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From the flock

JANUARY 2010 • VOLUME 7 • ISSUE 1

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR THE CANADIAN SHEEP INDUSTRY

Canadian Sheep Federation 2010 Bluetongue Insurance Available Now!

Canada's sheep farmers now have a proactive tool to manage the growing threat of loss due to Bluetongue disease.

The Bluetongue Insurance Policy for Sheep has been designed in such a way that producers who have coverage, and have been diagnosed with any of the 25 serotypes of Bluetongue disease will receive compensation above and beyond CFIA compensation. This voluntary insurance supplements funding provided to sheep farmers through current government agricultural assistance programs.

In contrast, a vaccination program in Canada would require vaccinating flocks against all expected serotypes and any new or emerging strains of the disease. There is not a universal bluetongue vaccine that will protect against all serotypes of the virus. Each serotype of the bluetongue virus would require its own separate vaccine for protection. Communication with US vaccine producer (Fort Dodge) for serotype 10 indicates use of vaccine in the USA is extremely limited.

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Furthermore, there is no licensed Bluetongue vaccine in Canada nor interest from US manufacturers to pursue licensing as the Canadian market is perceived to be too small. As vaccination is not possible or practical at this time, commercial insurance coverage provides a more affordable and accessible option for Canadian sheep farmers.

HOW DOES BLUETONGUE INSURANCE WORK?

Bluetongue Insurance covers producers for: mortality; consequential loss (drugs and treatment materials; veterinary fees; diagnostic fees; humane euthanasia) and; business interruption (loss of productive capability, additional feeding and management costs).

Premiums for Bluetongue Insurance vary by province reflecting differences in risk. Depending on your province of residence coverage will be 0.55 -1.78% of the sum insured. The value of the insured animal is predetermined and is defined in the policy. **Continued on next page**



Bluetongue Insurance

This value is reviewed annually to ensure it keeps pace with the market value. If the market value of the animal changes during the life of the policy, the change in market value will have no impact on the settlement price in the event of a loss.

KEY FEATURES:

- All sheep on the farm must be insured
- Sheep must be healthy at time coverage begins
- The Health of Animals Act (1990, c.21) applies
- Sheep must be owned by the insured
- Coverage ceases once ownership is transferred
- Animals must remain within Canada
- The insured must maintain reasonable care of the animals
- The insured must agree to notify the insurer of any possible claim immediately
- Proof of loss must be filed within 60 days.

**COVERAGE FOR 2010
IS AVAILABLE TO ALL
CANADIAN SHEEP FARMERS
NOW!**

PREMIUM SCENARIOS

The following scenarios illustrate typical premiums for an individual farmer for on-farm coverage under the 2009 Bluetongue Insurance Policy for Sheep. These scenarios illustrate both geographic diversity and provincial differences in risk. A premium quote will be provided by the insurer on submission of a completed application. The following are examples only:

BT Insurance Policy for Sheep	
British Columbia	
Premium Level:	1.78% of insured value
Avg. Size of Flock:	35 ewes
Est. Value of Sheep:	\$250 - \$300 (purebred) \$50-\$150 (commercial)
Insured Value:	
10 purebred @\$300	\$3000
10 commercial @\$150	\$1500
5 commercial @\$100	\$ 500
5 commercial @ \$50	\$ 250
	\$5,250
Estimated Annual Premium	\$93

BT Insurance Policy for Sheep	
Alberta	
Premium Level:	.75% of insured value
Avg. Size of Flock:	75
Est. Value of Sheep:	\$500 (purebred) \$175 (commercial)
Insured Value:	
30 purebred	\$15,000
45 commercial	\$ 7,875
	\$22,875
Estimated Annual Premium	\$172



Bluetongue Insurance

BT Insurance Policy for Sheep Saskatchewan	
Premium Level:	.74% of insured value
Avg. Size of Flock:	92
Est. Value of Sheep:	\$160
Insured Value:	\$14,720
Estimated Annual Premium	\$109

