

# Breaking Ground

(in Northeastern Ontario) Winter 2015

A Publication of the North Eastern Ontario Soil & Crop Improvement Association (NEOSCIA)

## NEOSCIA 2015 Year in Review

By Dan Cook, NEOSCIA President

The Northeastern Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (NEOSCIA) is comprised of 8 directors representing the 8 soil and crop improvement Districts in the Northeast plus the provincial director, treasurer and Regional Communication Coordinator (RCC). NEOSCIA is responsible for ensuring the Breaking Ground publication is produced and distributed on a quarterly basis and also may have responsibility with projects spanning multiple Districts.

NEOSCIA receives partial funding on an annual basis from OSCIA to assist with the production of Breaking Ground (\$4000) and RCC activities (\$2000). The key words are “partial funding” with the remainder of funds required to support these activities coming from sponsorship from area businesses advertising in Breaking Ground. Sponsorships are currently \$500 for advertising in all four quarterly issues of Breaking Ground. Without this support, NEOSCIA would not be able to continue producing Breaking Ground and RCC activities would have to be curtailed.

Highlights and initiatives in 2015 that NEOSCIA has been involved in include:

- In February at the OSCIA AGM, Mack Emery moved into the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-president position for OSCIA and it is expected that Mack will step into the 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-president position in 2016 and become

President of OSCIA in 2017.

Also at the February AGM, Graham Gambles presented the final report for the Haskap Evaluation and Management Development project. The report is available for viewing at [www.ontariosoilcrop.org/en/membership/annualmeeting.htm](http://www.ontariosoilcrop.org/en/membership/annualmeeting.htm).

With the OSCIA funding programs expiring at the end of March and new program funding coming into force in April, NEOSCIA applied for a Regional Communications Grant for the three year term of 2015-18 and has received approval for the grant.

With the coming of the new OSCIA program funding of Tier 1 and Tier 2 projects, NEOSCIA assisted the Cochrane District SCIA and the Temiskaming Crop Coalition in preparing and submitting a Tier 2 project application entitled “Rapid Development of Farmland from Boreal Forest and Evaluation Relative to Traditional Clearing Methods” or more typically referred to as the mulching project. The submission received OSCIA approval with grant funding of \$77,400 over the three year project timeframe and the project is underway. Cashflow for the project is being administered through the NEOSCIA bank account.

The NEOSCIA AGM was held April 10 in conjunction with the Earleton Farm Show.

(con't pg 2)

This newsletter is published 4 times per year. Articles can be submitted in either English or French. Please supply translation, if available.

Material in this newsletter is based upon factual information believed to be accurate. Action taken as a result of this information is solely the responsibility of the user. We reserve the right to edit articles.

Publication Number:

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## NEOSCIA 2015 Year in Review

*(Con't from front page)*

- In April, Graham Gambles advised of his plans to retire from the RCC position as of the end of May. A recruitment committee was formed to lead the search to fill the position with job postings in April and candidate interviews in May resulting in the hiring of Brittany Roka through NOFIA to fill the RCC position effective the 1<sup>st</sup> of June. The relationship between NEOSCIA and NOFIA is anticipated to provide opportunity for synergy in communicating agricultural issues in Northeastern Ontario.
- The NEOSCIA summer meeting was held July 23 in conjunction with the Temiskaming Crop Tour.
- With Brittany coming on-board as RCC, in-house publishing of Breaking Ground was initiated with the September issue reducing the cost of production of Breaking Ground. Other means to further reduce the cost of production and distribution are being examined. These measures may change the look of the publication somewhat but will assist NEOSCIA with the continued production of Breaking Ground.

## CALL FOR

## NOMINATIONS

**Provincial Director for Northeastern Ontario Soil & Crop Improvement Association (NEOSCIA)**

Duties will commence February, 2017

Time commitment outside of NEOSCIA is 1 hour (approx.) per month on conference calls, 2 to 3 days per year to attend Provincial Annual Meeting, 2 to 3 days per year to attend Summer Provincial Directors Meeting, 2 to 3 days per year for other possible committee meetings.

