



From the flock



MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR THE CANADIAN SHEEP INDUSTRY

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Bluetongue Insurance Available: See page 6 for details

Investment to Strengthen the Future of Our Industry

By Jennifer MacTavish, CSF Executive Director

On February 6, 2010, the Federal Minister of Agriculture, Gerry Ritz announced an investment of up to \$6 million into Canada's small ruminant industry. The funding has been granted to address key factors that are critical to the competitiveness and long term sustainability of the industry, specifically determining the prevalence of scrapie, traceability and identification, and food safety. The CSF appreciates the government's investment in the industry, recognizing that it will enable the building of valuable infrastructure to help capture more market share in the future.

Over the past seven years, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada has invested a substantial amount of money in the Canadian sheep industry. The funding has been targeted to increase the production and consumption of Canadian lamb.



(Photo from left to right) Murray Hunt (General Manager OSMA), MP Tilson and Hon. Gerry Ritz

This funding has been used to re-design the Canadian Sheep Federation's website (www.cansheep.ca) and develop the Fresh Canadian Lamb website (www.freshcanadianlamb.ca). Additionally the funding has been used to develop the Virtual Toolbox (<http://cansheep.ca/cms/en/Resources/VTBox/VTBox.aspx>), the Cost of Production template (<http://cansheep.ca/cms/en/Resources/CoP/CoP.aspx>) and the Lenders Seminar Template.

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Government Investment

This is in addition to funding that was provided to host two industry value chain roundtable meetings in 2008 to discuss how the industry should address the issue of lack of supply and the roundtable meeting in November to address predation. This funding is in addition to the support the industry has received for Scrapie Eradication, Bluetongue Insurance Development, On-Farm Food Safety and Animal Identification and Traceability.

While the CSF has been able to secure federal funding in the past, what made the announcement on February 6 different was that this was the first time in seven years that a federal agriculture minister personally announced the support for the sheep industry. This is an indication of how far we have progressed as an industry in establishing credibility at a federal level as a Canadian agri-food industry worth investing in. This was an incredible opportunity to have the Minister visit a Canadian sheep farm and interact with producers and industry representatives.

The announcement was made on Andrew Gordanier's (Vice-Chairman of the CSF) farm in Shelburne Ontario. After making the official announcement Minister Ritz spent some time talking to producers about sheep production and enjoying some Ontario lamb kebobs. Afterwards Andrew was able to discuss some industry priorities with Minister Ritz, specifically the industry's plan to develop a Master Shepherd's Course, the need to more effectively deal with predation, and the need to establish viable price insurance at a national level. A significant portion of time was dedicated to discussing traceability and Gordanier raised the concern of on-going costs of traceability to producers.

While the CSF is using some of the funding previously announced to investigate the benefits of RFID systems to Canadian sheep producers in terms of management, the Federation does continue to be concerned, not only with the implementation but the ongoing costs of traceability management in the future.



(Photo from left to right) MP Tilson, Andrew Gordanier (Vice-Chairman CSF), Hon. Gerry Ritz



Minimizing the Risk with Good Production Practices

By Barb Caswell, Interim National Coordinator, On-Farm Food Safety

I have recently been having conversations with farmers across the country, attempting to encourage them that the task of implementing a food safety program on their farm is not as daunting as they believe. There is a great deal of apprehension that implementing a food safety program on the farm is just one more way for the powers that be to control your farm. What happened to the good ol' days, when you grew your animal how you wanted and got paid for what you sold? Well, with the vast array of resources at our fingertips, courtesy of various media and internet sources that our grandparents would be in disbelief of, and a need to feed an every growing population on ever limited resources, the definition of a 'quality product' has been changed. While the definition seemed simple, producing a product that tastes good and looks appealing, we now include freedom from harmful agents invisible to the naked eye and being able to tell the life story of the animal, which reads almost like a novel, doesn't it?

Well, to keep up with the changing times and new requirements, the term 'Good Production Practices' has evolved. If you haven't heard the term before, you are probably wondering? Are good production practices, or GPPs, simply as they state and, if so, what do we qualify as "good"; or is it some fancy scientific lingo that exists to complicate the family farm. Well, in terms of food safety, I'm hoping I can put your fears to rest that it is, in fact, the first of the two. Good production practices are simply practices that farmers use to control operational conditions, the conditions on the farm that influence the product you are producing. And what's surprising to many farmers, most of those practices we've identified as important to food safety are already being used on most farms, not necessarily as a result of food safety concerns, but because they are good management practices in running a business.

