

High voltage readings found in rural homes near Drumbo

By Irene Schmidt-Adeney

Last week, voltage readings taken at two homes near Drumbo indicated electrical currents coming into residences that are more than double .5 volts, which is the rate that is considered safe.

The properties where the testing took place were in the vicinity of Parkinson Road and Township Road in Blandford-Blenheim Township.

The tests were conducted by Lorne Lantz of Wellesley, a former dairy farmer and electrical consultant. With him was Dr. Magda Havas of Trent University, an environmental contaminant specialist and Peter Stern, a local dairy farmer.

The homeowners asked not be identified.

A reading of 2.6 volts was taken in the first home between the shower handle and the drain.

"The shower was in a basement and the voltage was measured between the drain and the shower head," said Havas. "This is particularly dangerous for a person taking a shower and standing on the drain and touching the shower head."

At the same property, a reading of 2.2 volts was obtained at a metal-sided building on one of the properties.

"The key point is that there is current flowing through the ground that is most likely coming from the distribution line," said Havas. "A person in contact with the metal siding standing with bare feet on wet grass would have electricity flowing through his or her body. Especially dangerous for children and there is a child living at that property."

"Should the current be sufficiently high it could cause a shock and possibly be fatal," said Havas.

At the second home, the reading between a shower in the basement and the faucet was 1.2 volts.

Havas and Lantz spent the day taking readings at various locations in the vicinity of dairy farmer Peter Stern's farm. He has lost over 100 cattle to stray current running onto his property.

Stern has had "dancing cows", a description of cows that exhibit nervous and aggressive behaviour due to receiving excessive electrical currents passing through water troughs, milking equip-



From left: Lorne Lantz, Dr. Magda Havas, and Peter Stern take readings for stray current at the Stern dairy farm near Drumbo.

ment, and in the soil on the farm. Eventually cows refuse to drink, become dehydrated and die. The current also causes miscarriages and severe mastitis in dairy cattle.

Stern has been at the forefront of bringing awareness to the issue of stray current in this area and on Thursday evening addressed the Tri-County Chapter of Ontario Electrical League at a meeting in Brantford, along with Havas and Lantz. Local dairy farmers were also in the audience.

Bill 161 is dropped

Last fall, Chatham-Kent MPP Rick Nicholls began leading the movement to make the provincial government take action to properly neutralize hydro lines. In February, he introduced Bill 161, an Act to Prohibit Harmful Electrical Ground Current. It was passed unanimously at

Queen's Park.

Bill 161 suffered a setback recently when Premier Kathleen Wynne prorogued the legislature and wiped out all of the private members bills.

"It is unfortunate that Wynne prorogued the government at the beginning of the fall session," said Nicholls.

"What that means is that my Bill 161, 'the Ground Current Pollution Act' was essentially eliminated, and therefore it has to be re-introduced into the legislature. During the summer months, I had met with the new Rapid Response Team, along with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the Electrical Safety Authority, Farm and Food Care Ontario, several farmers affected by ground current pollution and a member from the Beef Farmers of Ontario," Nicholls said.

"My plan now is to work

closer with these stakeholder groups and develop a more comprehensive bill based on more of the scientific evidence that they gather. This serious problem cannot be ignored," Nicholls concluded.

Hydro One announces that Farm Rapid Response Team is ready to help

Last week, Hydro One announced that the Farm Rapid Response Team is ready to assist farming customers to help identify, assess and mitigate on-farm electrical issues.

"Uncontrolled electricity has plagued rural livestock farms for a very long time," said Mayo Schmidt, President and CEO, Hydro One. "This customer-friendly process will improve outcomes for Ontario farmers and provide access to technical experts to help troubleshoot and find solutions."

This simplified approach provides Hydro One's farming customers with a single point of contact to manage their specific on-farm concerns.

The Farm Rapid Response Team is an outcome of a working group comprised of the

Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) and Hydro One. The team will manage and investigate all stray voltage and related on-farm electrical issues, do a full technical audit of all testing conducted, have testing specialists in zones across the province, conduct larger root cause investigations, and when needed, run alternative testing and trouble-shooting on more complex issues and complaints, and collect data centrally for further work and study.

"We see the Hydro One Farm Rapid Response Team as bringing a consistent documented process toward solving local uncontrolled electricity problems," said Don McCabe, president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

"OFA hopes this leads to further cooperation with other utilities and all levels of government in attaining a satisfactory solution."

Customers can call 1-888-405-3778 or email farmresponse@hydroone.com to connect with a member of the team.



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Plattsville settlement area...from page 1

Under 1578651 Ontario Limited, Voisin and Zimmer have been working with the township since 2002, presently completing the final phase of Plattsville Estates.

The developer has already been in contact with Oxford County planning and public works and have been told that there would be an issue with providing services to a new development because the current sewage treatment plan will be at capacity when the present development is completed.

Councillor Bruce Banbury asked when commercial and retail development would be triggered in Plattsville and was told by Flewelling that there should be demand for a gas bar and an expanded grocery store when Plattsville Estates is completed.

"I don't like seeing farmland gobbled up, but I don't mind seeing some growth, and the way of the future is going to have development-growth pressure in this area, so we have to deal with it," said Banbury.



NORTH DUMFRIES
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In 1924, Ayr residents celebrated the 100th anniversary of the founding of the village. This display was at the Ayr Plow Works, now Greenwood Park at the intersection of Piper Street and Church Street. Abel Mudge brought the first commerce to the village in 1824 when he built a mill at the site of 16 Northumberland Street in downtown Ayr. The village was named for the Scottish homeland of a large portion of the village's first settlers.

A project of the North Dumfries Historical Preservation Society



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