

connection

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Forward Thinking Farmers Host Pilot Project

By Amy Petherick for the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association

Farm safety advocates Jack Thomson and Rhonda MacDougall became the first of several farmer owner/operators in Nova Scotia who are welcoming regulatory inspectors onto their farm to better understand and raise the profile of safe practices in the agricultural industry.

Their operation, West River Holsteins, was selected to be the first stop in a mock inspection tour of farms in an educational collaboration between Farm Safety Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education.

Thomson and MacDougall have been dairy farming since 1998 in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, and today they milk 120 cows. It had always been the couple's goal to farm, but in 2007 that dream almost went up in smoke after the original facility was struck by lightning and burned to the ground.

As dairy farmers, when rebuilding, their primary focus was on the cows. MacDougall explains that cow comfort is important, but they also aimed to improve occupational health and safety for the people who would work in the new barn. "Those things you put in place for comfortable cows are also reflective of employee safety," she offers.

With safer cattle handling in mind, gates were installed that are far easier and more ergonomic to use. The flooring in the old barn had been uneven and could prove to be slick, but the new flooring is grooved to help with traction. The new barn also has better air quality, another feature that isn't just better for the cows, but for people.

"Air quality is significantly different from before; the ceiling is extremely high in our new barn, airbags are on the side of the barn so it's all controlled, and the temperature is set, which is really nice for employees too," she says.

For Thomson and MacDougall, all of their ideas about safety are based on practicality. They have first aid kits and fire extinguishers in all buildings, exemplifying the farm's focus on keeping a small incident from

escalating into full blown disasters. They're also working to ensure all employees receive first aid, WHMIS (Workplace Hazardous Materials

Information System), and confined spaces training. MacDougall says that peace of mind allows them to concentrate more on milk production and their cows.

"We all have moments of forgetfulness or inattentiveness, when

we're rushing and we just need to get it done," she says. "We really want to provide as safe an environment as possible."

It was because of Thomson and MacDougall's commitment to safety that Carolyn Van Den Heuvel of Farm Safety Nova Scotia approached them to host the first mock inspection tour.

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masthead photo: West River Holsteins operates near Antigonish, Nova Scotia. Today they milk 120 cows.

WCB Coverage

ARE MY FAMILY MEMBERS WHO WORK ON THE FARM COVERED?

Under the Workers' Compensation Act, **family members who live at home** must be handled separately from the rest of your workers when it comes to WCB insurance—you need to purchase a policy called **Special Protection** to have them covered.

In Special Protection, you set the amount of coverage based on a worker's insurable earnings. Coverage can range from \$10,200 per year, up to the maximum assessable amount of coverage for any worker—currently about \$60,000 per year.

In the event of a workplace injury, any special protection benefits paid are based on what the family member actually earns or the amount of coverage selected—whichever is less. So, the amount of coverage selected should be representative of the family member's actual wages.

Remember, the important factor is **where** the family member lives. Regardless of the relation, a family member who works on your farm **but lives elsewhere** can be covered under your main policy and wouldn't require special protection. 

Do you have the right license?

TOWING — LICENSE REQUIREMENTS

License needed	Weight of towed implement	Combination weight (towing vehicle + towed implement)
Class 1	No restriction	No restriction
Class 3	4500 kg or LESS	14 000 kg or MORE
Class 3 + Condition 15	4500 kg or MORE	14 000 kg or MORE
Class 3R (Condition 23) *	4500 kg or MORE	14 000 kg or MORE
Class 5	4500 kg or LESS	14 000 kg or LESS
Class 5 + Condition 15	Up to 14 000 kg minus the weight of towing vehicle	14000 kg or LESS
Class 8 (Tractor License)	Towing not permitted	14 000 kg or LESS
Class 8 + passed Tractor Safety course *	Up to 14 000 kg minus the weight of towing vehicle	14 000 kg or LESS

* applicable to tractor combination only

Please note that the above restrictions and requirements are related to licensing only. The towing vehicle and towed implements must be suitable for the weight of the load.

Condition 23 and 15 testing offered

FSNS is hosting **Condition 23** and **Condition 15** testing in **MAY** in the following areas:

Lawrencetown Port Williams
Antigonish Truro

Note: Condition 23 requires a medical, so if you are interested in testing for 23,

you should schedule an appointment with your doctor as soon as possible.

Registration/Information:

Please contact FSNS at info@farmsafetyns.ca or (902) 893-2293

Limited spaces available
Register by April 21

TRACTOR SAFETY—See course below for Tractor License endorsements.

UPCOMING Training

Each course requires a minimum number of participants and Farm Safety Nova Scotia (FSNS) reserves the right to cancel courses due to low enrollment.

Members may also request training to be hosted in their community or at a farm. Contact FSNS to schedule a training course in your area.

info@farmsafetyns.ca
(902) 893-2293

Scheduled Training

Tractor Safety

This course is designed to increase awareness and test competency of tractor operators on the safe operation and use of farm tractors and implements.