Contrary to the product you are producing – live sheep, lamb, sheep's milk or breeder stock and replacements, at some point the animal and/or the products they produce will end up in the food industry. The use of Good Production Practices for food safety is to control operational conditions in order to reduce the risk of a food safety hazard occurring. A food safety hazard encompasses everything from residues in the meat as a result of using animal health products, to broken needles, right through to hazards as a result of the animal unintentionally coming into contact with a substance that could be harmful to humans through consumption of the product, such as pesticides or other farm chemicals. Sounds pretty complicated, like there could be drastic changes to the way you run your farm.

Good production practices are so much simpler than what many farmers expect. If you want to produce an animal without any residues from animal health products, what do you need to do? The best way to prevent residues is to follow instructions when using medications – withdrawal times, dosage, route of administration, actions probably followed by most farmers. Currently, the Veterinary Drug Directorate sets safe limits for residues in animal meat products, enforced by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Also, the instructions for administering animal health products are there to protect the animal from detrimental side effects and to ensure proper efficacy of the drug for its intended use. So while my job is to promote the Canadian Sheep and Lamb Food-Safe Farm Practices program for on-farm food safety, the incentives for using these good production practices are much greater than just to implement and certify to the program.



Good Production Practices

It's pretty hard to talk about following drug labels without some reference to the use of off-label prescription medications. Prescription drugs are obtained through a veterinarian and, if used in an off-label manner, your veterinarian likely gave you a prescription with instructions for usage. Again, you have already taken care of some of the good production practices found in the on-farm food safety program, requiring instructions from a veterinarian for off-label usage of prescription drugs.

So you needle an animal – you probably restrain the animal to ensure the animal cannot shift and break off the needle. It would be expensive to call the vet out to remove a needle shard; difficult and time consuming to do it yourself; or, you could face discounts at the abattoir if you have to sell the animal with the broken needle. Again, you are already implementing good production practices on your farm that apply to on-farm food safety, simply with the proper restraint of the animal to prevent needle breakage. Let us continue with this example – the drug has a withdrawal date of 14 days, what's your next step? Most likely you move the animal to a sick pen, mark it with animal paint, or record a tag number, but you identify the animal in some way – another good production practice.

So, usage of animal health products seem pretty straight forward, including the incentives for doing many of the good production practices that you will find in the on-farm food safety producer manual. Let's veer down a different path. I had mentioned the risk of pesticides. If you spray pesticides on your pastures, do you follow label instructions to be sure the animals don't graze before the pasture is ready? Maybe you record the dates on a calendar. If the animals did gain access to the pasture before the acceptable amount of time has passed, they could get sick and leave with you dead sheep. You already know what I'm going to tell you before you read it - you are already practicing the necessary good production practices of the on-farm food safety program.

While I could ramble through all the areas of the program, I'm going to stop there. What I hope I have done is intrigued your interest – maybe the good production practices of a food safety program are not as complicated as you think. Maybe you already have most or all of them at work on your farm, and already could be taking advantage of marketing a product produced using a scientifically-backed on-farm food safety program. Tune in the next From the Flock to find out the next steps in implementing the Canadian Sheep Federation's on-farm food safety program, or contact me by email at barbaraa@cansheep.ca if you have any further questions.

Cows Give Competition to Sheep In New Zealand

Source: www.13wmaz.com

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) -- Residents of New Zealand already get a lot of grief over the fact that they are outnumbered by sheep by a ratio of 20 to 1.

Now, they're also getting competition from another farm animal: cows. Authorities say the number of dairy cattle in New Zealand have reached a record 5.8 million. And that is well more than one animal for each of the country's 4.3 million citizens.

But, despite a decline in their numbers, sheep still rule the roost, if you'll pardon the mixed metaphor. Last year, some 32 million head of sheep were counted -- less than half the peak of 70 million reported in 1982 -- but still outnumbering human residents by a margin of about 8 to 1.



