

PUREBRED CATTLE BREEDERS

Robert & Sharon Ballantyne

Robert and Sharon Ballantyne own Diamond B Ranches, Ltd., a purebred livestock operation established fifty years ago by Robert's parents, on 5000 acres near Livelong. Their herd includes 60 purebred Galloway, 60 purebred Black Angus, and 240 Galloway-Angus cross cows.

Robert had long been aware that his main corral system was too close to his farm's two wells, and about five years ago began drawing up plans to move his wintering site to relieve some of the pressure. The project Robert envisioned included the construction of three new water bowls, electrically fortified five-wire pens and alley, and portable windbreaks. The total estimated cost was \$28,000, more than Robert had available, and more than he was willing to finance. Despite his growing concerns, his plans remained on the shelf.

Traveling home from Agribition with a fellow Galloway breeder, Robert learned of the Environmental Farm Plan. Intrigued, but not sure what the requirements might be, he got in touch with EFP facilitator Tom Brown. After talking to Tom, Robert decided it was worth looking into.

What is the Environmental Farm Plan (EFP)?

The Environmental Farm Plan is designed to help producers assess the current and future environmental impact of their farming practices. Delivered in Saskatchewan by the Provincial Council of Agriculture Development and Diversification Boards (PCAB), the EFP is an awareness and educational tool that, for producers who successfully complete its 5-step process, may open the door to potential funding support through the Canada-Saskatchewan Farm Stewardship Program (CSFSP). The program is open to anyone interested in understanding and addressing environmental issues in agriculture, and is completely voluntary. Information provided by producers who choose to take part is kept strictly confidential.

Participants are introduced to the concepts at a workshop led by a trained facilitator. Later, at home, they use a workbook to analyze their own



operation and farming practices, to identify potential environmental risks and to learn about possible solutions. After completing the workbook assessment, participants attend a second workshop where, with the facilitator's assistance, they choose the most appropriate steps to take, prioritize their activities, and finalize their personal Environmental Farm Action Plan.

Each completed action plan is then delivered to a committee of producers whose Environmental Farm action plans have already been endorsed. Once the action plan has been approved by this Peer Review Committee, the producer receives a Certificate of Endorsement from PCAB and becomes eligible to apply for cost-shared funding from the CSFSP to implement qualifying aspects of their Action Plan.

A win-win situation

Robert attended his first workshop in March 2005 and recalls being impressed by the way the material prompted him to evaluate his farming practices from an environmental perspective. Making improvements to his own operation was just one of a number of reasons Robert chose to participate in the program. Still, he credits the anticipated CSFSP funding support he applied for after successfully completing his Environmental Farm Plan, with giving him the opportunity to dust off his plans and start relocating his corrals.

Saskatchewan Environmental Farm Plan Testimonials

continued

Robert believes farmers in general try to be good stewards of the land. What has stopped many in the farming community from doing "the right thing," he says, has not been lack of awareness, but lack of funds. "They know there are things to be done. Now that there's financial help there, they may be ready to go out and get that project done."

As for Robert, he's once again making plans. He's considering the purchase of a portable solar-powered pump trough, and would also like to shield the base of his fuel tanks to contain any spills. Asked what he might tell a fellow farm operator about the program, he says, "The first thing is, you get some financial help from it. And the second thing is long-term benefit for the environment. And if you can put the two of them together, it really helps out. It helps everybody."



ENVIRONMENTAL FARM PLAN

EFP

Sustainable Futures

Provincial Council of Agriculture Development and Diversification Boards for Saskatchewan Inc. (PCAB) is an independent non-profit organization representing grassroots agriculture in Saskatchewan. We work closely with industry and government to ensure timely and effective delivery of agriculture programs in the province. PCAB is committed to working with both government and industry to ensure a cooperative, efficient approach to agricultural program delivery.

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