



Producers stop to shake hands during Gerry Friesen's presentation on stress on the family farm during Tuesday afternoon's seminars at Manitoba Ag Days. (Bruce Burnstead/Brandon Sun)



Stan Struthers

Farmers urged to diversify

BY COLLEEN COSGROVE

In his first visit to Manitoba Ag Days as agriculture minister, Stan Struthers challenged producers to tap into diversified income streams that will in turn help the entire industry as it moves into the next decade.

In the face of high input costs, a strong Canadian dollar and the summer that wasn't, Struthers says Manitobans should be impressed by the resilience and innovation of the provincial agriculture industry.

But he stressed that unique opportunities shouldn't be overlooked moving forward.

Aquaculture and hemp are two of Manitoba's fastest growing alternative markets that each have the potential to become industry heavy hitters, Struthers said.

"I don't want our producers to be missing out, and I think in a lot of ways we do miss out because we lose a market or we don't pursue a market," he said. "Whether you're talking about a protein or an organic market or a buy-local market, I want to pursue those kinds of approaches that turn those markets into money for our farmers."

Thinking beyond the days when single-commodity producers were the norm grows increasingly necessary with each year, Struthers added.

"We need to continue to diversify and understand that sometimes diversifying on a farm location means finding money to do that," he said. "We have to continue to add value and we have to continue to work with producers so they can produce the foods of the future."

Keeping a firm eye on the future while funding research and development will be the industry's bread and butter, he added.

"I know friends and neighbours of mine are more than willing to change their operations and take on new things. ... That's going to be the strength of our industry in the future."

» MANITOBA AG DAYS

Stress problems mount

BY COLLEEN COSGROVE

Whether it's the weather, financial troubles or an unexpected accident, life on the farm is stressful and at times, the work can seem never-ending.

Gerry Friesen, a self-proclaimed "farmer in recovery" who suffered from depression, spoke to about 50 men and women attending Manitoba Ag Days yesterday, about his journey from the bottom up. Friesen works with the Manitoba Farm and Rural Stress Line, a confidential service provided to help farming families cope.

"Farm and rural stress is a community issue. It touches everyone who's life and livelihood is linked to the land," Friesen told the crowd. "But in rural Manitoba, you'll find that it starts at the farm but it expands out ... so if one of our members is depressed, it affects other people as well."

According to a study completed by the Canadian Agriculture Safety Association, two-thirds of Canadian farmers feel stressed and one in five say they are very stressed. Meanwhile, only two in 10 had spoken to a mental health professional.

"One man, who asked not to be identified, said Friesen's radio interview Monday encouraged him to come and hear more.

"The one point (Friesen) said that his home the most for me is that it feels hopeless," he said, trailing off.

Although ongoing news reports



Wawanesa producer Gerry Friesen spoke on the topic of stress on the family farm during Tuesday afternoon's seminar sessions at Manitoba Ag Days. (Bruce Burnstead/Brandon Sun)

of death and destruction may dwarf one's own concerns, Friesen emphasized the importance of taking care of one's own mental health.

"I feel guilty today thinking those (depressed) thoughts when I look at what's happening in Haiti," he said.

"But regardless of what's going on in Haiti, I'm still going through what I'm going through, and it needs to be addressed. Don't ever feel guilty about those thoughts."

Stress can affect one's physical, behavioural, emotional and cognitive processes, and Friesen says the only way to ensure the pressure doesn't start to get the best of you is to take action immediately.

"When I realize that I'm starting to get irritable, I've taken on too much," he said.

"I have to learn to say no — it's very important to do that. Balance work and play, especially on the farm where home and work are so

PROGRAM ADDED

Cattle producers facing a feed shortage due to excess moisture or drought can rest a little easier this year thanks to a new pilot program launched by the province yesterday.

The first-ever Pasture Days Insurance Pilot Program was announced by Manitoba Agriculture Minister Stan Struthers during the first day of the 33rd annual Manitoba Ag Days.

The pilot program will investigate the benefits of protecting producers from being forced to remove their animals from the pasture due to drought or excess moisture conditions that reduce grazing capacity.

The program is weather-dependent and is slated to run for two or three years.

It was developed by the Manitoba Agriculture Services Corporation, Manitoba Cattle Producers Association, Manitoba Forage Council and Keystone Agriculture Producers.