National RFID Project

By Sean McKenzie – National ID and Traceability Coordinator

Following the funding announcement from Agriculture Minister Ritz on February 6th the Canadian Sheep Federation (CSF) RFID Project is officially underway. The selection of cooperating producers has been completed and the Traceability Extension Staff whom we have hired will be meeting with each co-operator to discuss the project and equipment selection. The overall response to the project has been excellent, and selection of this group of producers was not an easy task. The CSF received applications from 63 producers all across Canada, however due to finite resources were only able to select 25 as participants on the project.

A selection of producers from BC, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, and the Maritimes will be participating on the project and include a variety of producers from a range of operation types. Small, medium and large flock operations and total or partial confinement versus pasture or range based systems have been taken into account as this study hopes to determine the true impact of RFID technology on the costs associated with sheep production all across Canada. Alberta producers have not been included in this study. This is to avoid the duplication of information and effort as the province of Alberta and the Alberta Lamb Producers are already in year three of the Alberta Lamb Traceability Project (LTP). Should the CSF also run the national project in Alberta it would not have significantly added to the information already collected by the LTP and so would not have been efficient use of the funding available.

The CSF national project team is working very closely with the Alberta provincial team to ensure that both projects provide useful and comparable data upon completion. Quebec producers were also exempted from this study as RFID tags are mandatory in Quebec and as a significant portion of the project is to educate producers and industry on RFID technology, the information would have been somewhat redundant there.

A common question was asked in regards to what type of equipment would the project cover and to what extent? The design of the project and the funding contract allows the CSF to fully fund the cost of the RFID tags and the computer software. Tags that will be used will be the yellow Allflex RFID button tag and the Shearwell Data SET tag with official CSIP numbers. This will avoid the need for those producers to re-tag those animals when they are eventually set off farm and add to the education component of developing the CSIP awareness. These tags will be used equally on each farm to better evaluate the performance of the RFID components and remove the variation that may be seen from one farm to the next.

Computer software will also be 100% funded up to a maximum of \$700, leaving the selection of the actual program up to the producer. Thanks to the work that has already been completed in Alberta through the Lamb Traceability Project, the CSF will also be able to provide a summarized list of some of the potential options and a producer review of each program through the LTP, however it must be realised that being a growing and developing market, there is a nearly constant introduction of new material available, so this component will be a 'living' document and continually updated throughout the project term.

Further equipment for the project is being funded on a cost shared basis with the cooperating producers where the CSF can provide 50% of the cost for a laptop computer, the RFID tag reader, and a digital scale or scale head indicator. The CSF maximum funding limits on these components are; up to \$800 for a laptop computer, up to \$1500 for the RFID reader and up to \$2000 for the scale or scale head indicator. As with the software the choice of what equipment each producer uses will be left up to them. This will allow each producer to choose components that will best suit their particular operations, skill and comfort levels.



National RFID Project

The next steps for the project will be to sign contracts with cooperating producers and equip the participating farms with RFID software, readers and scales and tags. The Traceability Extension Team staff will be contacting co-operating farms starting February 8th to arrange their first visits at which time team member will review and answer any questions on the project, the contract or the desired outcomes for the project that the co-operator may have. Protocols that describe what data the project will be collecting, how this data will be collected and what the requirements will be for each producer will be discussed further at that meeting as well. Further, in an effort to minimize potential for issues, a bio-security protocol has also been drafted and the extension team will be able to review this with producers as well.

Canadian Sheep Federation 2010 Bluetongue Insurance Available Now

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

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.

Contact the Canadian Sheep Federation for more information.



Traceability Extension Team

Sean McKenzie

Sean is the National Coordinator for Animal Identification and Traceability for the Canadian Sheep Federation (CSF) and the Canadian National Goat Federation (CNGF). As National Coordinator, Sean represents the Canadian sheep and goat industries in such areas as program development and policy. Currently, two of Sean's major projects are the national RFID feasibility project for sheep and development and implementation of a national identification program for Canadian goats.

Sean's earlier experience in traceability came with the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, where he worked as a Food Safety Specialist as part of the Food Safety and Quality Branch. Outside of his government work, Sean has over 20 years experience in agriculture production in the dairy industry and has recently started his own part time sheep operation on 99 acres and with a small flock of 70 head of OLIBS Ewes in Orono, Ontario.

