



Calling on government to protect farm families from animal extremists

Any farmer who reads agricultural news is aware of the increased harassment and attacks on livestock farmers by animal extremists, ranging from trespassing on farms and stealing animals to picketers at sale barns beating on trucks and attempting to release livestock. Even more frustratingly, many of these extremists have not faced legal prosecution despite admitting to their crimes.

While the NFU-O fully supports people's right to peaceful protests on public property, the legal system is failing farmers. In a recent letter to the Attorney General, Premier, Solicitor General, and Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs, the NFU-O raised the following serious concerns.

We are worried about the safety of our farmers and their families. Farms are more than businesses; many farm families, including children, live on farms, and farmers feel threatened and unsafe when strangers enter their home property without consent. As well, anyone who works with livestock knows animals can be unpredictable. Extremists who are not used to handling livestock have the potential for a serious incident if a scared or aggressive animal is released and injures either the farmer, the trucker, or the extremist. Additionally, these extremists are intentionally putting themselves in harm's way when they step in front of livestock trailers which need a lengthy distance to brake. Accidentally killing or injuring an extremist would cause serious trauma, not to mention legal issues, for the person driving the livestock trailer. We cannot wait until someone is seriously injured or, worse, killed for the government to address this issue.

Many of these extremists have admitted to the trespassing on private

property and stealing animals, yet charges are being dropped or not pursued. This is a failing of the legal system. While we do not support giving extremists a platform to espouse their views, by not acting, the government is tacitly supporting their actions at the expense of the agriculture community.

There has been a much attention paid recently to farmers' mental health. If this is something the government supports, they need to address the animal extremists and allow farmers to run their lawful businesses and feel safe in their homes.

We are calling on the government to enforce the existing laws and to work with us and our fellow agricultural leaders to address this issue for all Ontarians.

What can you do?

To share your concerns with the government, visit nfontario.ca where you can find a sample letter that you can download and email or mail to Queen's Park.

Things to know:

- If you wish to prohibit all activities on your property, use a "No trespassing" sign. This does not affect your ability to give permission to individuals to enter or use your land.
- A posted red circle on a white background also indicates "no trespassing."
- Under subsection 3(1) of the *Ontario Trespass to Property Act*, Farmland does not have to be posted – trespassing on cultivated fields and fenced land is automatically illegal.
- If a convicted trespasser caused damage the court can award compensation to be paid by the trespasser over and above the fine; the court can also make the trespasser pay the occupier's court costs (an award of costs).

If you encounter a trespasser on your property, politely ask them to leave. If you find that the situation escalates, remove yourself from the conversation and contact the police.

Coming Events

Local 345 Durham Peterborough Victoria – Join us at Second Wedge Brewery (14 Victoria St, Uxbridge) on Thursday, May 30 at 7:00 p.m. for a kickoff to the summer season. Local members' first drink is on us. Family friendly and non-alcoholic options are available. For more information, please contact Elizabeth at willowindfarm@hotmail.com or 905-852-3878.

Local 330 Renfrew– Next meeting is Monday, June 3, 7:30 p.m. at the Barr Line Community Centre. Everyone is welcome.

Local 333 North – invites Local members to our last meeting before we break for the summer! We would love to tell you about what we have been doing over the past few months and share/brainstorm some ideas about how to promote the NFU in your northern community! We are meeting over the phone on Thursday June 6, 7:00 p.m. To participate, dial 1-800-808-0861; participant code is 215408#, or email nfuo.north@gmail.com for more information.

Local 362 Stormont, Dundas, Glengarry, Ottawa, Prescott-Russell – Join your fellow farmers on Thursday, June 13 as we celebrate a piece of agricultural heritage in Eastern Ontario – the Embrun Co-op (926 Notre-Dame Street, Embrun). We'll start off with a tour of this 75-year-old institution followed by our regular meeting. Embrun Co-op offers products and services through its eight divisions and is owned by its members who have chosen to join in order to share in the benefits of co-operation. Tour starts at 7:00 p.m. Park by the main office.

Local 351 Brant, Hamilton, Halton – Join us for a Skill Share day June 29 from 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. at Manorun Farm (782 Highway 52, Copetown ON). The format is such that you can drop in at any point during that time. For details, please contact Chris Krucker at 905-648-9608 or manorunfarm@gmail.com.

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