

BUILDING RESILIENCE INTO YOUR FARM

MIKE SWIDERSKY FARMS, MELANCTHON ONTARIO

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INTRODUCTION

- First generation farm established 2001
- Been on the current farm in Melancthon Township since 2004
- Today the farm operation consists of several enterprises including;
 - The management of the local community pasture (The Grey Dufferin Community Pasture) 700 acres of intensively managed pasture with 660 steers and heifers
 - Custom grazing of 160 stocker cattle
 - 300 ewe annual lambing pasture based flock
 - Buy and feed lambs if market dictates
 - Provide consulting services to a broiler breeder producer
 - My wife Amber operates an on-farm flower business specializing in local and farm grown blooms

OVERVIEW

- A year in Swidersky Farms
- Fundamentals for success (Resilience)



A YEAR ON SWIDERSKY FARMS

- January
 - Winter feeding
 - Our goal is to utilize pasture for most of the year feeding hay for only 120 days per year
 - To reduce time and labour when ever possible
 - < 1 round bale per ewe per year
 - No bedding
 - No water
 - Grain will be fed if it is more economical than hay
 - Breeding
 - Rams in January 1st
 - Rams not pulled

A YEAR ON SWIDERSKY FARMS

- February
 - our goal is to maintain body condition with average quality hay
 - Utilization is determined by quality of feed and body condition
 - Benefits of pasture feeding includes no competition for feeder space and allows old and young to compete for feed
 - Clean wool
 - Feed waste=3x increase in pasture production for several years
 - Total pasture rejuvenation

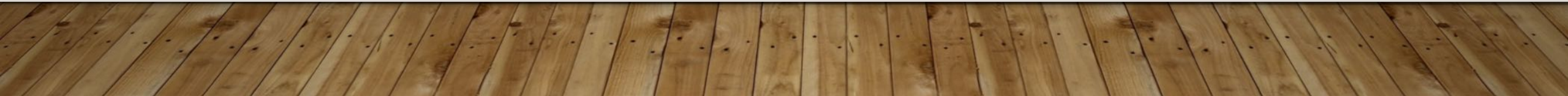
WINTER FEEDING



WINTER FEEDING



WIND BREAKS

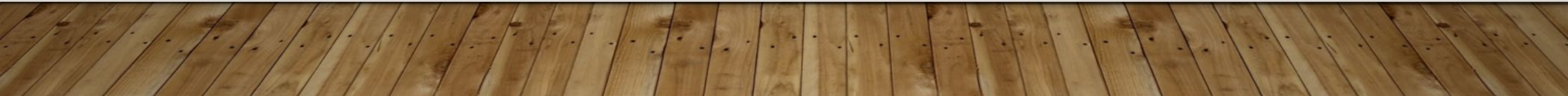


OUT DOOR FEEDING IS IT SAFE?

- Location
- Have a backup plan
- Wind protection
- Monitor
- Adjust



RUNOFF WORST CASE SCENARIO



A YEAR ON SWIDERSKY FARMS

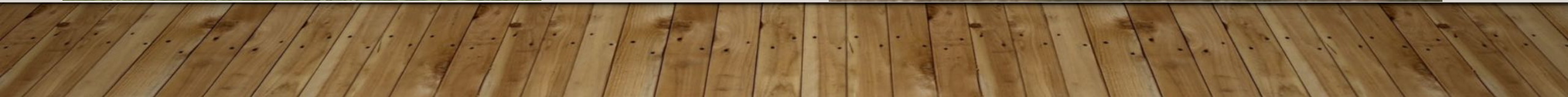
- March and April
 - Spring break-up
 - Sheep are confined to a small section of netting on high ground to prevent mud and to stop sheep from losing body condition while hunting for grass
 - As temperatures rise late gestation ewes don't need more feed
 - Replacement ewes that have been wintered in the yard are moved out to the field to get exercise and nutrition in preparation for lambing

A YEAR ON SWIDERSKY FARMS

- May
 - Sheering
 - Ewes out to grass
 - Checking fences
 - Cattle out to grass
 - Ewe lambs start lambing



FENCING AND TRAINING (LOW STRESS)



PASTURE LAMBING



PASTURE SETUP

- Keep it simple
 - A good energiser with a remote and a fault finder
 - A decent perimeter fence
 - Poly wire, geared reels, step-in posts and net fencing
 - Alley wire lifters
 - No permanent paddocks
 - A good clean water supply in every location
 - ATV

