

GOLDEN HORSESHOE

REGIONAL SOIL & CROP IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

Soil & Crop News - September 2005

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Purdy Park Farms, Courtland, Ontario

A lot has changed at Purdy Park farms since it first came into existence 43 years ago. Many of its changes are typical of the way Ontario family farms have evolved over that period, but not all.

The sign that greets a visitor to Purdy Park at #4929, Hwy. # 59 just south of Courtland in Norfolk County says "Jim, Harry, Rob & Jeff Purdy". It turns out that even though Harry was the founder of Purdy Park, Harry doesn't live here any more. He has since retired and now resides in a nursing home away from the farm.

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The Purdys of Courtland, Ontario

Jim, Jeff & Rob Purdy pose in front of their 1954 International Super W6 tractor with new grain drying and storage facility in the background.

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ONTARIO SOIL AND CROP IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION



It was 1962 when Harry and his wife, the former Ruby Atkinson, left the original Purdy farm in Elgin county and came to Courtland. They purchased 100 acres of land in lot 20 of the former township of Middleton and they bought it from the Ronson family whose ancestors had owned it since it was crown land. Harry & Ruby had 3 children: Jim, Barbara and John.

As a young man, Jim Purdy worked as an "Industrial Engineer" at what was then known as Livingston Industries in Tillsonburg. But, in 1969 he and his wife Donna left the security of a paycheck and purchased the 100 acres in lot 19 of Middleton, immediately adjoining his father's farm. Harry and Jim formed a partnership and overnight, Purdy Park had doubled in size. Ironically, this second parcel of land was also purchased from the Ronson family.

Over the next almost 30 years the Purdys pretty much kept in lock step with the times. They milked 35 cows and maintained a herd of 75 sows. They invested in labour saving devices such as a stable cleaner and a pipeline milker in the 1970s and built a new heifer barn and sealed tower silo in the 1980s. As the next decade advanced Jim's knees were telling him to take a more philosophical attitude toward farming. He said "when they start contracting pigs it's time



Former Swine Barn at Purdy Park

to get out of the business"; and the pigs left the farm in 1997. He also started to get concerned about the long term viability of supply management and realizing that a herd of 35 cows was no longer an efficient size made the decision to get out of the dairy business. The cows were sold in 1998.

Purdy Park Farm Operation In 2005

The present day farming operation at Purdy Park is largely devoted to the production of cash crops although a small herd of about 20 beef cows is maintained. The calves are finished to a weight of 800 to 1000 pounds and a sign at the entrance to the farm advertises beef available by the side. As much as possible they prefer to market their beef locally, a policy that has served them well during BSE crisis.



The Purdy Farm House, 4929, Hwy. # 59

The cash crop part of the farm operation consists of growing about 250 acres of corn and 250 acres of soybeans each year. The remainder of the 600 acres they farm is devoted to hay, pasture and small grains. To add value to crops grown for sale, and to allow more flexibility with respect to time of crop delivery, some of the money from the sale of milk quota was used to set up a grain drying and storage facility.

Most of the soybeans grown are Round Up Ready and most are planted No Til. Corn is planted after soybeans and their practice of employing minimum tillage means that bean stubble need only be cultivated once or twice before the corn is planted. Jeff Purdy says that minimum tillage works really well on their sand loam soils and in recent years they have rarely used their mould board plow. On the other hand, a small portion of the land they rent is a clay soil on the Goshen road and they find it requires more tillage.

Seed Dealership

When Rob Purdy returned to the farm in 1983 Jim took on a seed dealership as an added source of income. He started selling Funks brand seed which was later taken over by CIBA seeds. CIBA more recently has become NK Syngenta. While Jim is still involved with the seed business, both sons, Rob & Jeff, have roles to play. Rob looks after unloading trucks and assisting customers picking up their seed orders. Jeff does some of the selling and attends most company sales meetings on behalf of his father and brother. Having just returned from an NK meeting, Jeff is very enthusiastic about new products that are on the way such as the 7 new corn hybrids referred to as NK Brand Signature Agri Sure GT. While NK will not offer RR soybeans for sale in 2006 NK Glyphosate resistant corn hybrids are not far away. Jeff predicts that in future all seed will be genetically modified and will carry stacked genes; all of this in response to public demand for less use of chemicals to control insects and disease.

