

## CATTLE AND SHEEP RANCHING

*Rick & Susie Matthews*

Rick Matthews knew sustainable management of his grazing land could be improved by cross-fencing, but finding the money to do it was a problem. Rick and his wife Susie operate a ranch near Livelong. While Susie has her hands full with the couple's four children, aged eight, six, two and five months, Rick's main focus is their 175 breeding cows and 250 sheep. "There's always more money to spend than there is money coming in," Rick says.

Rick is realistic about his priorities, but he looks for a win-win situation. "Regardless of what I'm doing I'm looking at the future, and how it's going to affect me later on," he says. "I've got to balance things, and a business decision generally becomes the first priority, but we factor in environmental considerations as well."

For Rick, cross-fencing was an ideal win-win situation. When he learned that the Environmental Farm Plan could help him achieve it, he was quick to take advantage of the opportunity.



### The Environmental Farm Plan (EFP)

The EFP is delivered in Saskatchewan by the Provincial Council of Agricultural Development and Diversification Boards (PCAB). Designed as an awareness and educational tool, the EFP is open to anyone interested in understanding and addressing environmental issues in agriculture, and to producers who want to assess the current and future environmental impact of their farming practices. Participation in the program is completely voluntary and confidential, but for those who successfully complete its 5-step process it can open the door to significant cost-shared support through the Canada-Saskatchewan Farm Stewardship Program (CSFSP).

After hearing about the EFP from a neighbour, Rick attended an introductory workshop in Glaslyn. EFP facilitator Tom Brown introduced the concepts and worked with the producers present to examine the soil and site characteristics of their operation. He then gave each participant a workbook to take home to help them analyze their own farm and farming practices, and to identify potential environmental risks and solutions. After completing the workbook assessment, Rick and the other participants attended a second workshop to finalize their Environmental Farm action plan. With Tom's help, they reviewed the risks they'd identified, and prioritized the actions needed to resolve these risks. The completed action plans were then examined by a Peer Review Committee of producers whose Environmental Farm action plans had already been endorsed, to verify that the plans reasonably addressed the risks they identified.



## Saskatchewan Environmental Farm Plan Testimonials

*continued*

When Rick received the Certificate of Endorsement from PCAB stating that he had successfully completed the EFP program, he was eligible to apply to the CSFSP for cost-shared funding to implement those elements of his plan that qualified as CSFSP Beneficial Management Practices (BMP).

### A balance of priorities, and an eye on the future

Rick's application for funding assistance to cross-fence his pasture land was approved, and he completed the installation in the summer of 2006. He says he intends to apply for funding again in the coming year, to implement additional BMPs identified in his Environmental Farm action plan.

As a young rancher, Rick is preparing for a competitive future where agricultural products will be tracked from farm to table, and producers monitored for environmental compliance. "Producers are going to have to be more environmentally aware in order to be able to farm, or to ranch, in the next number of years," he observes. "We're going to have to calculate how efficient we are or how environmentally friendly we are some time. This just helps us get ahead on the competitiveness. I'd definitely recommend the program."



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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