Anita O'Brien

Anita brings over 20 years of agriculture extension experience in the Ontario small ruminant industries as Provincial Sheep & Goat Specialist, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

Although she is on a one-year leave of absence from OMAFRA, Anita is still an Ontario Public Servant.

Additionally Anita has been involved with commercial market lamb production for the past 29 years, and currently operates a part-time farming enterprise with 300 ewe pasture lambing flock in eastern Ontario.

Stefan Kaiser

Stefan has been a sheep and lamb producer since 1999 owning a small flock of 150 pure bred and commercial ewes. He has been and continues to be involved in an extensive array of agricultural production and management mainly sheep but also beef, dairy and poultry.

The experience Stefan brings to the CSF pilot includes contractual work at Ewe Can Genetics (ECG) a family sheep operation since 1999. Part of the experience at ECG was functioning as the onsite coordinator for the Alberta Lamb Traceability Pilot during 2007-2008. Additionally Stefan tested equipment for the Alberta Lamb Traceability Pilot. He has also been involved with various government personnel and members of the sheep industry both in Canada and abroad. Stefan's father, Martin Kaiser is also a sheep producer and an agricultural service provider, specifically livestock equipment and custom farming through Ewe Can Genetics and Kaiser Ag Solutions.

Fred Baker

Fred has been raising purebred and commercial breeding stock and market lambs since 1982 and continues to have rams and groups of replacement ewe lambs available for sale. He was an active member in both provincial and national sheep organizations from 1985 to 2005, during that time, he served as both Chairman and Vice-Chairman of both Ontario Sheep Marketing Agency (OSMA) and CSF. Fred also worked as a live lamb grader in Ontario stockyards.

An integral part of Fred's work at the CSF was conducting cross country producer consultations during the establishment of the Canadian Sheep Identification Program (CSIP) and participating in the development of the existing program. During this time Fred worked extensively with CFIA to ensure that the CSIP was affordable, flexible and efficient for Canadian lamb producers.



Using RFID to Lift Productivity

The use of RFID (Radio frequency identification device) ear tags has revolutionised what can be achieved in the management of commercial sheep operations. Over the past five years Australian researchers have been working on refining the practicality and usefulness of individual animal records. Whilst there is a push for producers to use RFID for traceability purposes in many countries, there is a huge opportunity to use these tags for precision sheep management to improve animal selection and automatic drafting.

Recent experience in large scale sheep operations (up to 20,000 sheep) has shown that whilst it is beneficial to identify highly productive animals, the big opportunity for improvement is in identifying the low production animals and removing them from the flock.

This technology has grown from trial research to large scale commercial operations using this technology in a range of applications. As researchers applied the first version of this approach in commercial situations, the opportunity to further develop applications to assist growers became apparent.

The suite of applications for this information now includes;

- Weighing, recording and drafting
- Productive performance
- Pedigree matchmaker (Matching ewes and lambs)
- In paddock walk over weighing
- Tailored index ranking of animals on farm

Implementing PSM is relatively straight forward. It is essential to know which sheep in the flock contribute to enterprise profit. This involves measurement of the basic characteristics that determine value such as growth rates, body weight, fleece weight, etc.

These parameters are easy and cheap to measure.

- Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) makes collection of data easier, less labour intensive and more accurate.
- RFID tags also allow easy re-use of data throughout the life of the animal and facilitate automatic drafting and more sophisticated management techniques.
- Automated data entry, data management and decision support systems are available for practically all aspects of PSM and are becoming more powerful and easier to use.
- Automatic drafting using RFID with decisions based on an index, or a single parameter, allows precise management of culling, joining and marketing. Automatic drafting systems responding to computer lists or real time weights, are becoming robust, cost effective management tools.

Advanced features of PSM include continuous or regular weight monitoring and remote drafting systems that respond to weight change and/or indexed instructions. These systems used together hold potential for precise administration of nutrition to animals in need, early detection of parasite and health problems, management of wool quality and lamb survival.

These systems can be seen in action at:

<http://www.sheepcrc.org.au/industry-tools-and-information/precision-sheep-management.php>

Whilst it is a challenge to find ways to further cut costs or seek premium prices in sheep production, this is an opportunity to use all of those past production records to create a customised selection system for your own stock. By removing the lowest 30% of animals from a breeding flock, a significant gain in \$/head return can be made.