Position allows \$175.00 per diem/day while acting on behalf of NEOSCIA plus allowable expenses (mileage, meals, accommodation as required).

Please contact Dan Cook at [dancook@puc.net](mailto:dancook@puc.net) or (705) 272-3964 for further information or to submit a nomination. Job duties can be found at [www.farmnorth.com](http://www.farmnorth.com), Associations, NEOSCIA.

## Haspak Demo 2015

*By Graham Gambles*

Although the NEOSCIA Haspak demo project only ran “officially” for two years, a number of the 16 cooperators are still willing to provide observations from this past season, the extended third year of the trial. The third year seen the first decent crop, and the 150 plants that each grower received were able to produce enough fruit for testing of pies, etc. However, everyone who planted their stand near the forest or even in a garden with surrounding landscape trees found that birds (robins, grackles, crows, etc.) make short work of unprotected plants. Therefore, in year 4, it is suggested that growers begin to cover their plants with bird netting (1/2 inch openings) if you expect to get your berries before the birds.

A number of growers, especially in the southern portion of the region, found that certain varieties of Haspak had blackening leaves by mid to late summer, followed by what seemed to be early leaf drop. This is believed to be related to “powdery mildew” presence, and has been noted previously in southern Ontario, and areas around the Great Lakes where there is greater humidity and higher temperatures. It was not seen much last year, probably due to the cooler summer that we experienced. Fortunately, the disease arrives well after the late June harvest, but it can

cut back on the rate of plant growth over the rest of the summer. (Increased plant growth = increased yield in the following year.) It is not expected to affect over winter mortality, but that remains to be seen.

Whether to plant in sod, bare soil, or into plastic mulch was a major part of the NEOSCIA research program. Those that planted into sod and tried to maintain their stand by use of lawn mowers found that there was very little growth this year. This was probably due to competition for moisture. The summer was very dry in most of the north, and the surrounding grasses, even when well mowed, have a greater ability to absorb the moisture available. However, one grower reports that planting into sod is viable, without any tillage, if CARDBOARD is placed over the grass, and then held in place by a decent cover of softwood chips. Watering was not required, even in this dry summer. By comparison, softwood chips used as a mulch alone did NOT prevent weeds from taking hold, although mushroom/fungi was promoted. The heavy clay soil under this woody mulch quickly developed greater tilth as the mycelium works through the soil, helping to release nutrients that are made available to the haspak. *(con't next page)*

## Haspak Demo 2015

By Graham Gambles

Bare soil growers suffered from excessive hours of weeding, mostly by hand, as rototillers and even hoes would damage roots that would spread out from the plant close to the surface. One grower tried to reduce the workload by applying Roundup to the weeds, after placing containers over the plants. After spraying, the containers were removed. A week later, many of the plants were dead. Apparently, even a whiff of Roundup can cause mortality to haskap.

Plastic mulch, especially that which is rated for 5 years or more use, seemed to provide the best combination of advanced growth with the least weeding. It also allows moisture to recycle under the plastic, reducing the need to water in light soils, and even eliminating the need for watering at all in heavy soils. However, it is not perfect. Rodents such as moles, voles and mice seem to like the plastic shelters and have caused over winter losses by devouring roots and stems. Mothballs or other devices such as "sonic" noise pollution will be tried to discourage these critters from setting up house in Haskap orchards over the coming winter.

One mulch that you definitely DO NOT want to use is HAY/STRAW. The grower who had had the best results by the end of year 2 found that the quackgrass was coming through the fibre weed control mats by the end of the second year. A heavy layer of hay/straw was applied under the bushes in the late summer, similar to what you would apply to a strawberry bed before winter. This spring, all looked well through the flowering period, but as the fruit turned blue in late June, plants began to suddenly wilt and die, often within a week. Leaf chlorosis was the only early indicator. All varieties were affected. A dead Czech-17 pollinator, four feet in height, was extracted, (including more than a foot of tap root), and sent for analysis at the University of Guelph Pest Diagnostic Clinic found that a form of root rot (*Cylindrocarpus*) was the culprit. The source of the disease is ASSUMED to be the hay/straw mulch. The material was removed from the site and no plants have died in the late season. Therefore, stick to woody or plastic mulches around your haskap in the future!

