

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Scugog Township Farmer Receives Ontario Pasture Award

November 1, 2018 – Alliston – Rodney Jones of Crimson Farm from the Township of Scugog in Durham Region is the recipient of the 2018 Ontario Sheep Pasture Award. The award sponsored by MAPLESEED, the Ontario Forage Council and the Ontario Sheep Farmers, was presented today at the Ontario Sheep Convention. For his environmental and pasture improvements and management, the recipient will receive \$500 and a bag of forage seed.

Rodney says he always had a keen interest in sheep, so several years ago, he made his dream come true. He started with a variety of breeds including Rideau, Suffolk, North Country Cheviot and Dorper, but over the years, he has focused more on the Dorper breed. Currently he has a flock of about 165 ewes, plus their off-spring, and basically lambs year-round, which enables him to have market lambs throughout the year.

During the past few years, Rodney has intensified his rotational grazing system. Gradually splitting his pasture paddocks from the day when he only had about 2 pasture fields. With that same acreage, he has kept splitting them into smaller paddocks of about 3 acres each. The results have provided phenomenal results, that he could never have imagined. Besides producing much improved pasture quality and quantity, it has also greatly improved the health of the flock. He rotationally pastures about 35 acres and the sheep are moved every 3 - 4 days. The longer rest period between grazing periods on each paddock appear to have greatly reduced the parasite burden in the sheep flock. This practice was started five years ago and since then, he has experienced less sheep and lamb mortality and significantly reduced the cost of parasite control products.

Regarding the availability of water for the livestock, Rodney comments, "It is critical to have fresh water close by and to make his system as efficient as possible. A spring creek flows along the boundary of his property on the east side of all the paddocks, but the sheep frequently come to the barn and are locked in the corral every night, which enables the sheep to maximize the use of well water and minimizes the potential risk of predators. Although coyotes have never been a serious problem, he also keeps a few lamas with the flock as a precaution.

Steve Hughes, District Sales Manager (Western Ontario) with MAPLESEED said, "Rodney is a deserving candidate for the 2018 award because of the continuous improvements he has made in his pasture management system over the past few years."

Ray Robertson, Manager of the Ontario Forage Council says, "This year's Ontario Sheep Pasture Award recipient has demonstrated the true benefits of a well-managed rotational grazing system.

The deadline for applications for the 2019 Ontario Sheep Pasture Award is October 1, 2019. 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 or Ontario Sheep Farmers' website at www.OntarioSheep.org.

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