

RAISING PROSTATE CANCER AWARENESS ON THE FARM

As September is Prostate Cancer Awareness Month, male farmers over 45 years of age should consider talking with their doctors about this disease which afflicts one in seven Canadian men.

The average age of a male Canadian farmer is 55, according to the 2016 Census of Agriculture. As a result, many producers are around the age where they should be discussing prostate cancer checks, said **Peter Coleridge**, president and CEO of **Prostate Cancer Canada**.

“We recommend that men (around the age of 50) have a conversation with their doctors,” he told *Better Farming*. “If there are any risk factors like a family history of prostate cancer, then we recommend having that conversation starting at age 45.”

Early detection is crucial to helping men beat the disease.

“We know that, if prostate cancer is detected in the early stages, the survival rate is almost 100 per cent,” Coleridge said. “If caught late, three out of four men will die from prostate cancer. That’s why early detection is so important.”

Men may be nervous about discussing a prostate cancer check because of the sensitive area a doctor may have to examine.

But the ways doctors check for this disease have evolved significantly, as the process often starts with a simple blood test, Coleridge said.

The next steps in a prostate cancer screening could include a rectal exam, MRI or CT scan, Coleridge said. **BF**

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Jonathan Martin photo

THE ART FROM THE EQUIPMENT SHED

It’s not unusual for farmers to show some creativity but **Craig Cowan**, an Essex County cash crop producer, is taking this inventiveness to the next level.

When he’s not in the field, Cowan is usually in his barn, hunched over a piece of old equipment. He’s not repairing it, though. Rather, he’s deconstructing the implement to turn it into something new.

Cowan is an artist who operates under the name **Rusty Relics**.

His work often dips into the macabre. A massive pumpkin-headed beast eyes visitors as they enter into his workspace. Rusty-beaked owls, fashioned from old combine cutter bars, perch atop metallic trees waiting for their next meal of gear-headed mice.

Onlookers may want to take a seat to admire his sculptures. If they do, they can make themselves comfortable on one of the spider web-shaped chairs Cowan created out of rebar.

Over the almost 60 years Cowan

has worked this land, he’s accrued quite a bit of old equipment. His father cultivated the farm before him, so Cowan has a couple of generations’ worth of materials to use.

Some farm implements – like his father’s **International Harvester Farmall C** tractor – are off limits, though.

“Most of the materials I use come from old, broken equipment,” he told *Better Farming*.

In terms of balancing his farming and artistic endeavours, Cowan said, “Time has a way of getting away from you.”

“I look up from the field and go, ‘It’s almost event season!’”

Cowan sells his sculptures at Essex County’s two largest art festivals, Art by the River and Art in the Park, each year.

The artistic flair runs through the Cowan household, as his wife **Dorothy** creates whimsical figurines from fabric, trim, chalk, paint and, occasionally, repurposed farm implements. **BF**