BT Insurance Policy for Sheep Ontario	
Premium Level:	.88% of insured value
Avg. Size of Flock:	49 ewes 3 rams 50 lambs
Value of Sheep:	
Breeding ewes	\$190
Breeding rams	\$600
Replacement Lambs	\$175
Market Lambs	\$140
Insured Value:	
Ewes	\$9310
Rams	\$1800
Replacement Lambs (25)	\$4375
Market Lambs (25)	\$3500
	\$18,985
Estimated Annual Premium	\$167

The 2010 Bluetongue Insurance Policy for Sheep provides farmers with affordable coverage for mortality, business interruption and consequential losses due to Bluetongue disease (BT). This commercial insurance program is endorsed by the Canadian Sheep Federation (CSF) and financially assisted through Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Private Sector Risk Management Partnerships (PSRMP) Program.

To obtain an application form for 2010:

Canadian Sheep Federation

130 Malcolm Road

Guelph, ON

N1K 1B1

Phone: 519.824.6018

Fax: 866.909.5360

You can also download the application form and sample policy wording on-line at: www.cansheep.ca

To speak to an insurance advisor about your need. You may call **1-866-820-4236** to speak to an insurance agent about Bluetongue Insurance for Sheep.

**APPLICATIONS FOR 2009 WILL
BE ACCEPTED UP TO JUNE 30,
2010!**

For more information on Bluetongue Disease:
<http://www.cfsph.iastate.edu/Factsheets/pdfs/bluetongue.pdf>



Expanding Markets and Trade Opportunities in the Americas



January 21, 2010 – Guelph, ON – The Canadian small ruminant industry applauds the announcement from the Government of Canada outlining the steps being taken to expand Canada’s export markets and trade opportunities in Colombia, Guatemala and Mexico.

“Colombia has been importing semen since 2006 but Minister Ritz’s commitment to negotiate animal health conditions that would allow live animal and embryo imports into Colombia from Canada is vital to our joint success,” says Brian Atkinson, Director of the CSBA and of the CLGA, who was in both countries in 2009. “Mexico and South American countries figure prominently in CLGA’s 5-year long term international marketing strategy. When these markets open they have the potential to put \$5 million directly into the pockets of Canadian small ruminant producers” said Atkinson.

Rick McRonald, Executive Director of the CLGA who was part of the Canadian delegation stated that “These negotiations can take years, we’ve been working with Mexico since 2003, but this “formula” where the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food takes the initiative to create the opportunity for industry partners from two countries to meet with Government officials from two countries has proven to be effective in achieving the desired results. This was Minister Ritz’s third visit to Colombia where we were able to celebrate the opening of the market for Canadian beef while advancing other issues including sheep and goats.”

“This announcement demonstrates Minister Ritz’s commitment to expand export trade in ovine genetics, it indicates that there are opportunities to diversify markets and enhance profitability. The Central and South American markets are potentially very lucrative to Canada’s purebred industry” says Dwane Morvik, Chairman of the Canadian Sheep Federation. He went onto add that “We encourage the Minister on behalf of the Canadian agricultural sector to continue his efforts to open international markets. The small ruminant industry is particularly appreciative of his continuing efforts to allow access of ovine and caprine genetics into the United States and Mexico.”

The Canadian Sheep Federation is a national, non-profit organization that represents all Canadian sheep producers. Its mission is to further the viability, expansion and prosperity of the Canadian sheep and wool industry.

The Canadian Livestock Genetics Association is a nationwide, not-for-profit trade association representing the market access and animal health interests of those involved in the sale, service and promotion of livestock genetics both domestically and internationally.

The Canadian Sheep Breeders' Association represents Canadian Sheep Breeders. Its mission is to insure the integrity and genetic advancement of purebred sheep through cooperative work among all levels of government and industry-related organizations, both domestic and international.

For more information contact the Canadian Sheep Federation at 1-888-684-7739 or cansheep@cansheep.ca



Antimicrobial Resistance: Human health benefits?

