



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Five industry leaders to be inducted into the Ontario Agricultural Hall of Fame

Guelph, February 3, 2025 – Five leaders who have made significant contributions to Ontario agriculture and beyond will be inducted into the Ontario Agricultural Hall of Fame (OAHF) in 2025. Their influence spans a diverse range of agricultural pursuits from livestock genetics to soil health and environmental sustainability to labour issues in horticulture, poultry welfare, and bovine veterinary medicine.

The 2025 inductees are:

- Edward Blair (Ted) Burnside
- Kenneth Elgin Forth
- Donald Wallace Hart
- Craig Hunter
- Ken Leslie

These individuals were selected by the Ontario Agricultural Hall of Fame Association for their contributions and commitments to improving Ontario's agricultural sector.

They will be formally recognized at an induction ceremony on June 8, bringing the total number of inductees since 1980 to 267. Induction into the OAHF is a prestigious honor, recognizing visionary leadership, innovation, entrepreneurship, and a lasting legacy within Ontario agriculture.

Inductees for 2025 and their nominators include:

Dr. Edward Blair (Ted) Burnside (Born 1937)

Dr. Ted Burnside of Manotick is widely recognized as one of the most influential figures in the evolution and development of animal improvement in Canada. His career has significantly impacted the profitability of Ontario dairy herds and raised the profile of Canadian genetics internationally. A graduate of both the Ontario Agricultural College and North Carolina State, the University of North Carolina at Raleigh, he served as a professor in University of Guelph's Department of Animal Science for 31 years. There he taught and conducted research in animal genetics. Dr. Burnside instilled enthusiasm and passion for livestock genetics in hundreds of students throughout his teaching career.

In 1986, Dr. Burnside co-founded and directed the Centre for Genetic Improvement of Livestock (CGIL). He represented Canada on a United Nations International Advisory Committee, providing guidance on large international breeding programs, and coordinated the Dairy Genetic Evaluation Program from 1970 to 1990. He was also a founding member of DairyGen, an industry-led research initiative fostering genetics research in Canada.

Throughout his career, Dr. Burnside was a prolific writer of both technical and popular articles for magazines and a sought-after speaker at conferences and industry meetings. His decades of research culminated in the prestigious American Dairy Science JL Lush Award, the world's most recognized accolade in animal breeding.

Dr. Ted Burnside is nominated by EastGen.

Kenneth Elgin Forth, LL.D. (Born 1952)

Ken Forth, a fifth-generation broccoli farmer from Lynden, has dedicated his career to advancing Ontario's horticulture industry. His leadership has spanned a wide range of critical issues including the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP), agricultural labour and safety, the Agriculture Safety Audit Program, the Workplace Safety Prevention Program, and the Ontario Human Resource Committee.

Forth's impact is particularly evident in his unwavering support of horticulture, especially the SAWP. Recognizing its vital role, he understands that without SAWP and the seasonal workers who come annually to Canada to help grow fruits and vegetables, most farmers would struggle, if not be unable, to plant and harvest their crops.

His leadership was crucial during the COVID-19 pandemic, where, as president of the Foreign Agricultural Resource Management Services (F.A.R.M.S.), he ensured essential workers could cross borders and work on Ontario farms. As one letter of support for his nomination stated, "His dedication to sustainable farming practices and advocacy for the rights of farmers have left an indelible mark on the industry."

Forth's commitment extends to long-term service on the National Council of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (since 1995) and the board of directors of the Labour Issues Coordinating Committee (since 1992).

Ken Forth is nominated by Deborah Forth.

Donald Wallace Hart (1929 – 2014)

Don Hart of Woodstock was a pioneer in developing conservation tillage systems, leaving a significant and lasting impact on the quality and sustainability of Ontario farmland. A 1953 graduate of the Ontario Agricultural College (OAC), he gradually transitioned Hartholm Farm Ltd. from the dairy operation run by his father to beef cattle and then cash crops.

In the 1960s, Don observed soil degradation caused by monoculture corn crops and moldboard plow tillage. Driven by this concern, he sought out like-minded individuals to find solutions. This group, informally known as the Oxford Group, became leaders in soil conservation in Oxford County and across the province.