Using RFID to Lift Productivity

The figures from Australian research can be seen at the Sheep CRC web site above. Using this technology with the new software applications really allows individual producers to create a system that works for them.

Looking away from breeding selection and moving to lamb feeding, this technology can be used to weigh and record lambs entering the feedlot. By weighing lambs three times (two weeks apart) we can quickly identify and remove those animals that are not gaining weight at a profitable rate and put them back on pasture or sell them to minimise losses. The weight records from the remaining lambs can then be entered into the lamb growth rate predictor software and used to calculate a draft list for animals at a specified future date to meet slaughter specifications.

By using this objective measurement we can as producers, take the subjective assessment out of the equation to allow for a more businesslike approach to animal management.

This system along with cutting edge management and marketing from around the world will be on display at the upcoming World Sheep and Wool Congress in Sydney, 6th – 9th of April 2010. For more information go to :

www.worldsheepandwoolcongress.com

The early adopters of this technology in Australia have been quick to reap the benefits within their flocks, now we are seeing other growers joining together to use the knowledge and hardware across a number of flocks. I believe in this technology as I use it on my own sheep properties and assist clients in using it, we are finding genuine improvements in both ease of operation and improved production. As the government invests in the implementation of this technology in Canada, I urge growers to be open minded and work together to assess how this can benefit them.

The lessons so far are that RFID is the new tool in the toolbox for sheep producers.

For more information contact

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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.



Comparing Scrapie Programs in the U.S. and Canada

By Courtney Denard, National Scrapie Coordinator

Canada has been working on scrapie eradication since the 1950s. Current Canadian programs include:

A Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program.

- An eradication and compensation program for flocks/ herds that are tested positive for scrapie.
- An identification and traceability program for sheep.
- National and provincial surveillance in sheep and goats.

In the past, Canada completed a three year national genotyping project for purebred sheep.

The U.S. has been working on scrapie eradication since 1952. Current American programs include:

- A Scrapie Flock Certification Program.
- An eradication and compensation program for flocks/ herds that are tested positive for scrapie.
- A regulated inter-state sheep and goat ID program.
- A national surveillance program in sheep and goats

When it comes to flock certification, Canada and the U.S. have comparable programs. Both programs require producers to work with a scrapie accredited veterinarian completing annual inventories of all sheep and goats on the property. Producers on both programs must also track any incoming and outgoing animals and must complete scrapie brain testing.

Canada's program offers three pathways to producers, as does the U.S. program. Canada's Pathway 1 is comparable to the U.S. program's Export Monitored Pathway. They are both OIE compliant, meeting international trade regulations.

Currently in Canada there are 60 producers enrolled on Pathway 1 and one producer enrolled on Pathway 3. In the U.S., there are 48 producers on the Export Monitored Pathway and 1,686 producers on the Complete Monitored Pathway.

The Complete Monitored Pathway has more lenient regulations and is not compliant with OIE guidelines. See comparison charts for more detailed information.

Canada and the U.S. are quite similar in terms of their scrapie eradication and compensation program. Both countries' infected flock clean up programs are risk based using genetics (genotyping) and compensation is offered for all animals ordered destroyed. Genotyping is not a possible option for goats but all goats ordered destroyed are compensated in both Canada and the U.S.

The two major areas where Canada and the U.S. differ in their scrapie initiatives are identification and surveillance. In 2000, the U.S. developed and implemented an inter-state identification program for all sheep and goats in the country. To date, Canada has a national ID system in place for sheep but not for goats.

Canada is not equal to the U.S. when it comes to surveillance numbers either. Not only has the U.S. been completing scrapie surveillance for a longer period of time than us, they complete more of it; therefore their numbers are a lot higher than ours. As part of the National Scrapie Eradication Plan, the U.S. has three national surveillance components, which completes surveillance on-farm and at slaughter facilities. Surveillance was also made a priority in the U.S. with the 2002 Scrapie Ovine Slaughter Surveillance study where scrapie prevalence in the U.S. was determined.

Canada does complete surveillance on a national level but at this time the numbers are not comparable to the U.S. In Canada, sheep and goats are tested for scrapie on-farm through the Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program and at slaughter facilities by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency; however, due to low producer uptake and lack of resources, Canada has just not been able to meet the U.S. surveillance numbers.