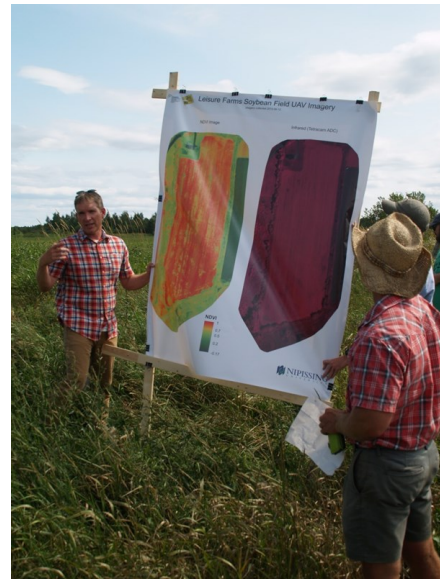
Fertilization tests were undertaken this year at Haileybury. Soil analysis from the Saskatchewan Haskap research fields indicated a very high level of calcium in the soils. Therefore various types of calcium field amendments and fertilizers were tested. The best results came from slow

release tomato food that specifically had calcium added. Note that high nitrogen rates do allow stems to grow extra long, but they have no strength and fall over. A complete fertilizer is required, but the proper ratios are still not known.

Currently, with the assistance of Phytocultures of PEI, the supplier of our test plants, a small project to evaluate late fall planting (after the leaves have dropped) is underway at the Haileybury Haskap Demo site. In Russia, it is said to be more common to plant similar varieties in the fall than in the spring. This allows for fields to be fully prepared over the summer, without the need to supply extra water. The trial is being done both under plastic and in bare soil. We will see the results by this time next year!

## UAV Imagery in Agriculture

By Neil Tarlton




UAV imagery was one of the highlight techniques demonstrated at the recent Nipissing soil and crop improvement association summer tour. Here Dr Dan Walters of Nipissing University explains the interpretation of the light sensing results taken with a drone camera the day before. Mitch Deschatelets of Leisure farms is here observing the results and explaining the crop growth of his soyabean trial demonstrating the difference between planting at 7" and 14" row widths.

The remote sensing technique will be used to monitor the crop growth during the season and will be correlated to the yield results from the combine at harvest time.





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# Breaking Ground (in Northeastern Ontario)

## Bring Food Home *Digging Deeper*

By Stephanie Vanthof



Bring Food Home was held on November 20-22 to collaborate on the future of the Ontario food movement. FarmStart and the Ecological Farmers of Ontario hosted a series of farmer based training workshops that included New Options for Small Flock Chicken Farmers, Time & Productivity Management for Farmers and Effective Irrigation Systems. Summaries of these sessions will be in the Winter and Spring editions of Breaking Ground!

### New Options for Small Flock Chicken Farmers

*The Chicken Farmers of Ontario recently held a series of consultations across Ontario to assess the allocation of future growth in Ontario's share of national quota for chicken production. Eat Local Sudbury was instrumental in including 8 remote sessions in Northern Districts. Responses from these consultations showed support for allocating growth to small flock producers and large public support for small flock producer allocation. Dr. Gwen Zellen of the CFO & Maureen Strickland, a farmer on Manitoulin Island, spoke about the newly created Artisanal Chicken Program.*

The CFO has released three new programs to help allocate growth in chicken quota. These programs include:

1. Specialty breeds: supports consumers with demands for alternative breeds (2 approved) with at least 5,000 birds, currently 19 farms in Ontario;
2. Family Food (previously Small Flockers): up to 300 birds per year, geared towards home consumption and farm gate sales; over 15,000 in Ontario with an average of 60 birds per year; grows approximately 5% per year;
3. Artisanal Chicken: between 600-3,000 birds per year; intended to meet local, discrete, currently unmet markets.