Source: Feedstuffs, January 4, 2010, Issue 1, Volume 82

After a decade of data collection in Denmark, the effects of low-level antibiotic use are still unclear. The emergence of 'superbugs', bacteria that cause human infection and are resistant to the regular arsenal of antibiotics, has raised concerns from the general public that use of antibiotics at low levels to reduce sickness and promote growth in food animal production should be banned. Denmark chose this route and has been under the watchful eye of many countries, curious if they should do the same. However, there seems to be increasing speculation that the key to reducing antibiotic resistance in humans does not lie in the reduction of low-level use of antibiotics in food animal production.

Margaret Mellon, a US scientist and proponent for the banning of low-level antibiotic use, states that, "When continually exposed to antibiotics, bacteria develop resistance to the drugs. Adding antibiotics to animal feed in CAFOs (concentrated animal feeding operations) turns these massive, overcrowded facilities into prime breeding grounds for antibiotic-resistant bacteria, which can move to humans through food, air and water. Then, when people get sick from these resistant bacteria, antibiotics are less effective." However, the results of monitoring resistant bacteria levels after banning antibiotic use in Denmark has not been able to produce definitive evidence of a direct link.

Results in Denmark show there is little connection between the use of animal drugs and resistance in humans. Contrary to expectation, the rate of resistance against the human antibiotic erythromycin has remained unchanged for the past decade, even in light of the ban. There may, in fact, be something besides animal use may be to blame, as a four-fold leap in the rate of resistance in people against other antibiotics which have limited use in Danish food animals has also occurred during the ban.

To date, no scientific studies have been able to provide concrete evidence that bacteria of foodborne origin pose a direct threat to human health. On the contrary banning of low-level antibiotics in Denmark has resulted in an increase in the number of human cases of salmonellosis and campylobacter, a pattern that can be seen across Europe despite continent-wide antibiotic bans. This evidence suggests that low-level antibiotic use may, in fact, play a beneficial role in reducing the incidence of foodborne illness.

While the World Health Organization (WHO) continues to support Denmark's decision to ban low-level antibiotic use, the organization has been careful only to quote the success as being "a reduction in the reservoir of resistant microorganisms in food animals" with no reference to any human health benefits. Proponents for the low-level use of antibiotics have argued the ban has been more detrimental, both to the industry and to animal welfare, than beneficial. A number of smaller Danish farmers could not afford the transition during implementation. Officials have acknowledged the pig industry has experienced increases in mortality and illness in the first few years of the ban, which has led to an outcry to stop the ban by animal welfare supporters. The industry is expected to fall to approximately 5000 pork producers by 2015, down from a staggering 25,000 in 1995.

While Canada has not yet followed in the footsteps of Denmark, the discussions are occurring both here and in the United States, with public pressure to follow suit. While there is yet to be scientific evidence of a link, there will always be those who believe that human health benefits exist from banning use of antibiotics in farm animals.

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Antimicrobial resistance con't

Currently, on-farm food safety is one of the many ways in which the industry has the ability to show due diligence in use of antibiotics on-farm. The program requires a veterinary script for those products used in an extra-label or off-label manner, and record-keeping to ensure animal health products are administered properly, with treated animals identified and withdrawal periods met. The records are evidence to the general public that our industry is responsible in their use of medications and that medications are a necessary tool in producing a safe food product in a human manner.

An all-natural fertilizer that's dirt sheep

Source: Katie Chalmers-Brooks, University of Manitoba

This article was originally published in *The Bulletin*, August 20 2009 published by the Research Communications and Marketing Unit, Office of the Vice-President (Research) at the University of Manitoba.

Ask Heather Wilton about her flock of sheep and she'll have something to say about each of their personalities. Kit Kat is the laid back one; Oobleck is never satisfied and Hummer is flighty. Silver has a quiet intelligence while Molly is more self-effacing. "She is so sweet and gentle. She never gets into trouble," Wilton gushes, like a proud mom.

The agricultural and food sciences student – and her baa'ing brood – are involved in new research that has sheep replacing faceless machinery on organic farms. Besides being a lot more fun (as Wilton points out), using sheep to blend nutrients into the soil instead of gaspowered machinery could save organic farmers money and cause less damage to the environment.

