



EGG-CEPTIONAL YOUNG FARMERS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Abbotsford – February 18, 2009 – A focus on innovation, diversification and agricultural education earned Ian and Jennifer Woike of Running W Egg Farm and Farmer Ben's Eggs of Duncan the prestigious 2009 BC Outstanding Young Farmer Award. The Woikes received the award from BC Minister of Agriculture and Lands Ron Cantelon before over 400 people at the annual BC Agriculture Gala in Abbotsford, Feb 18th.

Ian's father, Ben, began Running W Eggs in 1981, with Ian joining the operation following his graduation from Malaspina College in 1992. Ten years ago, he and Jennifer took over day to day management of the operation which now includes a 44,000 bird layer flock, a wholesale egg grading company which markets white, brown and 'dark yolk' eggs all over Vancouver Island, an on-farm egg market, a 140 cow Black Angus cross cow/calf operation and a hay farm producing over 20,000 bales/year. They are also adding a specialty layer flock this year to further diversify an already incredibly diverse farm.

The Woikes have emphasized agricultural education, going into schools to speak to students at all grade levels, and hosting numerous tours of their farm and egg grading station.

The Woikes were also finalists for the 2008 award, when they were narrowly edged out by David and Lisa Taylor of Courtenay. The Taylors went on to be named one of Canada's Outstanding Young Farmers for 2008, an honour the Woikes hope to duplicate at the 2009 Canadian Outstanding Young Farmer finals in Ottawa in December.

Runnersup for the 2009 award were Gene & Shelly Covert of Covert Farms and Dunham & Froese Estate Winery in Oliver. The Coverts are the third generation to operate Covert Farm, which they have taken from commercial field tomato production to production of specialty organic tomatoes and 20 other crops, most marketed through their on-farm Pancho's Country Market or their estate winery. Covert Farms is also home of the Festival of the Tomato, one of Oliver's major tourist attractions.

"The agricultural industry should be very proud of both finalists," said judge Barry Remus, a recently retired RBC financial specialist. " They both embrace change and are very adaptive and innovative and provide awesome customer service."

To be eligible for the Outstanding Young Farmer award, farmers must be between 19 and 39 years of age, derive at least two thirds of their annual income from farming and demonstrate progress in their agriculture careers. Nominees are judged on conservation practices, production history, financial and management practices, and community contributions. Helping Remus judge the 2009 competition were 1984 BC OYF winner Louis Schurmann and consultant Dr Chris Byra of Greenbelt Veterinary Services.

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The BCOYF program is sponsored by Agri Digest, Bank of Montreal, BC Broiler Hatching Egg Commission, BC Chicken Growers Association, BC Chicken Marketing Board, BC Egg Producers Association, BC Holstein News, BC Landscape & Nursery Associaton, BC Milk Marketing Board, Country Life in BC, Farm Credit Canada, Golden Valley Foods, Island Milk Producers, Pioneer HiBred, Ritchie Smith Feeds, RBC Royal Bank, Scotiabank, TD Canada Trust, TerraLink Horticulture and United Agri Systems.

The national competition is sponsored Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Bayer Crop Science, CIBC and John Deere and supported by AdFarm.

Reference: David Schmidt
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BC & Yukon Outstanding Young Farmer Program
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