The Artisanal Chicken Program offers an opportunity for Northern Ontario producers to expand their chicken operations, which was previously difficult due to costly quota barriers. The program, which was announced in August, is currently evaluating the applications for 2016 growth. For the current year, 5% of total annual growth (1,000,000 kg) has been allocated to the Artisanal Program, which allows for approximately 450,000 additional birds in 2016. The current applications have not exceeded this allocated capacity.

Evaluation criteria include the business plan that identifies local markets & partners, the farm visit & inspection, growing facilities, OFFSAP & ACP regulations and

transportation options. A successful applicant will have demonstrated an understanding of the local/artisanal market, met CFO policies, audits, inspections and applicable regulations, paid appropriate fees & levies and communicate digitally with CFO. More information can be found at [www.ontariochicken.ca](http://www.ontariochicken.ca).

Maureen Strickland, a producer on Manitoulin Island, has applied to grow 600 chickens in 2016 under the Artisanal Program. She currently has 100 egg hens, but applied to the program to make additional income and be able to raise chickens humanely and meet an identified market demand with a potential to expand if successful. Despite trepidation about the regulations/audits and the site visit, as she wasn't investing money to ready for 600 chickens if not approved, Maureen applied. She found the site visit very pragmatic and she is able to work towards compliance if her licence is approved, with knowledge support from CFO. Per Maureen's site inspection, she will have to create a dedicated, fenced in pasture to separate her meat chickens from her other animals and will need to create a secured roosting area. Maureen had a fantastic experience with her CFO application and will learn about her application status in December, at which point she will make the changes to come into compliance. She is also looking forward to the larger opportunities this program could create, including efficiencies in her operation and potential chicken processing at the Manitoulin Island Community Abattoir if additional producers in Manitoulin enter the program. Retailers, such as Eat Local Sudbury, are also supportive as it allows access to the sale of Northern Ontario chickens. The CFO is working to add information about food safety, animal care and biosecurity, etc. to its website to support applicants.





# Breaking Ground (in Northeastern Ontario)

## 2015 Grain Corn Results



### 2015 Grain Corn Plots at Chieftain Farms / prepared by D Tasse OMAFRA New Liskeard

Site: New Liskeard Salesbarn road					
Seeded: May 22 , 2015					
Harvest Date: November 3rd					
Previous crop: Barley					
Population : 30,000					
8 rows x 2,402'		Axle Scales		Koster moisture tester	
<b>Hybrid</b>	<b>Area harvested</b>	<b>Wet weight</b>	<b>Moisture at Harvest</b>	<b>Dry weight adjusted at 15.5%</b>	
Pioneer 82-10	1.103 acre	8,880 lbs	26%	3.16 t/ac	125 bus/ac
Dekalb DKC 23-17	1.103 acre	8,120 lbs	24%	2.97 t/ac	117 bus/ac
Pioneer 73-32	1.103 acre	8,660 lbs	26%	3.08 t/ac	122 bus/ac
Pioneer 73-32	.8363 acre	7,400 lbs	24%	3.57 t/ac	141 bus/ac (2nd test performed nov 4th)

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For more information, please contact Marthe Geoffroy at [marthe.geoffroy@orange.fr](mailto:marthe.geoffroy@orange.fr). If you would like a copy of the Placement Proposal, please contact NOFIA at [nofia.on@gmail.com](mailto:nofia.on@gmail.com) or 705-647-4782.

### Grower Pesticide Safety Course Dates

Huntsville	February 9, 2016
Chelmsford	February 22, 2016
Verner	March 16, 2016
	March 17, 2016 (French)
Earlton	March 31, 2016
	April 1, 2016
	April 2, 2016 (French)
Powassan	April 12, 2016

To sign up, please call 800-652-8573 or visit <https://www.opep.ca/index.cfm/farmers1/courseexam-schedule-dates/>.