To grow crops, farmers need nitrogen-rich soil. Conventional farmers simply buy nitrogen fertilizer and apply it to their land. But organic farmers must be fertilizer-free so they prepare their soil – about every three years – by growing legume crops like alfalfa and lentils that are good at fixing nitrogen from the air. Organic farmers then use tillage machinery to incorporate the legumes into the ground to provide nutrients for the next crop.

This method, dubbed the green manure concept, means they lose out on a harvesting season for the portion of their land where they're preparing the soil.

An alternative now being studied at the University of Manitoba's research station in Carman, MB, has sheep eating up a legume crop and leaving behind their nitrogen-rich manure, which nourishes the soil and doesn't involve any unnatural emissions.

Not only would sheep be helping out with the harvesting process but they themselves would be harvested, and in turn provide farmers with additional income, says research technician Joanne Thiessen Martens. Farmers could sell sheep or lambs for meat or wool.

This option might be all the more appealing given current economic tough times. In November 2008, American market researcher The Hartman Group noted 43 per cent of consumers surveyed had stopped buying organic products or at least scaled back to save money.

"There is some interest among farmers in gaining some value from these legume green manure crops without sacrificing the nitrogen benefit," Thiessen Martens says.

This system also has some added perks: there's less soil erosion since no tillage is used and sheep like eating those pesky weeds that threaten crops. Some cities in North America – including Fort Saskatchewan, AB., and Missoula, Mont. – are even using dandelion-craving sheep within city limits to keep their green spaces pretty.

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Fertilizer continued

Little if any research has been done on using grazing as a green manure management alternative, says Thiessen Martens. For this three-year research project, they'll compare the yield of wheat grown on a sheep-grazed plot versus a tilled plot, and look closely at the nutrient content. They plan on doing an economic analysis as well.

She says this system, which at this point is "very rare," might even persuade conventional farmers to go green. Manitoba is home to about 300 organic farmers.

"One of the criticisms of the green manure concept for conventional farmers is that it's more expensive than just buying fertilizer and putting it on because you don't have that harvestable crop. But if we can offer a system where there is some animal product to be harvested, then it is a practice that may become economically viable for conventional farmers as well."

CSF Launches Virtual Tool Box for New Producers

A new online resource is now available to help producers wanting to enter the sheep industry. The CSF's Virtual Tool Box is a repository of information covering key aspects of sheep production from business, housing, handling and flock health to nutrition, grazing, predation, breeding and wool. Although intended for new entrants, existing producers may also find it a helpful resource as they evolve and expand their operations.

Located on the CSF website at <http://cansheep.ca/cms/en/Resources/VTBox/VTBox.aspx>, the Tool Box demonstrates the education and training commitment set out in the CSF business plan.

The Tool Box was developed through a collaborate process involving participation and input from Alberta Lamb Producers, Ontario Sheep Marketing Agency, Saskatchewan Sheep Development Board, Dr. Paula Menzies and Jennifer Woods with funding provided by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. A special thank you to Dr. Paul Menzies and Jennifer Woods for use of their photos and illustrations.



Liability and Traceability

By Sean McKenzie – National ID and Traceability Coordinator

An argument that is often raised in discussions on traceability is that by having a traceability system in place will lead to more producers being named in lawsuits resulting from food recalls and the like. That by making this information available it will allow processors to download yet another cost to producers by providing them the information they need to point the finger at the producers of the raw products, and lessen the responsibility on themselves. A paper written by Thomas Manes, LLB and Miller Thomson, LLP for OnTrace in Ontario was released recently looks at these arguments and sheds some much needed light on the issue.

Accountability, Anonymity and Liability:

There is a general assumption that being traceable means that producers will then also be held accountable and found liable for food contamination incidences coming from their farms and that by remaining anonymous this risk is eliminated. In fact under Canadian law, regardless of whether a producer is known or not, we are all liable for the quality of the products we produce. What is being suggested by the article is that rather than traceability being a tool for prosecution of producers, having a traceability system in place can be give producers the necessary tools to demonstrate due diligence and best management practices and thereby protect themselves from unfounded or inaccurate claims.

