



Havey Whidden presents Anne Crowe with token of appreciation for her service to the DFNS Board.



NS Agriculture Minister Keith Colwell presents Phillip & Lori Vroegh, of Sunny Point Farms Ltd., with a 5 Year Excellence Award.



NS Agriculture Minister Keith Colwell presents Joe & Nancy Harbers, of Ben J. Harbers & Sons Farm Ltd., with a 5 Year Excellence Award.



Havey Whidden presents Dave Davies (left) with an Honourary Membership to the DFNS.



Havey Whidden presents Doug Bacon (left) with token of appreciation for his service to the DFNS Board.

# Farming is a Lifestyle

By Linda Harrington

Lauchie MacEachern worked on Folly River Farms in Lower Debert for 6 years alongside owner, Henry Eisses, and when the opportunity presented itself he jumped at the chance to own a dairy farm. One of Nova Scotia's newest dairy farmers, he only took over the farm in January, 2013.

Lauchie didn't grow up on a farm but while working towards an Animal Science degree at the NSAC, he worked summers on dairy farms during in his 3rd and 4th year.

"I just really enjoyed the work. It is something different every day," says Lauchie, acknowledging the biggest struggle is time management. "You could work as much as you want, so it is important to manage time efficiently."

Tony Versteeg is another one of the newer dairy farmers on the scene, having bought Black Avon Farm in Heatherton about three years ago. He grew up around farming and also attended the NSAC. "I like to keep busy and I like a challenge. The different things I get to do as a dairy farmer are incredible," he says in answer to why he went into dairy farming. "Nothing is ever easy but when you have a passion for farming, you do what you have to do."

Tony says he was able to build up confidence in lenders over the years and did not find it difficult to get financial support when he found a farm for sale. "There are only 200 dairy farms in NS, so there are not many for sale. I was able to purchase an older farm, with a milk quota. The owners stayed involved and allowed me to gradually take things over."

Alan Porter, of Belcher Holsteins Ltd., Fort Belcher, is a second generation farmer, having worked alongside his own father from the time he was a youngster. He says he simply enjoys farming, with 70 head of cattle, calling it a "lifestyle".

Alan tries to attend the DFNS Annual General Meeting every year to get first-hand information from the national groups and enjoys the chance to talk with other dairy farmers.

Allan Macmillan, of Charles Hill & Son Ltd., located in Central Onslow, agrees saying, "It is a great opportunity for comradery and to network with other dairy farmers. We greatly appreciate all that the board members do for us." Allan used to be self-employed as an arborist/landscaper but gave it up to be home with his young family.

"Farming is long hours but very rewarding. The work is never boring; we do something different every day."

Macmillan says one of the biggest hurdles he faces is finding quality labour. "It is

hard to find an employee who knows how to work and enjoys what they do."

Alan Porter says another big issue is rising input costs. "Prices of everything has gone up significantly over the last few years."

Both farmers also worry about Canada's new trade deals and what this will mean for their industry. "The long-term goal is to keep our farms strong enough to be able to eventually hand it off to family, so they can easily take it over," says Macmillan. His farm has been in his wife's family for 5 generations.

Long days and hard work, but these farmers love what they do.



Dairy Farmer, Phillip Vroegh steps to the microphone to ask questions following a presentation.



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