In 1973, a trip to Australia exposed Don to a chisel plow system. Recognizing the benefits of leaving crop residue on the surface to reduce soil erosion and build organic matter, he brought the concept back to Ontario, claiming to have performed the province's first chisel plowing on his farm.

Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, Don was a sought-after speaker at farm meetings across Ontario, consistently encouraging farmers to explore new methods for improving the long-term health and productivity of their soil. Long before "sustainability" became a common term, Don was already championing the concept, establishing a legacy that continues to shape farming practices today.

Donald Hart is nominated by Kevin Dolan and Robert Hart.

Craig Hunter (Born 1944)

Craig Hunter has dedicated his career to improving the economic prosperity and stability of farm families in the Ontario and Canadian poultry industries. Growing up on a poultry breeder farm, he experienced firsthand the industry's transformation from dual-purpose birds to specialized egg and meat production, fostering a passion for collaboration and advancement.

A leader in shaping and disseminating improved animal care practices, Craig, as Vice President of Grading and Poultry Operations at Burnbrae Farms, transformed how the company, and the sector as a whole, approached poultry farming. He shifted the focus to enhanced biosecurity, animal behaviour, health and welfare. His keen insight into consumer trends also led to the development of Omega-3 eggs through research conducted by the University of Guelph.

A passionate industry advocate, Craig has always sought opportunities to connect with consumers, sharing the egg's journey from farm to table. He spearheaded the construction of viewing rooms at Burnbrae Farms, enabling public access while maintaining biosecurity and mitigating disease risk. Even after retirement, he continues to volunteer at events across Ontario answering consumers' questions about hens and eggs.

Nationally, Craig provided counsel and leadership in developing three iterations of the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Pullets and Laying Hens, which guides farmers across Canada. He has also served on numerous provincial, national and international organizations.

Craig Hunter is nominated by Egg Farmers of Ontario.

Dr. Ken Leslie (Born 1949)

Ken Leslie is a champion for the dairy and veal industries, and a visionary leader in advancing bovine veterinary medicine in Ontario. Since being hired by the University of Guelph in 1977, Ken has helped build it into a global leader in dairy research and veterinary medicine. Dairy farmers, veterinarians, and industry professionals all utilize approaches that he pioneered.

He has mentored over 70 graduate students, advanced knowledge through more than 170 peer-reviewed publications, and delivered over 170 presentations at scientific conferences, continuing education events and producer meetings across Canada and internationally. His nomination package described Dr. Leslie as "a beacon of knowledge and inspiration," adding that his collaborative efforts with industry has been instrumental in translating research findings into practical on-farm applications.

A founding force behind the Department of Population Medicine, one of the first of its kind in a veterinary medicine faculty, One of Ken's greatest accomplishments is the creation of the Dairy Health Management Certificate program. Recognizing the need for advanced veterinary training, he founded this two-year, modular, interactive program for dairy veterinarians.

In the early 1990s, he led research on using somatic cell counts to assess udder health and milk quality, and served in leadership with the National Mastitis Council. During the Canadian rBST controversy in the 1990s, Health Canada tasked the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association with reviewing potential animal health and welfare impacts. Ken served on the panel, becoming a leading voice navigating the complex intersection of science, ethics, and public policy. rBST remains unavailable in Canada.

Ken is nominated by the University of Guelph (Dairy at Guelph).

The 2025 induction ceremony will take place on Sunday, June 8, 2025, at The GrandWay Events Centre, Elora. Tickets are available at a cost of \$40 (for in person attendance) or \$20 (virtual attendance) on the Ontario Agricultural Hall of Fame's website at www.oahf.on.ca.

It is the mission of the Ontario Agricultural Hall of Fame Association to acknowledge, record, and preserve the contributions made by leaders to the growth and development of Ontario's agriculture and agri-food industry. To date, 262 worthy candidates have been inducted into the Hall of Fame gallery. www.oahf.on.ca

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For further information:

Jean Sullivan
President, Ontario Agricultural Hall of Fame Association
Phone: (613) 223-2477
Email: jean@sullivanagro.ca

Susan Fitzgerald
Secretary/Treasurer, Ontario Agricultural Hall of Fame Association
Phone: (519) 787-4322
Email: susan.tfo@bell.net