To explain further Manes and Miller describe the various types of liability, Tort and Statutory and how these would potentially be applied to a producer. Statutory liability is interesting in that agriculture is one of the few areas that are covered by both federal and provincial legislation. This liability refers to an action that was in contradiction of some form of federal or provincial law; the federal Health of Animals Act for example or the Ontario Sale of Goods Act.

Under this type liability claim there are 3 different levels that may be applied to a claim, that range from a person or people intentionally and knowingly engaging in prohibited conduct, known as mens rea; to absolute liability where regardless of whether realised or not, the individual or corporation acted in a way contrary to law. Between these two extremes is strict liability, where most offenses under the statutory liability category occur, where the individual/corporation was found to have broken the law, but it may or may not have been intentional, which allows the defendant to raise the defence of due diligence. Due diligence, in the farm products sense means that a producer who follows reasonable farming practices but still produces/sells a contaminated product cannot be held responsible for unforeseeable outcomes for which they had taken reasonable steps to avoid.

Tort liability is on the other hand a more likely scenario in the case of farm product contamination and it would likely arise as a claim of negligence on the part of the producer. In this case however the onus is then on the claimant to prove two things; one: “that they were owed a duty of care by the defendant” and two: “the defendant breached that duty of care through their actions”. Given that normal practices involve farm products passing through several processes and the multiple opportunities for contamination to occur, these claims would be extremely difficult to prove and would more than likely be dismissed early in the proceedings. This would potentially still result in legal fees for a producer, however the paper suggests that these cost would be much less than the potential losses that could be suffered if a traceability system were not in place. As we sit now, the risk is borne by all producers within the industry, rather than the unlucky individual who has a food safety incident.

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Traceability continued

The risk right now is that a tainted product whose source cannot be identified would result in the impact being borne by the entire industry as was the case with BSE in 2003. The Alberta case in 2003 resulted in 2700 head of cattle being culled. Of these 2000 were over 24 months and none tested positive for BSE. We are all aware of the resulting effect of the border closure and effect on the market.

The question is then 'what would the impact have been if the products were traceable and could be localised to an individual operation, or at least a limited number of farms?' The effect would likely have been much reduced, and while that individual may have faced some difficult times, more than likely the use of a traceability system and farm records would show regular and reasonable farming practices were being carried out and would result in minimizing the impact even to that specific operation.

This tool, traceability, can also be used by producers to help establish due diligence claims. Completed farm records and best management practices that can be used to capture product before it enters the food chain or defend against claims of negligence in Strict Liability cases.

Further to all this is the fact that some of our major trading partners are moving towards legislated traceability within their own countries. Once these are in place it is quite foreseeable that they would also require the same level of traceability from Canada if we wish to continue to send product.

In summary, the concept of traceability may seem to remove the risk to producers of legal action, but in reality we are all still accountable and responsible for the products that we produce.

There is truth in that traceability systems could make producers more open to being named in legal action, but when combined with best management practices and due diligence they also provide a strong defence against claims of negligence. A larger concern is that without a traceability system in place, producers are at greater risk of having their business adversely affected by the actions of another producer and the resulting negative impact on the industry as a whole.

The full article can be found online at www.ontraceagrifood.com/admincp/uploadedfiles/Liability%20%20Traceability%20Paper%20-%20Nov%2009.pdf



Livestock lead to better health in developing nations, rising consumption poses challenge

Source: www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2009-12/bc-llt120809.php

COPENHAGEN, DENMARK -- In the face of reports about the ills livestock generate for the climate, environment and health, a new study published in the December issue of the journal *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability* emphasizes that livestock production in developing and developed countries are very different animals.

While rising consumption of meat, milk and eggs is one of the factors in epidemics of obesity and heart disease in developed countries, consumption of meat and milk in developing countries is associated with good rather than bad health. In poor countries, where most people subsist on poor starchy diets, the study highlights the fact that modest amounts of these foods improve people's nutrition and health, lower mortality rates, and enhance child development.

Furthermore, the new analysis by researchers at the Nairobi-based International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the Center for Collaborative Conservation at Colorado State University, finds that the current environmental risks posed by livestock are driven mainly by the impacts of over-consumption of livestock foods in wealthy countries and rapidly growing demand in emerging economies, particularly in China, Southeast Asia, and Brazil.