Who should attend?

- 14-16 year-olds with a valid NS Class 8 driver's license who want to be able to haul equipment on Nova Scotia roads; and,
- Others with a valid Class 5 driver's license who want to increase their tractor safety knowledge and skills.

Cost: \$225 + HST

Truro

April 8 & 9

Registration Deadline March 31

Antigonish

April 29 & 30

Registration Deadline April 21

Port Williams

May 6 & 7

Registration Deadline April 28

Register with: Extended Learning, Dalhousie Faculty of Agriculture extended.learning@dal.ca or (902)893-6666

Online Training

There are also a number of online training courses available on the FSNS website. Cost per course varies. Visit www.farmsafetyns.ca or call (902) 893-2293

Young Operator Day

The Young Operator Day is designed to provide youth aged 14–21 with an introduction to safe equipment operation.

Saturday, April 22 (9:30am – 4pm)
Agridome, NSPE, Bible Hill
Cost: \$20/participant or \$50/family

Registration deadline is April 14th and space is limited.

The day is jam packed with information and will also include practical sessions so participants get to put to use what they have learned! Sessions include: general worker safety, safe tractor operation, safe implement

hitching, equipment maintenance, road safety and more.

A minimum of Class 8 license is required for those who will be operating equipment, but is not a requirement for participation in non-driving elements.

This workshop is for awareness purposes only and does not meet the requirements of a Tractor Safety Course required for hauling implements with a Class 8 license.

Tor register, contact :
info@farmsafetyns.ca
or (902) 893-2293

*This event is supported by
Green Diamond Equipment Ltd.*



Children on the Farm

Are you sometimes wondering if your child is ready to work on the farm or to take on increased responsibility?

The North American Guidelines for Children's Agricultural Tasks (NAGCAT) were developed to help you answer those very questions. Every child differs in his/her development so the age of the child is not always the best determining factor.

NAGCAT is a collection of guidelines designed to assist you in assigning age-appropriate tasks for children ages 7–16. The guidelines are based on child growth and development, farming practices, injuries and health and safety.

To view the NAGCAT guidelines, visit nagcat.org

Forward Thinking... (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Van Den Heuvel had worked with the family to complete a FarmSafe Plan in 2012 and later on through Farm Safety Nova Scotia training programs. Because of their history and the family's proven commitment to safety, Van Den Heuvel thought West River Holsteins was a perfect place to kick off this pilot.

Admittedly, there were nerves on all sides, both MacDougall and Van Den Heuvel confess. Although the intention was to keep the visit educational, it was understood inspectors would not be able to ignore anything that was an immediate danger. But in the end, the inspections went off without a hitch. Van Den Heuvel says that as many as 75 participants, including farmers, stakeholders and inspectors,

attended the three sessions held throughout the province.

"The inspectors really wanted to take an educational approach and they really wanted to meet farmers in their element," Van Den Heuvel explains. "I am really happy the Department of Labour is quite keen to support industry driven initiatives."

Van Den Heuvel believes that as much as the attending farmers learned about regulatory compliance, the event also proved to be a real opportunity for the inspectors to learn about agriculture. "Things that we do as farmers, that we consider to be industry best practices, might not necessarily be on the radar of the inspectors because they're generalists not specialists," she says.

For example, Thomson and MacDougall could explain a lot about handling cattle and the safety features their facilities included, which some inspectors had previously little experience with.

"I think there was good conversation on both sides," MacDougall explains. "It was good for them to see what kinds of challenges we face, that we all have to be aware of."

Both MacDougall and Van Den Heuvel agree that the event did a lot to emphasize how everyone who was participating shared a commitment to safety improvements. This new found sense of common ground will serve as a strong foundation for more joint initiatives that are expected to take place later this year. 🌱



Progressive Agriculture Safety Days

A fun-filled day of learning for children aged 9 – 13.

Registration fee is \$10/child or \$20/family. Pre-registration required.

10 am – 2 pm (Drop-off between 9:45 am and 10 am)

Brookfield Fire Hall
Saturday, May 13
 Register by May 1

Berwick Fire Hall
Saturday, June 10
 Register by May 29

Topics for demonstrations and discussions include:

- Tractor Safety Chemical Safety ATV Safety Fire Safety
- Animal Safety Food Safety ...and more!

This Safety Day includes lunch, snacks and a T-shirt!

For application forms –

visit www.farmsafetyns.ca/safetydays or contact Farm Safety Nova Scotia

Return application forms to –

Farm Safety Nova Scotia, 60 Research Drive, Bible Hill, NS B6L 1N2

Above: Participants at the Progressive Agriculture Safety Day held last year in Antigonish.

What is a Progressive Agriculture Safety Day?

The mission of a Progressive Agriculture Safety Day is simple—to provide education, training and resources to make farm and ranch life safer and healthier for children and their communities. It is a program delivered by the Progressive Agriculture Foundation.

For more information visit www.progressiveag.org



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