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# Breaking Ground (in Northeastern Ontario)

## Pollinator Health Action Plan

By Brittany Roka

Dr. Madhi Ramadoss with the Ministry of the Environment and climate change spoke on the Pollinator Health Action Plan at the Bring Food Home Conference on November 22<sup>nd</sup>.

A Pollinator Health Action Plan is being developed to address the four key stresses affecting pollinator health. The objective to this plan is to improve the state of health of pollinators in Ontario and to strengthen pollinator populations in order to promote a sustainable food supply, healthy ecosystems and strong economy.

Dr. Madhi Ramadoss states the plan will be a critical element to achieving the aspirational targets set for pollinator health. The plan is set to reduce the over-winter honey bee mortality rate to 15 percent by 2020 and to reduce the number of acres planted with NNI-treated corn and soybean seed by 80 percent by 2017.

New regulatory requirements are effective as of July 1, 2015 to help reduce the number of acres planted with NNI-treated corn and soybean seed which will be phased-in between 2015 and 2020. Integrated Pest Management training (IPM) is one key regulatory component for growers. The course is offered by the University of Guelph, Ridge town Campus and will be available the beginning of November at various locations and online. As of August 31, 2016 corn and soybean growers must complete the course to purchase class 12 pesticides. After completing the course you will receive a certification number that will be valid for 5 years.

## Upcoming Soil & Crop Annual General Meetings: (confirmed)

<i>Cochrane</i>	<i>December 10, 2015</i>
<i>Sudbury West</i>	<i>December 14, 2015</i>
<i>West Nip/Sud East</i>	<i>December 15, 2015</i>
<i>Temiskaming</i>	<i>January 15, 2016</i>
<i>Algoma</i>	<i>January 20, 2016</i>
<i>Manitoulin</i>	<i>January 21, 2016</i>
<i>Muskoka</i>	<i>January 30, 2016</i>

\*\*An RCC goal for 2016 is to access Tier 1 Funding (up to \$1,500/year) for the districts in Northeastern Ontario either individually or collectively based on the interests, research projects, etc. of the districts. Project ideas will be discussed at the meetings and the RCC has hours in the budget to build the projects, applications, complete reporting requirements, etc. on each district's behalf!

The 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual  
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 (Jan. 5, 2016)


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*Verner:* Pierrette Desrochers, 705-594-2313  
*Algoma:* David Thompson, 705-942-7927 x. 3027


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**Saturday, January 23, 2016**  
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 Guelph

**Jerry Hatfield**  
  
 Dr. Hatfield's is the Laboratory Director and Supervisory Plant Physiologist, with US Department of Agriculture. His research emphasis is on the interactions among the components of the soil-plant-atmosphere continuum and their linkage to air, water, and soil quality. His focus has been on the evaluation of farming systems and their response to water and nitrogen interactions across soils and the evaluation of remote sensing methods to quantify spatial variation within fields for application to risk management tools.


**Temple Grandin**  
  
 What can be done to influence consumers perception about Animal welfare? Dr. Grandin is a world renowned Animal Behaviourist and has worked globally to improve animal welfare in livestock handling facilities. She has worked with farmers, agribusiness and the food processing, retailing and restaurant trade. All the more remarkable she has done this by overcoming many of the constraints that face people with autism. Hers is a remarkable story of courage, gut instinct, hard work and challenging the status quo on many fronts. Join Dr. Grandin for this enlightening talk.


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# Breaking Ground (in Northeastern Ontario)

## Effective Livestock Management



By Stephanie Vanthof

According to Curt Pate, a livestock handling expert from Montana, both hockey and Tim Horton's can be used to describe the human vs. animal world. In hockey, players have to think ahead and anticipate where the puck will go next and that behavior better reflects how humans should interact with animals. However, waiting in line at the drive-through, no matter the quality of the coffee, is something an animal would never do and behaviour such as that makes it difficult for humans to design and act according to animal needs.