"Livestock are a lifeline for hundreds of millions of people, for whom livestock represent one of few options available to improve their incomes and nutrition," said Carlos Seré, director general of ILRI.

Nowhere is the "meat divide" between rich and poor greater than in levels of consumption of livestock foods.

The authors note, for example, that although annual consumption of milk in the developing world is expected by 2050 to rise from an average of 44 to 78 kilograms per person, this is still far less than the 202 kilos per person consumed today in wealthy countries.

"It would be unethical, even for the sake of the environment, to advocate policies that prevent the poor from increasing their consumption of milk and meat, when they consume significantly less than people in rich countries," said Mario Herrero, the paper's lead author and a senior scientist at ILRI, which is one of 15 research centers supported by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).

"However, without further investments in livestock that improve production and marketing efficiencies, rapid increases in milk and meat consumption in developing countries pose serious threats to the environment and will still fail to feed many of the world's poorest and hungriest people."

Milk, beef, eggs, chicken, and pork are key global commodities. Livestock production systems occupy 45 percent of the earth's land surface, excluding Antarctica, and are worth at least US\$1.4 trillion. Livestock production employs 1.3 billion people globally and is directly responsible for the livelihoods of 600 million poor livestock keepers. The market for dairy products produced by smallholders, for example, is significant in many developing economies, with India now the largest dairy producer in the world. And growing dairy enterprises mean more jobs for the poor: every 100 litres of milk handled daily in Kenya, for example, provides two full-time jobs, and at higher than the minimum wage.

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Developing nations con't

According to the ILRI study, most livestock operations in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are far from industrial. Livestock are either raised on small farms where they feed largely on leaves, stalks and other non-edible remains of food crops, or are herded over marginal lands unsuited for crop cultivation by pastoralists in search of grass.

Emissions from animal products account for about 18 percent of the global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Expanding industrial livestock operations in China and other emerging Asian economies, and deforestation driven by large-scale cattle farming, are significant sources of livestock-related GHG emissions in developing countries.

"Livestock are not bad for the environment everywhere," said Herrero. "We need a thorough consideration of the trade-offs involved in livestock systems, so that we know where and how it makes sense to limit livestock production and consumption and where and how to increase production in sustainable ways."

The authors cite major opportunities for easing the tradeoffs, such as improved management of vast rangelands to remove significant quantities of carbon from the atmosphere in exchange for environmental service payments. There are also opportunities for exploiting synergies among different components of livestock-based agro-ecosystems, such as by breeding food crops to make better and wider use of their stover for livestock feed and providing incentives to pastoral livestock herders to continue to conserve the wildlife on their rangelands.

Changes in animal diets can dramatically reduce the amount of methane produced per animal. Shifting to more productive breeds would allow farmers to reduce the number of animals they keep while increasing their production levels.

"Governments and policymakers need to design policies that cap animal numbers, while at the same time providing incentives that encourage farmers to feed their animals better, so they can produce more food with fewer emissions," said Seré.

There are also proven technologies that significantly reduce emissions from manure on industrial farms. According to the ILRI study, paying communities for their "environmental services" would encourage herders on vast rangelands of Africa and Latin America to adopt practices that would help protect biodiversity, as well as store carbon.

"Right now, farmers get paid only for the beef or milk that they produce. If these other options come on board, then people will adopt more sustainable practices to cash in on environmental services," said Seré.

About International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI): The Africa-based International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) works at the crossroads of livestock and poverty, bringing high-quality science and capacity building to bear on poverty reduction and sustainable development. ILRI is one of 15 centers supported by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). It has its headquarters in Kenya and a principal campus in Ethiopia. It also has teams working out of offices in Nigeria, Mali, Mozambique, India, Thailand, Indonesia, Laos, Vietnam and China. For more information, please visit: www.ilri.org

International Livestock Research Institute
Megan Dold, Jeff Haskins



Changes to importation protocol for female sheep and goats

By Courtney Denard, National Scrapie Coordinator

In early 2009, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) announced that requirements around the importation of U.S. female sheep and goats into Canada were going to be changing.