The Partners in the Purdy Park Operation

Jeff Purdy



Jeff Purdy, younger son of Jim & Donna Purdy is the current president of the Norfolk Soil & Crop Improvement Association. Having served as a director for the last 7 years he was elected president in February, 2005.

Due to injuries sustained in a motorcycle accident when he was only 14 years old (he suffered a broken neck) Jeff's contribution to the physical workload on the farm is limited. Even though officially a quadriplegic he has regained limited use of his arms and hands and makes the best possible use of them. He cuts all the grass at Purdy Park with a modified lawnmower and says that he can sharpen lawn mower blades and even do some welding in the farm shop.



Jeff Purdy's Full Service Gas Bar

Jeff's more significant contribution to the farm operation manifests itself in the form of management and record keeping. A 1993 graduate of

the Ag. Business Management diploma program at the University of Guelph, Jeff has computerized the farm record system and takes care of most of the farm banking.

With the downsizing of the Norfolk Co-Operative in the late 1990s Jeff seized the opportunity to take over the full-serve gas bar located at the corner of Hwys # 3 & #59. He applied to UPI in Guelph and was successful in becoming an agent. He currently manages a staff of two full time and two part time employees at the gas bar. The property is leased from the Norfolk Co-Op and while Jeff doesn't actually own the business he is responsible for scheduling staff workload, ordering fuel, making bank deposits, taking care of landscaping and snow removal etc., etc. His remuneration comes in the form of a profit sharing arrangement with UPI. Completely independent as he drives his modified van from one task to the next he is an inspiration to all who come in contact with him.

Rob Purdy



Rob Purdy, Jeff's older brother works full time on the farm with the exception of some time away in winter ploughing snow. He does much of the physical work involved in planting and harvesting as well as that of looking after the beef herd. He also does custom forage harvesting as well as custom hay cutting and baling. In the past he has worked for the Norfolk Co-Op, and for a while worked part time for a

Cayuga construction company. For about a year and a half he even worked for the Norfolk disposal company driving a garbage truck.

Rob's hobby is a team of Belgians that he likes to drive and he also keeps a pair of miniature horses that he refers to as pets. Rob is a member of the Courtland Lions club as is both his father and brother. For the last 20 years he has been a member of the Courtland Volunteer Fire Department. Rob is married to Annette Coderre who grew up in Frogmore.

Jim Purdy



Jim Purdy and wife, Donna Shelley, have 3 children: Rob, Laura & Jeff. Laura is married to Rick Benneff and they have two daughters, Amanda and Nicole. Over the years Jim has been an active participant in the farm community having served as director on the board of the Norfolk Co-Operative, director on the board of The United Co-Operatives of Ontario (UCO) and director on the board of Co-Operators Insurance. He has also been an active member on the Norfolk Milk Committee and the Norfolk Corn Producers Association.

Having sold the dairy herd in 1998 but not yet quite ready to retire he and Donna purchased a vegetable stand at the corner of #3 & #59 Hwys. At this location they sell locally grown produce originating from the tri county area of Elgin, Oxford and Norfolk. They don't grow any of their own produce but Jim emphasizes that all produce is obtained locally. Their stand opens in mid July and continues through to the first week in September.



Donna & Jim Purdy with grand daughter, Nicole Benneff

According to Donna even the milking herd never tied them down the way this vegetable business has.

Summary

Over the last 40 years the Purdys have made their decisions and kept abreast of changing times in agriculture. As have countless other farmers, they have had to decide when to expand an enterprise and when to close one down.

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They have had to find ways to generate more income when a second generation enters the business and they have had to recognize opportunities for off-farm income to complement a new way of farming. Obviously, some of their challenges have been unique to them, but these too have been successfully dealt with, one at a time.

Editor's Note: Jeff Purdy was selected by the Norfolk Soil & Crop Improvement Association for this month's feature.



Donna Purdy's collection of cups & saucers by Shelley of England. Shelley ceased operation in 1964 and was purchased by Royal Doulton.

