

## **G & B Farms – Gordon and Brenda Adams & Family**

Each year the Turtle Mountain Conservation District (TMCD) nominates a farm family, individual or organization that has demonstrated sound conservation practices and environmental stewardship on their farm and/or organization. G & B Farms is the 2018 recipient of the TMCD Conservation Award. This award was presented to Gordon and Brenda Adams and their son Colin on December 11th at the Manitoba Conservation District Association Conference held in Brandon, MB. The following is the presentation from the evenings event.

G & B Farms is located along the west side of Whitewater Lake, northeast of Deloraine, Manitoba. Gordon Adams and his wife Brenda live on the farm and have two children Colin and Lacey. Colin has his own cows and manages them together with Gordon's cattle.

Horses are a big part of G & B Farms which has led the family to be very active in the rodeo scene. Gordon is a rodeo judge and Brenda is a timekeeper. Lacey Adams rodeos in the Foothills Cowboys Association. She barrel races, trains and prospects barrel horses. She has 6 mares and a stud and usually breeds 9 mares each year. She currently resides in Carstairs, AB and works at a Dental Office in Calgary. Colin Adams started rodeoing in 2004 and in 2005 started riding bareback horses. In 2011, Colin started competing professionally and currently rodeos in 2 associations: the Canadian Professional Rodeo Association and the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association. Colin competes across Western Canada and as far south as Texas, Florida and Arizona. On a regular year, he could be attending 50+ rodeos. When not rodeoing, Colin is heavily involved with the farm management. The family laughed and said, "Colin does the farm stuff and Gordon does the work!"

When the kids were in school, Gordon coached hockey and was the president of the minor hockey league and volunteers for on the local Fair board. Brenda canvasses for the areas Donors Choice and works as an Educational Assistant at Waskada School.

Their mixed farming operation consists of Black Angus cows, horses and chickens that includes 2,720 acres of land that spans from the Turtle Mountain, Whitewater Lake, Medora and Pipestone areas. At Pipestone, there is 1,120 acres of native pasture that has never been broke. Rented land consists of 2,080 acres in the Turtle Mountain and Medora areas. Hayland consists of 300 acres of an alfalfa-grass mix and 100 acres of corn for silage that is used to keep the cows out on the land all winter and aids in their manure management by spreading the manure out on the land instead of in the yard.

Calving takes place in the spring on 60 acres of pasture on the home farm. Colin has 80 cows and together they turned out 300 this year and calved 285. May 1<sup>st</sup>, cattle are taken to spring paddocks in the Turtle Mountain and Pipestone pastures to start grazing and get the cattle out on the land sooner. Calves are backgrounded in the yard and pasture. Cattle are grass fed in the summer and grain silage is fed the last 3 months of the year. The family uses 4-5 gelding horses to check pastures, sort cattle pairs, brand and trail cows home with neighbours and always have few young horses coming up.

G & B Farms has introduced cover cropping into their farming operation over the last 3 years with a salad bar mix of barley, turnip, tillage radish, rye grass, brassicas and red clover used for fall grazing. The cover crop mix has been good for the cattle, soil health and soil infiltration. Soil testing has been conducted to see advantages and Colin has recorded the results since it was first implemented. G & B Farms has also seen less inputs with using a cover crop mix and having cattle graze the land. Land sown down with the cover crop mix has seen better infiltration. Adams said, the field where the cover crop was planted is normally fairly wet with poor infiltration. After a rain, the small run through the field would normally have been filled with water but with the cover crop, there were no puddles of water unlike the surrounding fields." Adams credited the improved infiltration to the cover crop.

Their conservation practices on the farm consist of rotational grazing and some pastures in a twice-over grazing rotation. In the Turtle Mountain, G & B Farms MOB graze - a high-density stock grazing where cattle graze for a short period of time and then give the grass ample time for rest and regrowth.

G & B Farms have participated in several Turtle Mountain Conservation District programs including a portable remote watering system which is used by 90 pairs within the Turtle Mountain pastures. They have also taken part in the abandoned well sealing program, salinity seed, water sampling and portable windbreak program to keep cattle out on the land year-round for improved manure management and fertilizer. Gordon has also participated in rental programs that the TMCD offers that include the cattle handling system, wire roller and watering system demo.

Gordon, Brenda and Colin Adams have worked with the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation to secure a total of 1,325 acres of upland and wetland habitat combined. Of those acres, a combined 272 acres is wetland and upland habitat around Whitewater Lake and a combined 1,053 acres is upland grassland habitat with some wetland acres in the Municipality of Pipestone that is also managed under a twice over rotational grazing system.

The operation has also participated in the Species at Risk Partnerships on Agricultural Lands (SARPAL) program for their native grasslands in the Pipestone area. "It's lighter land and it's doing what it does best and that's growing grass", says Gordon. The SARPAL project involved 60 acres of Colin's land being sown down to native grass. Through the program 6 miles of permanent 3 wired barbed wire fence and 3.5 miles of single strand electric cross fencing was implemented through the program. The program works with beef producers to preserve native grassland and protect wildlife habitat for species at risk.

The properties involved in the SARPAL program were surveyed by Bird Survey of Canada to identify all bird species on the property including species at risk and species of interest. On Gordon and Brenda's half section in the Pipestone area, 37 bird species were identified, 2 were species at risk – Bobolink and Sprague's Pipit and 1 species of interest – Grasshopper Sparrow. On Colin's half section, 48 bird species were identified, 2 species at risk – Bobolink and the Barn Swallow and 1 species of interest – Grasshopper Sparrow. The Adams' stewardship of their pasture is a significant contribution for these bird species and all wildlife as native grassland is important for these species survival as much of their habitat has been lost.

G & B Farms is involved in the Verified Beef Program. Colin takes the lead for the farm and keeps details such as cattle weighed on and off the pasture in the spring and fall. It allows them to keep track and tell which pastures have better gains. Through the program Colin applied for loadcells for a hydraulic squeeze shoot and controller and was approved through the program. The system records all CCIA tags, scans and uploads calf information for a digital record. Colin uses the CattleMax app as it complements the other program and has a good tracking system to assist them in selecting replacements and pasture selections in terms of gains.

Gordon currently sits on the Canadian Cattlemen's Association (CCA) Board of Directors representing Manitoba. He is also the Director for District 1 with the Manitoba Beef Producers and is the representative from the Beef Producers on the CCA Board and has held the title for 4 years.

Gordon has supported many agricultural events and is proud of his contributions at the Manitoba Winter Fair and Red River Ex. In Brandon, he has participated in Moo!Mania where grade 3-5 school aged kids attend before the start of school. Gordon volunteers to run one booth where he spoke about his own ranch and the day to day activities on the farm. "It's a good educational event. Lots of questions about horses! Its good to talk to a school groups so they can learn more about the farm."

When asked what G & B Farms plan for the future is Gordon replied, "Expand the livestock operation and keep doing what we're doing. Continue to promote "Eat Beef" and for the grassland to stay in grass."

~ G & B Farms – Gordon and Brenda Adams & Family ~