

# **GenAssist: New Routes for Tomorrow's Farmers**

## **Operating Guidelines**

### **Background**

In September of 2002, Gordon Enns, Canadian Prairies Representative for Heifer International, contacted Genesis to explore ways the two groups might work together. The groups share mutual interests in sustainability, care of the earth and the way food is produced and distributed. The outcome makes possible new routes for tomorrow's farmers by helping them with living livestock loans.

### **Goals of Living Livestock Loans**

One of the major goals of this project is to help potential and beginning farmers with the challenging task of establishing a sustainable farm operation in today's economy. Genesis Land Conservancy wants to encourage those pursuing environmentally sound agricultural practices and to model to the rest of society that working with nature is the best way to produce food. The focus of this program will be on individuals and families that need additional resources to improve their income generating capacity and who are willing to explore sustainable production and marketing techniques. As a program, our goal is to offer tangible help as well as continued educational opportunities and support.

### **Genesis Land Conservancy**

Genesis Land Conservancy is a registered charity dedicated to preserving land for agricultural use. Key principles include sustainable agricultural practices and stewardship. A land trust is an alternative ownership model that removes land from the commodity market and uses it as a long-term resource. Genesis assists farmers in the transfer of land to the next generation in order to make land available to farm operators under lease. Genesis is working with land in trust to foster a new generation in sustainable farming. Our farms will help to provide fertile soils and healthy crops for generations to come. Genesis Land Conservancy currently manages over 2300 acres of land throughout Saskatchewan.

## **Heifer Project International**

Heifer International works in partnership with others to alleviate hunger, poverty and environmental degradation by providing animals, training and community development assistance. Heifer partners with people in many countries around the world where lack of food is a daily concern and often a matter of survival. Heifer is also interested in the sustainability of agriculture in Canada and while Saskatchewan produces vast quantities of food, there are some real concerns about the sustainability of this system of production. Heifer is committed to the initiation and preservation of small and family scale farms in Saskatchewan. These farms provide greater stability for rural Saskatchewan and greater depth in our knowledge and ability to sustain the food supply in our country. GenAssist is one way to help ensure the continued existence of family farms in Saskatchewan and Heifer is pleased to support this effort through the gift of livestock for beginning farmers.

## **Guidelines for Acceptance into the GenAssist Program**

These guidelines are used to clarify the Livestock Passing on the Gift contract. These guidelines do not alter, amend, or change any terms, provisions, or requirements of any or all sections of the Livestock Passing on the Gift contract.

### **Goals:**

- To help beginning farmers, committed to environmentally sound agricultural practices, build equity and sustainability;
- to help support beginning farmers through educational opportunities such as field days and workshops;
- to help network beginning farmers with like-minded people and innovative established farmers.

The following guidelines have been written with the assistance of many individuals and are intended to take into account the best interests of everyone involved. Our thanks go to the Land Stewardship Project for sharing the experience and expertise they have gained through implementing a similar project in Minnesota.

## **Definitions:**

The beginning farmer cited in the guidelines is considered the recipient in the Livestock Passing on the Gift contract. The Genesis Land Conservancy is considered the owner in the Livestock Passing on the Gift contract.

**Genesis Land Conservancy (GLC)** - applied for, received and is the project holder for the livestock loan program. GLC is also considered the owner in the Livestock Passing on the Gift contract.

**GenAssist Committee (GAC)** - is an appointed committee with the specific task of developing and implementing the New Routes program through the Genesis Land Conservancy. (see attached list)

**New Routes Program** – is an educational, practical program for beginning farmers and provides living livestock loans to selected recipients.

**Heifer Project International** – is supporting the New Routes program with a generous grant and resource personnel. The organization is built upon the tradition of passing on the gift, which means the recipient agrees to help another farmer in the near future to the same degree.

**Recipient** – is an individual who has been selected by the GenAssist committee to receive a livestock loan and participate in the educational opportunities of New Routes. It also refers to the same individual named as the recipient in the Livestock Passing on the Gift contract.

## **GUIDELINES:**

### **BEFORE RECEIVING THE ANIMALS**

beginning farmers applying for a livestock loan must have completed the Genesis application and committed to Passing on the Gift.

- Knowledge and Experience  
recipients are likely to be farmers of Genesis land or members of a holistic management group in Saskatchewan

recipients will demonstrate sufficient experience, training and/or willingness to work with a mentor

- Business Plan  
recipients will have been selected based on the farm plan supplied in the application procedure. The Plan shall address short and long-term goals, any deficiencies, areas of production, marketing, human resources and finance.
- Livestock Facilities  
recipients must have adequate facilities or explain in the plan how deficiencies will be met in the plan. This includes all seasonal aspects of the enterprise and all nutritional needs of the livestock. Where rented or leased facilities or land are involved, written agreements must be in place through the duration of the New Routes program (until the passing on of the gift is complete).
- Motivation  
the GenAssist committee will be looking for strong personal motivation and commitment to his/her individual farm plan as well as the goals of Genesis Land Conservancy and holistic management
- Income Guidelines  
Net Worth < \$225,000  
  
Net worth means total assets minus total liabilities. Assets shall be valued at fair market value. Net worth is to include assets and liabilities of spouse and dependents.  
  