Environmental Farm Plan Meeting Dates Norfolk, Brant & Wentworth Counties

Wentworth - September 19/26
 Woodstock - September 22/29
 Brant - November 15/22
 Woodstock - November 17/24
 Simcoe - November 18/25
 Woodstock - November 29/Dec 06
 Simcoe - December 02/09
 Simcoe - January 06/13
 Simcoe - January 20/27
 Simcoe - February 03/10
 Simcoe - February 17/24
 Simcoe - March 02/09
 Simcoe - March 16/23
 To attend meetings in Brant, Wentworth & Norfolk contact
Chris Thorpe - 519-442-6710
 To attend meetings in Oxford contact
Cathy Dibble - 519-463-6374
 Woodstock Meetings will be held in the OMAFRA office,
 Hwy. # 59 N. Simcoe meetings will be held in the
 OMAFRA office corner of Blue Line Rd. & Hwy. # 3.
 Other locations still to be determined.

Niagara North and Niagara South

All meetings will be held in Rittenhouse Hall, Vineland
 OMAFRA, 4890 Victoria Avenue.
 September 09
 October 18

November 09
 November 14
 To attend meetings in North & South Niagara contact
Mark Neufield - 905-682-2879

Halton County

September 08/15
 February 02/09
 March 03/10
 April 06/13
 Halton workshops will be held at Ebenezer United Church
 (Guelph Line)

Peel County

September 21/28
 January 09/16
 February 03/10
 March 07/14
 Peel workshops will be held at the Brampton Fairgrounds,
 (Heart Lake Road)
 To attend meetings in Peel & Halton Counties contact
Jonathan Watchurst - 519-942-1181

Haldimand County

September 14
 October 19
 November 16
 Haldimand meetings will be held at the Kohler Hall, Kohler.
 To attend meetings in Haldimand contact:
Mike Tomascin 905-957-7805

Cropping Innovation Review

On September 1st, more than 100 farmers climbed on school buses to take part in the “Cropping Innovation Review” being held in Wentworth County, south west of Hamilton. The group gathered at the Binbrook hall before setting out on the days tour.

Fall Cover Crops

Dr Bill Dean of the Crop Science Department at the University of Guelph said there are two primary reasons for planting fall cover crops. The first is to capture Nitrogen to carry it over winter and the second is improve soil quality



Dr Bill Dean explains the advantages of different crops in establishing ground cover in the fall.

by providing crop rotation. The objective with fall cover crops should be to maximise bio mass. If manure is available non legume crops such as oats and oil seed raddish work well because nitrogen from the manure will be captured to increase bio mass. If manure is not available a legume crop such as red clover or peas should be used. It does not pay to apply nitrogen in the form of commercial fertilizer to non legume cover crops.

Fall Tillage

Greg Stewart said there are two reasons for performing tillage in the fall. One is to manage crop residue and the other is to loosen the soil. For residue management,



OMAFRA corn specialist, Greg Stewart discusses various options for fall tillage after wheat & soys.

he said “shallower and wider is the way to go”. In medium textured soils research shows a yield advantage with deep tillage equipment such as offset discs and disc rippers. However, most of what we want to accomplish can be done with strip tillage. The advantages to strip tillage are mostly associated with timeliness of spring planting rather than increases in yields.

Rates and Timing of Nitrogen Applications

Several corn plots were examined with a variety of nitrogen treatments. Results from these plots will be published in future newsletters. With regard to planting timeliness the main message left with the group was “stop cultivating and start planting”.



OMAFRA crop specialist Keith Reid discusses the merits of using Nitrogen Rate Calculator for corn.

The days programme was sponsored in part by a grant from the Federal Green House Gas Reductions Programme and was organized by the Brant and Wentworth Soil & Crop Improvement Associations. Local sponsors for the event were:

Bayer Crop Science, Lynden Co-Op, Hyland Seeds, Pioneer Hi-Bred, Monsanto, Pickseed, Clark Agri Service, County Ag. Service, Scotland Agromart, Szentimrey Seeds and NK Syngenta Seeds.



Everyone gathered back at the Binbrook Hall for lunch.

Farm Smart Farming Systems Expo

The second annual "Farm Smart Expo" was held at the Elora Research Station, University of Guelph, on the 13th of July, 2005. Unlike a year earlier when rain drizzled throughout the day, the weather was sunny and hot with temperatures approaching 34°C by mid afternoon. While the high temperatures caused heat stress for some, an abundance of cold drinks and shade at each location allowed the program to progress smoothly.



Shaded areas at each plot location provided protection from the sun.

Increased attendance this year coupled with the many positive comments ensure that this event will take place again next year.