GRAZING GEAR



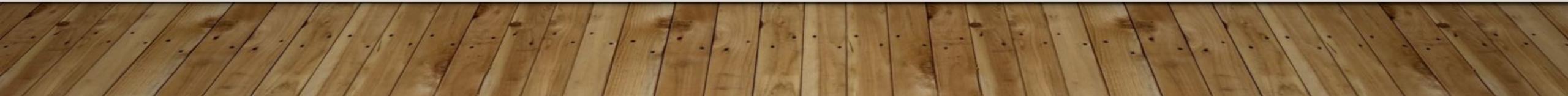
WATER



A YEAR ON SWIDERSKY FARMS

- July and August
 - Increase stock densities
 - Move cattle every 24 to 48 hours
 - Densities of 100 head per acre
 - Sheep are moved every few days
 - I aim for rest periods of +/-50 days
 - Cattle clean graze for sheep
 - If grass is on the mature side I only allow the stock to graze the top portion and tramp the remainder of the plant to make a thick grass mat
 - Mat holds moisture and provides a food source soil creatures

HIGH-DENSITY GRAZING

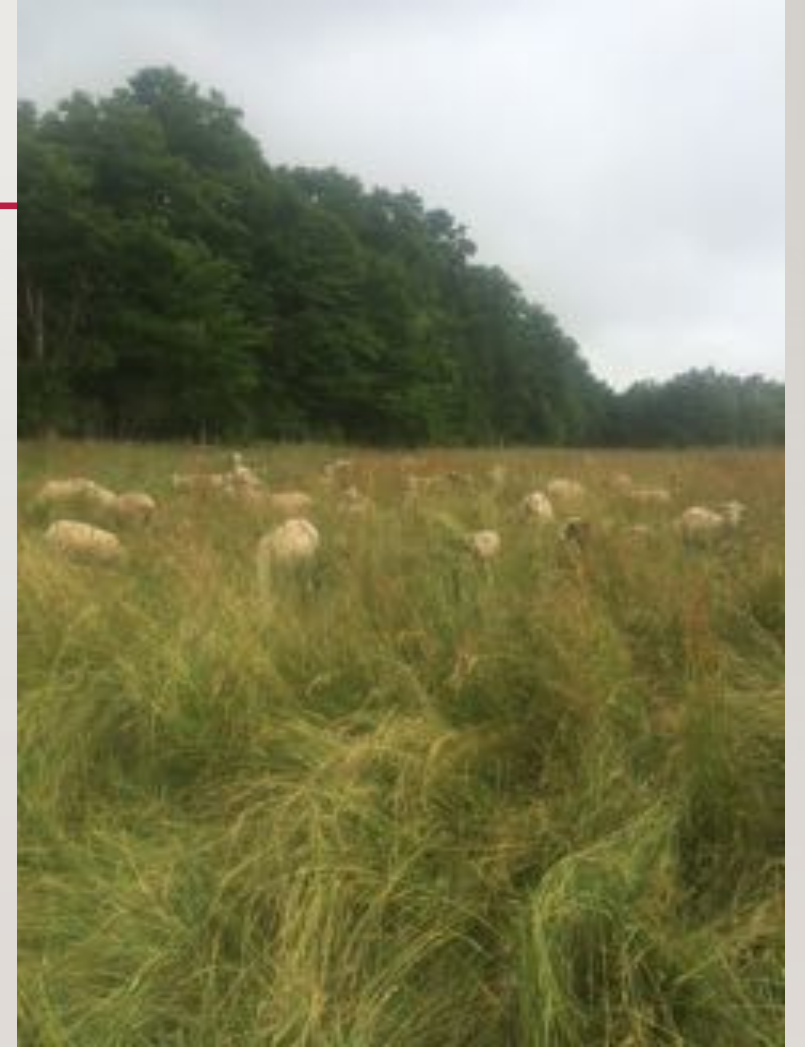


WEED CONTROL



MULTI-SPECIES GRAZING

- Bovine and ovine species
- Parasite “clean up crews”
- Different types of grazing behaviors and forage preferences
- Sheep are increasing forage faster than we can increase flock



HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM WINNING? PROVIDING HABITAT

