

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE PROGRAM'S HISTORY, SHEEP FARMERS NAMED 2018 FARM FAMILY OF THE YEAR



Winnipeg, Manitoba – (For release May 31, 2018): The Red River Exhibition Association (RREA) has officially named Brian Greaves, Karen Hill and Family of Miniota, Manitoba and owners of Silver Bend Ranch as the 2018 Farm Family of the Year. Brian, Karen and their family have joined a distinguished list of 52 other families who have been honoured with this award since its inception in 1966.

"The purpose of this annual award is to profile the diversity of agriculture in Manitoba, as well as the traditional values of farm families like Brian and Karen who have contributed to the success and resilience of prairie agriculture and the rural way of life," said Garth Rogerson, CEO of the RREA.

These sheep and cattle farmers know the importance of adaptation, innovation and environmental stewardship to insure a successful farm operation. Brian had 21 years of farming experience in New Zealand before he and Karen took over Karen's family farm in 1993. Their son Mark has indicated he is interested in moving into the farm operation and is enrolled to start an Animal Science diploma at Lakeland College in September. Their daughter Alison is completing her final year of study in veterinary medicine at Massey University in New Zealand.

The pair worked to make significant improvements to the land in a relatively short time. Some of these improvements included re-establishing the hay land, adding shelter belts, enabling rotational grazing with the addition of piped water, restoring the wetland with fencing to keep out livestock and integrating solar pumps. They also use innovative farming practices like no-till seeding, polycropping, and winter bale grazing to improve their farm's sustainability. As part of their commitment to the environment and their community they have provided the local Conservation District and Rural Municipality with an easement on 95 acres of land along the Assiniboine River for the development of publicly accessible hiking trails and riparian forest.

The couple's dedication to environmental stewardship was recognized with the Upper Assiniboine Conservation District Farm Family of the Year award in 2009.

But the improvements they have made don't stop with the land. Their experiments with cross breeding their sheep flock has resulted in a composite breed that features maximum carcass growth and both improved fertility and wool quality.

In addition to managing the farm, Brian has served many leadership roles for a variety of organizations and boards including Canadian Co-operative Wool Growers, Manitoba Sheep Association, Canadian Sheep Federation and the Manitoba Debt Review Board. Brian was also the farmer representative on the national committee that revised Canada's Sheep Code of Practice. His interests in the sheep industry have allowed him to facilitate sheep shearing courses, be a peer mentor for sheep producers and act as wool and sheep judges in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Brian has also served as a volunteer firefighter.

Karen has a Bachelor of Education and has taught in Winnipeg, Northern and rural Manitoba communities and New Zealand. She was a volunteer board member for Agriculture in the Classroom–MB for 7 years before joining the staff in 2008, first as program manager then curriculum specialist. Karen was a 4-H leader for over 10 years and has served on the executive of many local sports and culture organizations.

"The Greaves/Hill family is deserving of this award because they embody what it means to live in rural Manitoba. They engage with their community, are exemplary stewards of the environment and have built a farm business that is progressive, diverse and a welcome place to work and visit," said Eleanor Cassels, chair of the Farm Family committee and president of the Red River Exhibition Association.

Brian Greaves and Karen Hill will be officially acknowledged at a reception to recognize excellence in agriculture on Monday, June 18 as part of celebrations surrounding the 2018 Red River Ex. At this same event, scholarships for young agriculture students will be awarded in addition to the induction of four deserving nominees into the Manitoba Agricultural Hall of Fame. For more information visit www.redriverex.com.