Curt was in Northern Ontario in October to deliver three workshops on effective livestock handling. These workshops included a presentation on pressure, balance points and tips to herd livestock as well as a live demonstration of these techniques. Three main types of pressure (1) maintenance pressure (2) driving pressure and (3) drawing pressure were discussed as well as the need to balance proper pressure with low stress. Livestock respond to pressure and learn from the release of pressure. Concepts such as 'flight zone', the area around an animal where it begins to perceive pressure, and 'balance point' were used to illustrate livestock handling. Note that the balance point as illustrated in the diagram can vary greatly, especially if cattle have offspring in nearby locations, pressures from other areas, etc.

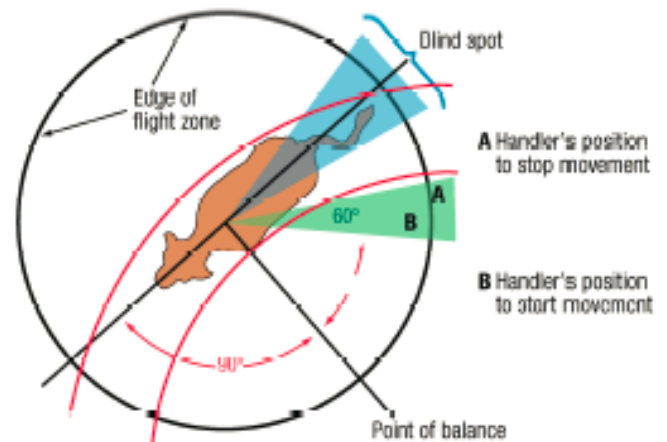
Tips for livestock handling include:

- Work the animal from the side to go straight: if you work from behind the animal will hook to catch the handler in its periphery
- Reduce the wildest animal's pressure zone to that of the herd
- Apply pressure at one point at a time (multiple people can act as a human blockade, but only one person should be applying pressure at any given time)
- Work animals from the left
- Can move animal's hips back and forth instead of twisting the tail
- Watch how noise is used – as a driving pressure it may cause the animals at the front of the herd to slow, stop or turn around.

Curt suggests animal handlers determine their animal's flight zone and balance points and then begin refining to meet the needs of their operations, analyze their handling

and network and share to learn and grow. Strong husbandry skills should be combined with science and antibiotic use can be used as a scorecard as properly vaccinated, properly handled, calm livestock should remain relatively healthy.

Thanks to Farm and Food Care for hosting these informative, lively sessions! For more information on effective livestock techniques and to watch videos of Curt herding the cows at NLARS, please visit the NEOSCIA page, under Associations, at [www.farmnorth.com](http://www.farmnorth.com).



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Serving the Northern Agricultural Community since 1966

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## Success at the Massey Fall Fair

*By Mack Emiry*

Massey Fair, from Friday, August 28 through Sunday August 30, 2015, kept large crowds busy and entertained with many events and activities. While most of the 3 days gave good weather an "off and on" Saturday rain did little to dampen the enthusiasm of participants and spectators at the parade which traveled from the downtown arena to the fairgrounds. The large livestock arena at the grounds afforded ample protection from rain, as required, as well as housing 40 head of cattle in the pens. Breeds on display included Holstein, Hereford, Angus and Limousin. There were also numerous pens of poultry and small animals. Alpacas. Pony Rides and a Petting Corner completed the inside area except for the 4H Booth which sold milk and ice cream all weekend.

30 4H Club members competed in Junior and Senior Showmanship Classes with the top 2 from each going "head to head" for overall champion. The large group of Holstein calves they were showing were also judged for type.

Other animal events included Horse Pull, Western and English Horse Shows.

For those who enjoyed the mechanical side there was a Demolition Derby, ongoing Mud Bog Competitions and a Fire Truck Pull. A large midway, including a Ferris Wheel, and games of chance kept crowds entertained during the weekend.

Garden Produce, Flowers, Quilting, Handcrafts and Artwork filled one wing of the display hall with vendors occupying the other wing and overflowing into the outside which, of course, also accommodated numerous food booths. The Stage area provided a variety of shows from Friday evening to Sunday afternoon, including a community Church Service at 10 A.M. on Sunday. An entirely successful event!

