wean, and vaccinate, allowing them to handle the sheep wherever they are and provide more grazing opportunities. Looking towards the future, they have started incorporating cattle into their grazing system to rotate with the sheep, helping to keep the parasite load down and freshen the feed up for the lambs.

Scott Fisher, Western Ontario Sales Manager with DLF, commented, "Gayla and Scott run quite the operation. It's always encouraging to see resourcefulness and hard work pay dividends. Some of the land used by their admission is less than 'stellar' but through management and hard work, they have created opportunity for themselves."

"On behalf of the Ontario Forage Council, I would like to extend our sincere congratulations to Gayla, Scott and family on receiving this well-deserved recognition," said Patricia Ellingwood, General Manager of OFC. "Excellence in pasture management is the foundation of a sustainable and productive livestock industry, and Footflats Farms' commitment to soil health, forage quality, and animal well-being sets an inspiring example for producers across the province. Their innovative approach and dedication to continuous improvement reflect the very best of Ontario's agricultural community."

For more information and photos:

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