Thanks To Farm Smart Expo Sponsors

Farm Smart Farming Systems Expo was organized jointly by the Ontario Agricultural College, OMAFRA, 4-H and the Golden Horseshoe & Heartland Regional Soil & Crop Improvement Associations with support from Agri Business.

"Pioneer" was once again the major Agri Business sponsor. As well, a number of farm suppliers with exhibits provided an added feature for this year's event. The following is the complete list of Ag. Industry sponsors:

- Pioneer Hi-Bred Limited
- Agri-Food Laboratories
- Egger Truck & Machine
- Elmira Farm Service
- Salford Farm Machinery
- Shantz Farm Equipment
- Stoltz Sales & Service
- Swanston's Equipment
- Szentimrey Seeds
- Terratec Environmental



Soil profile showing 1 foot of silt loam top soil above a slightly reddish layer indicating imperfect drainage.



Farm Machinery on display at Farm Smart

Soil Pit Revelations

OMAFRA crop specialist, Keith Reid, told the group gathered around the soil pit that their best diagnostic tool for determining the presence of soil compaction is a shovel. His question for them was, "Has anyone dug a pit on his/her own farm to investigate compaction problems?" Reply from someone near the back of the group- "Does tile drainage count?" and Mr Reid's response, "Yes. But only if you have your eyes open".



Knowing what to look for is the key. Mr. Reid explained that a plants roots follow a path of least resistance

Keith Reid described the many things that can be learned from careful examination of a soils profile.

and tend to follow the root channels of previous crops. Normal rooting depth for corn can be 2 to 3 feet. Better rooting is achieved if the roots can follow the channels of any crop other than itself. In general deep roots go for moisture and surface roots for fertility.

Commenting on the practice of using deep tillage to correct soil compaction Reid said "it is much like chemotherapy. There will be side affects". He further explained that

while the compaction layer may be temporarily eliminated by deep tillage, if management practices are not changed the problem will return and next time will be worse than ever. In his opinion deep tillage is used far to much. In heavy clay soils, soil cracking does the job naturally and more effectively.

“What’s with Wheat”

According to Peter Johnson *“If the nut behind the wheel would get off the tractor and check more often we would have better wheat crops”*. Referring to planting depth for wheat Peter Johnson says that conditions vary from field to field. The thumb rule for early planting is “Plant into moisture”. For late planting deposit the seed to a depth of 1 inch.



Peter Johnson discusses proper planting depth for wheat

Duane Faulk discussed optimum planting dates for wheat and described what is commonly known as the “Black Hole”. Black Hole is an unscientific term used to describe the late planting of wheat when there is still

enough heat for germination but insufficient to manufacture enough reserves to survive over winter. For wheat planted later than the Black Hole the seed should retain reserves to help it survive the winter.

Strategic Weed Control In Corn



#1-Sprayed June 04 #2-Sprayed June 08 #3-Sprayed June 21

Greg Stewart & Mike Cowbrough stressed the importance of controlling weeds that come up at the same time as the corn. *“You have to control the first flush of weeds”*. Delaying weed control past the critical 3 leaf stage results in yield loss of about half a bushel per day. In the plots of RR corn above, #1 & #2 show significant regrowth of weeds but little or no yield loss. Plot # 3 has near perfect weed control but there was significant yield loss due to early weed competition. Research has shown that weeds emerging after the 8th leaf stage will have little or no impact on crop yield.



Certified Crop Advisors line up to obtain their CCA Continuing Education Credits.

Livestock Handling & Pasture Management

After lunch those interested in livestock production got on a bus and travelled over to the Elora Beef Research Station. Nancy Noecker, Joanne Handley and Craig Richardson discussed livestock handling and ear tag application. Right, Paul Laronde of Digital Angel Corp. in Waterloo demonstrates the use of a scanner to read electronic ear tags.



Radio Frequency Scanner used to read this animal’s unique ID

Jack Kyle said that with pasture, nutrients don’t leave the field. The

problem lies with distribution. Keep the grazing area small for even distribution and aim for 1 “cow patty” per square yard. Moving cattle daily will give better distribution. The optimum stalking rate for pasture is 1 lb. of animal per square foot per day. Adequate water should be available not more than 500 feet from the herd. Shade is nice but not necessary.



OMAF Forage Specialist, Jack Kyle (centre)