The changes were prompted by the Canadian sheep industry's plans to move towards scrapie eradication, which means implementing tighter import protocols to reduce the risk of bringing scrapie into the country.

The sheep and goat industries were given the opportunity to comment on the proposed protocol and did so throughout the summer of 2009. During the fall, the CFIA met to discuss the proposed protocol and completed a review of all submitted industry comments. Through these meetings a decision surrounding the proposed protocol was made.

The following proposals will be adopted as part of the import requirements for bringing in intact female sheep and goats from the U.S.

1. Intact female sheep/goats from the U.S. are to be imported to a Canadian premises that has been enrolled in the Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program (VSFCP) for at least 12 months, with at least one annual inventory completed (the initial inventory is not considered an annual inventory).
2. The U.S. exporting producer must have been enrolled in the U.S. Scrapie Flock Certification Program for at least 12 months with at least one annual inventory completed (the initial inventory is not considered an annual inventory). Further, the U.S. producer must be enrolled on the Export Monitored level of the program or the Complete Monitored level of the program (and has been conducting brain testing on all mortalities over 18 months of age for at least 12 months).

The prior enrolment in the country's flock certification program for at least 12 months (with the completion of at least one annual inventory) is a key bio-security and risk mitigation component, especially as risk tolerance for scrapie is decreasing.

Canadian producers with no sheep and goats currently on the property would be exempt from the 12 month waiting period as there would be no animals on the farm to inventory. These producers would contact Scrapie Canada and ask for Temporary Enrollment on the program and follow these requirements.

A new import protocol was also proposed in early 2009 around the importation of U.S. intact female sheep/ goats going into a flock/ herd that doesn't expect any deaths for many years; and does not routinely send aged animals to slaughter. For example, the importing flock/ herd would be small groups of rare breeds or animals that are being used for ongoing fibre production. The proposal incorporated the use of a rectal biopsy to complete scrapie testing on these flocks/ herds, rather than completing annual brain testing.

After reviewing industry comments and completing a committee review, the CFIA has released the following statement:

After careful consideration of all comments, and a thorough evaluation of the impact on the CFIA's ability to fully follow up on the health of the national sheep and goat population, it was determined that the rectal biopsy was not able to be incorporated into the import policy for three main reasons:

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Importation Protocol

1. From a CFIA operational and resource standpoint, follow-up of these flocks could not be conducted in a fair and equitable manner;
2. Inconsistencies would have been introduced into the VFSCP, taking value away from those participating in the program.
3. The use of the rectal biopsy as an individual animal test is not in line with the OIE recommended international standards at this time for import purposes.

The CFIA went on to say that although it is not logistically feasible at this time to incorporate the rectal biopsy into the import protocol for importing live small ruminants into Canada, the CFIA is willing to discuss further incorporation of the rectal biopsy within its domestic programs, specifically within the VSFSP, for small flocks/herds that do not anticipate a constant rate of mortality over time.

The industry plans on continuing to work with the CFIA on all small ruminant importation issues. Any new and relevant information on the issue will be released for comment. Any producers wishing to send in feedback or questions can do so by contacting Scrapie Canada at admin@scrapiecanada.ca or by phone at 1-866-534-1302.

Canadian Support for the International Dairy Federation Initiative to Highlight the Dairy Industry's Environmental Commitment

September 24, 2009 - Berlin, Germany

The Canadian dairy industry is joining others from around the world today in highlighting the dairy industry's environmental commitment. At the International Dairy Federation (IDF) meeting this week in Berlin, seven international organizations¹ representing the global dairy industry signed the Global Dairy Agenda for Action - Climate Change.

The Global Dairy Agenda for Action commits to five points of action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) and promote the long term sustainable supply of milk and dairy products. This will include work undertaken with IDF and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to develop a standard methodology to assess the carbon footprint of milk and dairy products. This work will allow the dairy industry worldwide to use the same basis for calculating the carbon footprint of their dairy products and to identify areas for improvements.

