

## Annual award winners announced at Ontario Sheep Farmers 2021 annual meeting

**Guelph, ON [October 29, 2021]** – Several Ontario sheep farmers received special recognition at the Ontario Sheep Farmers (OSF) 2021 virtual annual meeting today, with the announcement of the organization’s annual award winners. The annual awards program recognized a diverse group of individuals for their contributions to the Ontario sheep sector.

“Our industry includes so many outstanding people and we are happy to showcase a few of them each year with our awards program,” says John Hemsted, OSF Chair. “We are also excited to be awarding a new Emerging Leader Award for the first time this year to recognize younger producers who are taking a socially responsible approach to the industry.”

**Emerging Leader Award.** Quintin McEwen received the inaugural OSF Emerging Leader Award for 2021. Quintin is building a reputable Dorset breeding flock together with his wife and two young children in Monkton. He is the current chair of the District 3 Ontario Sheep Committee, a full-time firefighter, a new board member of Farm and Food Care Ontario, and active online advocate for farming. Always the first to volunteer, Quintin leads by example with his infectious enthusiasm, kindness, community outreach and focus on social responsibility.

**Outstanding Shepherd Award.** Mark Ritchie and his late wife Cherry Allen were recognized with the 2021 Outstanding Shepherd Award from OSF. When Mark and Cherry bought Foot Flats Farm on Amherst Island in 1989, they set a course to create a genetic base in their flock that was capable of lambing on pasture and growing on grass, arguably shaping the course of what sheep farming now looks like in Ontario.

**Long Service Award** – Peter Kudelka has been involved in the Ontario sheep industry for more than 40 years, earning him the 2021 OSF Long Service Award. A sheep shearer from Mitchell, Peter grew up on a sheep farm outside of Newmarket and after attending the University of Guelph and working overseas, he bought a farm, his first sheep and a Sunbeam Shearman in 1976. That began his lifelong learning and travels as a shearer in Ontario, following all the changes in sheep farming through the years.

**OSF Memorial Fund – Industry Leader Award.** Valerie Higginson, a third-year student at the Ontario Veterinary College (OVC), received the 2021 OSF Memorial Fund Industry Leader Award. Raised on a sheep farm in Eastern Ontario, Valerie holds a MSc in animal science and is looking forward to continuing to make significant contributions to the Ontario sheep industry through



research. At OVC, Valerie is actively involved as co-president of the Food Animal Club and president of the Theriogenology Club. She's looking forward to travelling to New Zealand next summer to broaden her experience in small ruminant medicine, and further her career as a food animal veterinarian.

#### **Genovis Program Awards**

- **Highest Flock Improvement** – Shelagh Finn, Lamb Lady Farm of Simcoe County
- **Dorset Category** – Top Gain Index and Top Maternal Index: Jim and Wendy Driscoll of Wellington County
- **Rideau Category** – Top Gain Index and Top Maternal Index: Shelagh Finn of Simcoe County
- **Suffolk Category** – Top Gain Index: Keith Todd of Huron County, Top Maternal Index: Paul Dick of Grey County
- **Any Other Breed (AOB) Purebred Category** – Top Gain Index Irwin and Spencer Jackson Wellington County and Top Maternal Index Todd Sheep Company Huron County
- **Any Other Breed (AOB) Commercial Category** – Top Gain Index and Top Maternal Index: Mark and Betty Beringer of Wellington County

**Mapleseed Pasture Award** – Brad and Karen Davis of Leeds & Grenville United Counties

Ontario Sheep Farmers (OSF) is a producer-run organization established in 1985 and represents the province's 3,000 sheep farmers who contribute over \$530 million to Ontario's economy. Ontario is home to the country's largest sheep flock and processes over 50% of the sheep and lambs born in Canada. We believe passionately that sheep farming is an agricultural business sector that is profitable, contributes to the well-being of our communities and our province and offers unique opportunities to develop new markets, provide needed environmental benefits and grow both our domestic and international markets.

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