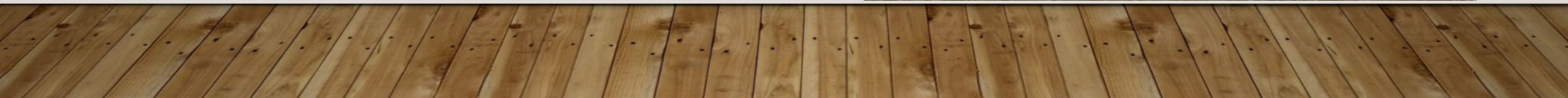
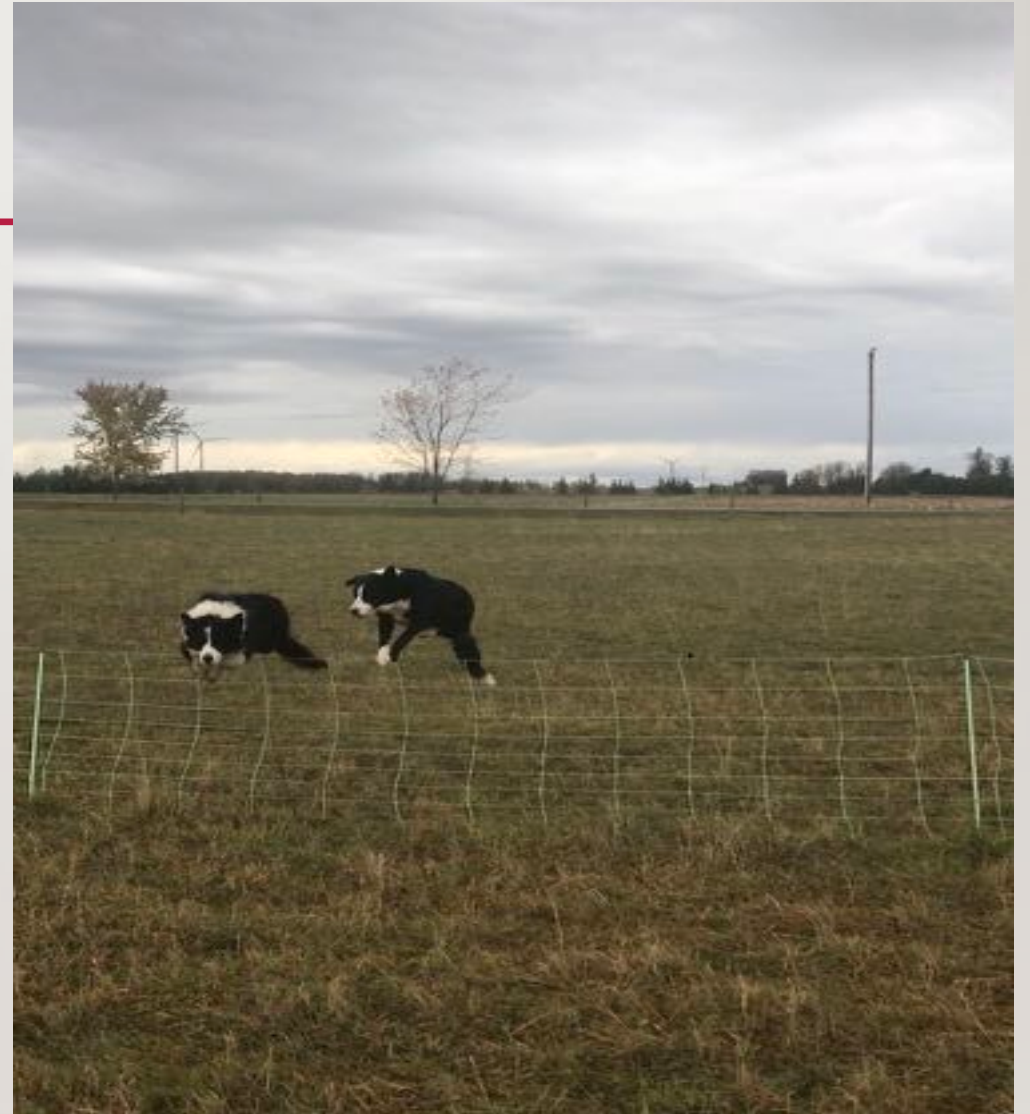


ANIMAL HEALTH

- Deworming and fly control
- Salt and mineral
- Vaccinations
- Pasture treatment



DOGS



A YEAR ON SWIDERSKY FARMS

- September
 - Start shipping cattle
 - Grazing of cover crops on neighbouring farms
 - Wean lambs
 - Identify ewes to cull
 - Rams will be chaperones for the lambs
 - Ewes will clean up ditches and other pasture farms