"The Canadian dairy industry is actively seeking solutions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions," says Gilles Froment², President of FIL-IDF Canada attending the IDF World Dairy Summit in Berlin. "Initiatives and programs conducted by Agropur Cooperative, Dairy Farmers of Canada, Gay Lea Foods Co-operatives and Saputo Inc. are proof that the Canadian dairy industry is committed to concrete action to mitigate GHG emissions. These initiatives are highlighted in the 'Green Book' and website unveiled today by IDF and its partners."

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Dairy Industry's Environmental Commitment

The 'Green Book', officially called 'Initiatives to Create a Sustainable Dairy Industry' and the website www.dairy-sustainability-initiative.org currently feature 260 case studies from 40 countries, including Canada. They will be updated periodically and reported on at least every two years to record progress and announce new initiatives.

"The dairy industry worldwide is committed to transparency in their plans to improve environmental sustainability," said Richard Doyle³, President of IDF. "It makes good sense to reduce GHG emissions – it improves profitability and efficiency of production, processing and distribution. This initiative will encourage the adoption of innovative technologies and practices throughout the Canadian dairy supply chain from farm to consumer."

As part of our action plan, FIL-IDF Canada is organizing an Environment Sustainability Conference for Canadian dairy industry stakeholders on March 16 and 17, 2010.

FIL-IDF Canada is a non-profit organization which acts as the Canadian National Committee of IDF and promotes through international cooperation and consultation, the solution of scientific, technical and economic problems in the international dairy field. It brings together dairy producers, processors, federal and provincial governments, agencies, universities, colleges, research institutes and private companies involved in the Canadian dairy industry.

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*The declaration Global Dairy Agenda for Action and the 'Green Book' can be viewed at www.dairy-sustainability-initiative.org
IDF news release: www.fil-idf.org*

(1) Signatories are the International Dairy Federation (IDF), the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP), Global Dairy Platform (GDP), SAI Platform, European Dairy Association (EDA), the Pan-American Dairy Federation (FEPALE) and the Eastern and Southern African Dairy Association (ESADA).

(2) Senior Director, Policy and Corporate Affairs, Canadian Dairy Commission.



McDonald's wants full cattle traceability

Source: www.fcc-fac.ca; Rae Groeneveld

One of the biggest restaurant chains in the world is supporting the Canadian government and its effort to implement mandatory livestock traceability by 2011.

"McDonald's believes that a robust, national traceability system is critical to ensuring consumer confidence and building brand trust in the beef industry," says Jeff Kroll, senior vice-president of McDonald's Restaurants of Canada during a recent presentation to the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association.

"While it's an additional cost, we believe that it's simply the right thing to do. Traceability is the right thing for all of us to do for our businesses and our customers, both domestically and abroad," Kroll says.

Growing consumer awareness about food production and demand for greater food safety has caused McDonald's to emphasize traceability for all menu items. In 2009, the company purchased 64 million pounds of Canadian beef, 44 million pounds of chicken and 62 million eggs. In Canada, 2.8 million people eat at McDonald's daily -- almost 10 per cent of the population.

Kroll notes that since the 2003 BSE case, McDonald's has purchased 100 per cent Canadian beef for its Canadian restaurants. They have also been part of a program to trace their beef, if concerns arose.

"For us to be able to call our supplier, which is Cargill, and say, 'that animal came from a specific farm, are you buying from that farm? Was that animal in our meat? What lot was it in?' We need to be able to answer those questions to be able to assure safety and quality to our customers," Kroll explains.

While he was firm in the need for a traceability system, Kroll also told producers McDonald's is willing to pay for that increased traceability.

"We pay a premium today for the firewalls we have on beef. That's just a fact and is something we build into our price to our owners who operate our restaurants across the country and is something ultimately the consumer is paying for today."

Quality, food safety, animal welfare are all things McDonald's has a history of paying more for, according to Kroll, and will continue to pay for.

"Ultimately it does get passed onto the consumer, although it is one element of 500 that go into the price of a product before it goes to one of our restaurants," Kroll says. "Do I think consumers will pay more for a premium product? Marketed correctly -- absolutely."

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