• Brandon Sun

connected. Develop a positive attitude and finally, laugh ... It's key. Everyone should start laughing more."

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Police dog gets body armour

BY IAN HITCHEN

Thanks to a grant from Enbridge Pipelines Inc., Mason the police dog will be a bulletproof pooch.

Ballistic body armour for the German shepherd is just one of the handy tools to be purchased by the Dakota Ojibway Police Service thanks to a \$10,000 grant.

"It's significant and I'm very pleased and appreciative," DOPS Chief Doug Palsen said of the funds.

The money is especially appreciated, Palsen said as the police force has found lately that it has to pressure the federal and provincial governments for adequate funding.

Enbridge supplied the cash through its Safe Community Program, which benefits first responder groups in municipalities that its oil pipeline passes through.

The money goes to special projects, training or equipment for police forces, for example, or volunteer fire and ambulance departments and also funds education programs at schools.

"It's for communities along the right of way and helping build safe communities," said Guy VanTeeling, Enbridge's assistant supervisor for area operations in the Cromer region.

DOPS will use the money to purchase items that will benefit its partnership with Search and Rescue Manitoba.

DOPS partners with the Office of the Fire Commissioner to make use



Guy VanTeeling of Enbridge Pipelines Inc. (left) presents Dakota Ojibway Police Service Chief Doug Palsen with a \$10,000 cheque. The money, supplied through Enbridge's Safe Community Program, will be used to buy equipment for search and rescue and police work. (Ian Hitchen/Brandon Sun)

of Mason, a German shepherd. The dog is trained in search and rescue but also does some police work.

Palsen said noted Brandon police dogs are also equipped with body armour.

"The officers all have to wear it and the dog, in some capacities, is an extension of the officer so it's only right that he gets some protection too," Palsen said.

The armour, which DOPS has already ordered, will not only protect Mason from bullets, but edged weapons and other sharp objects.

The money will also be used to

purchase hand-held GPS devices with supporting software and an ATV. The GPS systems will have a wide range of issues including search and rescue operations.

The ATV will be DOPS' second, and will allow officers to access tough-to-reach areas. It will also be used to teach ATV safety.

The GPS systems and ATV should be available for duty by March.

DOPS serves five Manitoba First Nations, including Birdtail Sioux, Canupawakpa and Sioux Valley.

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IN BRIEF

POLICE TO UPDATE SUSPICIOUS DEATH PROBES

Police say they're ready to release an update today about two unrelated suspicious death investigations.

Yesterday, Brandon Police Service Const. Ron Burgess said autopsies are complete, but didn't release further information. Instead, he said the police force will deliver updates through a news release this morning.

On Saturday evening, police were called to a home on the 3600-block of Centennial Boulevard at 8:37 p.m. Saturday.

The body of a man was found inside and friends and family identified the deceased as Duane Lacquette.

Then on Sunday, in an unrelated incident, the body of a 26-year-old man was found in the backyard of an Empress Bay home.

Relatives have since identified that man as Clarence Bonner. More information will be posted at brandonsun.com as it becomes available.

TEEN GIRL CAUGHT WITH COCAINE

A teenage girl faces a drug trafficking charge following a drug raid in a city motel room.

Brandon police raided the room at a south end motel at 3:30 p.m. on Monday. Inside, they found an ounce of cocaine with a street value of about \$1,500 and unspecified drug trafficking paraphernalia.

A 17-year-old Brandon girl was arrested in relation to the search warrant during a vehicle stop on the 400-block of 10th Street.

Charged with trafficking cocaine, she'll appear in court on March 11.

The girl can't be named under the provisions of the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

MANITOBA DOCTOR CHARGED WITH SEXUAL ASSAULT

WINNIPEG — A Manitoba doctor has been charged with sexual assault following a long RCMP investigation.

The RCMP said Tuesday morning that Mohamed Sadhakatull Kadirsahib of Pinawa has been charged with one count of sexual assault.

Police said the charge followed a complaint from one of Kadirsahib's patients, who alleged that she was assaulted March 17, 2009, while being examined by the doctor at the Lac du Bonnet Health Clinic.

Kadirsahib was arrested Monday at the RCMP Lac du Bonnet detachment office and was released on a condition he agree to appear in court on Feb. 17.

Pinawa is about 114 kilometres northeast of Winnipeg.

• Brandon Sun, Winnipeg Free Press