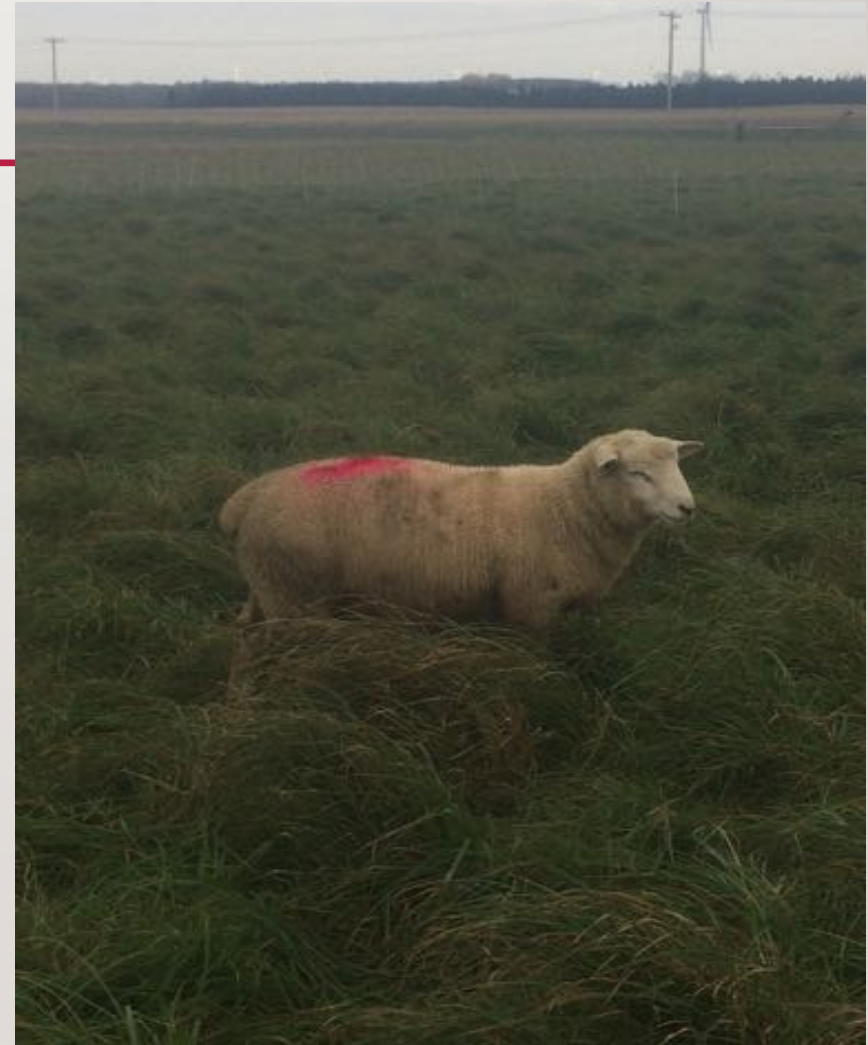


CATTLE HEADING HOME



WHAT DOES A CULL LOOK LIKE

- Can not maintain body condition
- Requires treatment for parasites
- Requires help during lambing
- Is open
- Is dry at weaning
- Has a broken mouth
- Is on the wrong side of the fence
- This is not a kindergarten math test
- Does it fit the environment
- There is a strong market for quality culls



