



Rural Water Quality Program: Producer Profile

Lyhaven Farms

Municipality	Farm Type	Acres	Years in Farming
Mulmur	Cash Crop	70	50

Lyhaven Farms started as a dairy farm. We had Holsteins and we milked them until the early 90's. Since the mid 90's we have fully moved to cash crops. We grow wheat, soy and canola. No corn since the mid 90's. Economically, and for soil health reasons, we decided canola was a better option for us. The equipment we used for the other crops would work for canola, and we would not have to continue to have corn custom planted and harvested.

Our farm is a Honeywood loam with some sandy loam in the hilly areas. In the 1980's I was one of the first to try and experiment with cover crops. I started with clover and under seeded wheat to clover long before others.

We tried oil radish in the early 90's and we were one of the biggest suppliers of oil radish seed at the time. We have done minimum tillage for about 35 to 40 years. We have not plowed anything since the early 90's; once we stopped growing alfalfa for feed, we stopped plowing. We went to total no-till in 2016. We plant green soybeans into standing rye, and it has worked really well. Weed control is exceptional and yields are average high.

~ Alan Lyons, Lyhaven Farms

Rural Water Quality Program Experience



Cover Crops

We had a well that needed to be brought up to grade to avoid contamination and we received a grant from the Dufferin RWQP in 2021 to do this.

However, our biggest project with RWQP was for cover crop funding. Even though I have been using cover crops such as clover and rye mix for a very long time, we wanted to experiment with including other cover crops in the mix, like peas and other types of clover. We planted 65 acres out with the new mix, 40 of which were eligible for the RWQP grant, and learned a bit from it.

We saw benefits from the peas increasing the nitrogen in the soil but, since they don't have an aggressive root system, we didn't see major benefit in soil porosity. Also, we usually see more benefit from clover in terms of nitrogen than what we saw with the peas.

I'm also involved in the soil health initiative from the Greenbelt and the one from Soils at Guelph. Through my participation in these projects, we determined that our soil bulk density has increased in the top 6 to 8 inches, so we are trying to find ways to loosen it. This bulk density increase is to be expected after many years of doing no-till. So, we are looking at cover crops to help us bring the bulk density down. That means we need to experiment with species with deep roots like sunflowers. We are not able to use oil seed radish since we grow canola, and the radish can increase our risk of sclerotinia. We know that the changes to the BD will be gradual, and it will take time to see changes, but we think cover crops will help.

I have always been a big advocate of cover crops because I have used them, seen the benefits and I promote them to others when I can. Hopefully other farmers take advantage of this funding and decide to try cover crops.