Net Farm Income < \$20,000
- References  
1 Financial / Business  
1 Current / Past employer  
1 Character / Past teacher, mentor

### **AFTER RECEIVING THE ANIMALS**

- Project Support and Continuing Education  
Each beginning farmer must attend the annual field day in June. The field day is intended to provide a networking forum that offers support to the recipients and provides educational sessions.

Continuing education is expected. Examples of continuing education would be attending species specific conferences or field days, meeting with other producers with similar enterprises one-on-one or in a farm management group, watching appropriate video tapes and / or reading books and magazines relating to the enterprise. The credit for these activities will be determined at the farm visits and indicate to GenAssist an interest and desire to continue learning. A short summary of what was learned should be documented in journal format.

Through New Routes, the beginning farmer will have help designing a system that fits his / her own situation. This also includes a system of financial planning.

Each beginning farmer will be asked to submit an annual review of their farming enterprise.

- Site Visits  
GenAssist will schedule a minimum of two site visits per year. The beginning farmer must be present at the site visits. The site visits are intended to help the beginning farmer succeed. It is a time for the GenAssist committee to assess the situation of the animals, make suggestions where appropriate and, equally important, to answer any questions or offer any assistance that may be needed.
- Accounting / Financial Management  
Every beginning farmer must keep records specific to the livestock received from this project. These records will be reviewed during the site visits.

In addition, beginning farmers must keep farm records which can be made available to GenAssist upon request.

- Pass – Ons  
Each beginning farmer will pass on an animal of the same number, quality and types as they received unless otherwise agreed upon by the GenAssist committee. Pass on schedules vary with each animal species. For variations, see Schedule B.

- Ownership of the Animals

The beginning farmer owns the original animals after the offspring are passed on to the next recipient. Here is a beef example.

Year	#of animals	# Passed On	#Owned by Recipient	#Owned by Genesis
1	10	0	0	10
2	10	0	0	10
3	10	3	3	7
4	10	3	6	4
5	10	4	10	0

Until the pass-ons take place, the animals are owned by Genesis Land Conservancy. Offspring not earmarked for pass-ons become the property of the beginning farmer when the pass-on is completed. Keeping the animals healthy and properly maintained is the responsibility of the recipient. Monitoring and training is the responsibility of the GenAssist committee. Accelerated payback is permitted.

- Identification

Recipients will be required to brislet tag all animals and to brand mature animals with Genesis identification.

- Insurance

Any insurance costs are the sole responsibility of the recipient.

- Breeding Plan

The beginning farmer must have a planned breeding schedule and submit a plan for acceptance by the GenAssist committee.

- Health / Vaccination plan

All livestock must be kept in good health and annually vaccinated for blackleg.

- Livestock Movement  
It is the responsibility of the beginning farmer to arrange movement / transportation of the animals.
- Death of an animal  
If an animal given as part of the livestock loan program dies, the beginning farmer is still obligated to pass on the same number of animals originally agreed upon.

The beginning farmer must notify the GenAssist committee of the death of an animal. There must be a written report of cause of death. The GenAssist committee will then determine the course of action, including gaining the insights of an advisor and the beginning farmer. The beginning farmer is obligated to perform the tasks that GLC deems necessary.

- Contract Termination  
The beginning farmer must advise the GenAssist committee in writing at least 30 days prior to his / her intent to terminate the contract. GenAssist can terminate the contract with cause upon twenty-four hours notice. Cause includes but is not limited to the following:
  - Animals in jeopardy
  - Abuse
  - Financial – unable to support the animals

Note:

In the unlikely event the GLC feels the loaned animals are being jeopardized in any way – physically or financially - written notice regarding needed changes will be given to the beginning farmer with adequate time to respond. If the beginning farmer does not respond in a timely and satisfactory way, the GLC has the authority to and will REMOVE THE ANIMALS from the beginning farmer or ask the beginning farmer to repay the livestock loan in money within a certain period of time.

The GenAssist committee members and / or appointees have the right to enter the property without the permission of the recipient or rental owner should the committee deem such action necessary.

If the beginning farmer is found in violation of the guidelines, it is considered a breach of the agreement and Genesis Land Conservancy has the right to repossess the animals.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ have read, understand, and agree to abide by the guidelines as written.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Mentor: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

GenAssist Member: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*Note:**

The GenAssist Committee appreciates the understanding of all involved as we develop this pilot project in collaboration with Heifer Project International. We appreciate your comments and feedback. Your input will help make this program the best it can be. GLC realizes issues will come up and thanks you in advance for your patience as we work through them.