



Circle H Farms Receives TESA Award

By Duncan Morrison, MFGA Executive Director

[The Environmental Stewardship Award for Manitoba \(TESA\)](#) was presented at the recent Manitoba Beef Producers AGM to the Harper family of Circle H Farms near Brandon, including MFGA board member Kristelle Harper, her father Brian, mother Sonja, and brother Thomas.

The Harpers have been farming just outside of Brandon since 1990. Their 500-acre, 80 head purebred cow/calf operation consists of three breeds known and designed for production on grass/forage only - Lincoln Red, North Devon and Shaver Beefblend. The Harpers' cattle program is focused on breeding, developing and marketing forage-only breeding stock to commercial producers.

In their application it was noted that Circle H Farms is situated on light soils, which can present challenges such as soil erosion and vulnerability during drought. The Harpers use strategies to deal with that, including planting perennial forage and perennial crops. They have also planted more than 5,000 trees, installed off-site watering systems, dug wells to feed water lines, and use a solar powered winter water system.

The Harpers have carefully managed their grazing practices over the year. After starting with rotational grazing they moved to high stock density management or adaptive multi-paddock grazing - a system using a short graze of a few hours to one day on an area, followed by a long rest period. As part of this approach, the Harpers participated in a project funded through the [Commission for Environmental Cooperation \(CEC\)](#). The project aimed to showcase management practices that improve profitability and environmental sustainability. This system has generated positive results for the Harpers. From 2014-2017 beef production increased by 9,400 pounds off the same 130 acres. Zero inputs were used, just animal impact and time management.

As the Harpers note, regenerating soils pays dividends and creates a healthy ecosystem. In 2017 Circle H Farms was selected to be part of the Canadian National Carbon Sequestration study, a multi-year on farm/ranch study that will compare high stock density grazing management compared to conventional pasture management.

As the Harpers note, "Healthy soil produces nutrient dense foods and having nutrient dense food promotes healthier people."

**special thanks to MBP media release for the Circle H Farm information*