GRAZING DITCHES



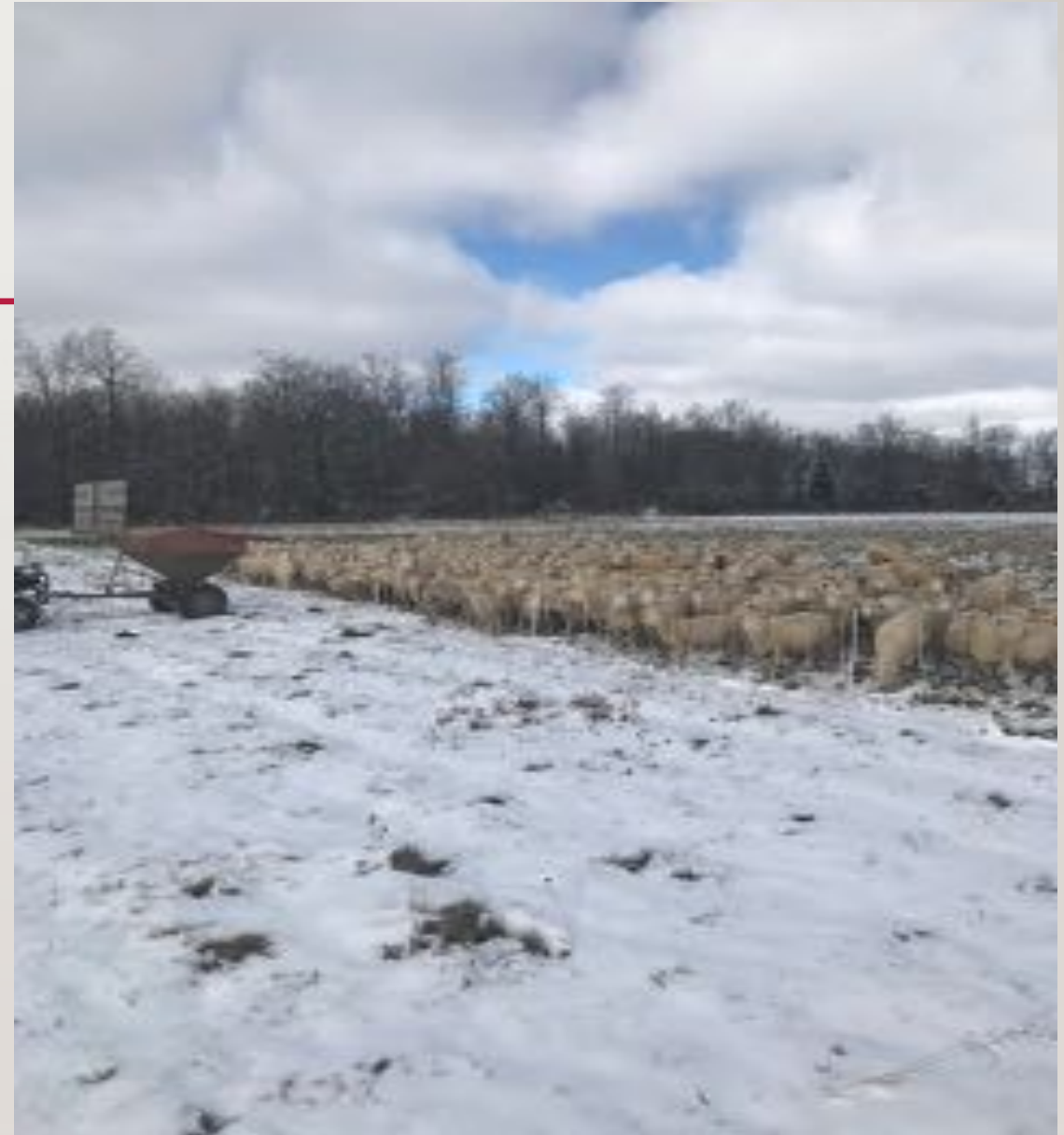
A YEAR ON SWIDERSKY FARMS

- October
 - Ship the remainder of the cattle
 - Start “snacking” lambs
 - Prepare for winter
 - Ewes start to get better feed



A YEAR ON SWIDERSKY FARMS

- November
 - Ewes are getting fat on grass
 - As weather conditions worsen lambs are brought in to be fed
 - Compensatory gain



A YEAR ON SWIDERSKY FARM

- December
 - If there is a lot of snow or grass conditions are poor I will supplement ewes with a little grain
 - Plan breeding strategy
 - Market lambs



FUTURE

- Cover crop collaboration
- Silviculture
- Grazing maintenance services
 - Solar leases
 - Ski hills
 - Municipalities
 - Conservation Authorities

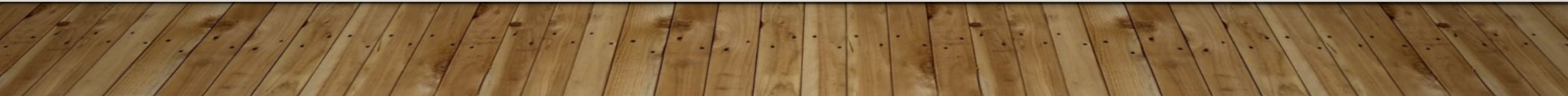


BUILDING RESILIENCE ON YOUR FARM REQUIRES PEOPLE

FIND YOUR PEOPLE

- To learn from
- To share
- To challenge you
- To question you
- To cheer and be cheered
- Think outside the box

“If you think this year was bad you should be here last year Mate.”



THANK YOU

