

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Ontario Pasture Award winner named**

November 6, 2014 – Guelph – Brian and Anita DeJong of DeJong Farms in Georgian Bluffs (formerly Keppel Township), in Grey County is the winners of the 2014 Ontario Sheep Pasture Award. The award is sponsored by MAPLESEED, the Ontario Forage Council and the Ontario Sheep Marketing Agency (OSMA) was presented today at OSMA's Annual Meeting. For their environmental and pasture improvements and management, the DeJong's receive \$500 and a bag of forage seed.

The DeJong's flock consists of approximately 600 ewes plus their offspring. The ewes and rams are on pasture from May until the end of November. Brian says, "The ewes are flushed mid-summer on regrowth for breeding and are bred while still on pasture. The ewes gain condition and flush well on the pasture, which leads to high fertility and successfully starting the seasonal breeding season earlier than natural". As Anita comments, "Moving fences frequently and keeping ewes in small paddocks has demonstrated effective manure distribution, and alternating pasturing and cutting for hay, increases the fertility of the hay land and decreases weed populations."

Anita stated, "After completing our Environmental Farm Plan a few years ago, we were better able to determine what areas were higher risk and by using our portable fences, we are able to easily avoid pasturing these areas, such as creeks and woodlots."

Brian shares that they have made extensive use of electric net fencing for both, portability and predator protection, as well as livestock guardian dogs, which has been a major asset in allowing them to make the maximum use of forages and cereal grain regrowth in their sheep operation." The DeJongs credit their current pasture management with being one of the key factors in the financial viability of their sheep operation.

Lawrence Leveque, District Sales Manager (Western Ontario) with MAPLESEED said, "The DeJong's are ideal candidates for the 2014 award, because of the innovation and consistency they have shown in their farming operation and their willingness to share ideas for the benefit to agriculture and the industry in general."

Ray Robertson, Manager of the Ontario Forage Council says, "This year's Ontario Sheep Pasture Award winner has demonstrated that they have been able to make the maximum use of both their workable and fragile land and still exemplify good practical environmental stewardship practices."

*The deadline for applications for the 2015 Ontario Sheep Pasture Award is Oct 2/15. For details call the Ontario Forage Council at 1-877-892-8663 or visit either the Ontario Forage Council's website at [www.ontarioforagecouncil.com](http://www.ontarioforagecouncil.com) or the Ontario Sheep Management Agencies website at [www.ontariosheep.org](http://www.ontariosheep.org).*

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