2010 American Sheep Industry Association Convention

By Dwane Morvik, Chair CSF

The 2010 American Sheep Industry convention was recently held in the music city, Nashville, TN, on January 20-23. The mood at the convention was generally upbeat with some reasons for this being that the cull-ewe prices are the highest in recent years, wool markets are more active and on the rise, pelt prices are higher this winter than last and USA lamb meat export numbers are substantially higher.

For someone attending the first time the amount of information to be learned is somewhat overwhelming but having gone last year I knew where to begin the two day session. The first place to start is the sheep research symposium. This 4 hour presentation encompasses the best research documents selected and assembled over the last year of all research done in the USA. On the long list of subjects presented including: the Effects of Long-Term Targeted Grazing on Large-Scale Leafy Spurge Infestations (Surber, Kott, Roeder and Moore, Montana State University); Effect of Sex of Co-Twin and Breed on Ewe Flock Productivity (Uthlaut, Alexander and Moss, University of Wyoming, Laramie); Comparison Among Katahdin and Dorper Grades and Composite For Commercial Lamb Production in the Southeast (Getz, Kouakou and Mobini, Georgia Small Ruminant Research and Extension Centre).

From the research proceedings I moved to the next meeting room to attend the Livestock Protection Dog Taskforce meeting. This meeting was quite interesting for any producer that uses livestock guard dogs with their sheep.



Dwane Morvik - CSF (center) and Montana producers Randy Tunby and Leon Lammers at the ASI awards banquet in Nashville, TN
(Photo by Lisa Surber)

Much of the meeting dealt with the establishment of Livestock Protection Dog certification program for producers that use livestock guard dogs in range situations and on operations utilizing herders that speak little or no English.

It also heard from Kurt VerCauteren, Ph.D. who is conducting research to create new methods to manage diseases and damage of deer and elk to protect American agriculture. This is being accomplished using livestock protection dogs to reduce the interface between free-ranging cervids and livestock.

Another issue that dealt with guard dogs had to do with liability from a dog that had bit a person that was intruding in sheep areas on permitted forest service land. In July 2008, the U.S. forest service permitted an organized bike race on and adjacent to a sheep grazing allotment in Colorado.



ASI Convention

The forest service did not warn the sheep grazer that a race was being held that day. After the race had concluded one of the participants remained on the course and was bitten by a livestock protection dog. The sheep owner is still tangled in a legal battle over this incident and may drag out for some time to come.

ASI is currently in the process of finalizing a certification program to implement best management practises (BMPs) that were developed that encourage the use of these guardian dogs. The Livestock Protection Dog (LPD) working group also gave a presentation on suggested management guidelines to help producers avoid conflicts due to protection dogs. The main areas of the program include the legal aspects of owning livestock protection dogs, health management, LPD training and management, herder education, and public relations. The whole list of BMPs is supposed to be available ASI website shortly. This website is: www.sheepusa.org

Drug Regulations - Sheep

Dr. Meg Oeller, DVM with the Minor Use Minor Species (MUMS) spoke about the approval process for drugs used on sheep. In particular they need to address many issues surrounding the process such as: effectiveness; animal safety; human food safety; environmental safety and; secure manufacturing process.

In the USA sheep are officially listed as a minor species when it comes to drug regulations and as such fall under the Minor Use Animal Drug Program, NRSP-7.

USDA does not actually test the drugs as many believe. The drug companies complete and pay for the tests themselves while USDA's role is one mainly of verification and licensing.

In registering a drug in the MUMS program the sponsors of these drugs get some benefits such as waiver from user fees, certain designation, 7 year exclusive marketing and conditional approval to get drugs out quicker with 5 years to prove label claims.

The CIDR that was recently approved in 2009 by FDA began the approval process back in 1996 and through the efforts of a team of applicants the necessary work was completed on behalf of the pharmaceutical company that holds the registration for the CIDR.

The current absence of Levamisole was explained by Dr. Oeller in that a vast array of bulk drugs are currently produced overseas by Chinese companies and a manufacturing problem occurred in China which led to the worldwide shortage.

Scrapie Eradication: Update

Dr. Diane Sutton, USDA/APHIS gave a report on the continuing efforts of USDA to eradicate scrapie and produced a state by state picture of which states were doing well in this goal. She also stated that the atypical Nor 98 will be taken off the scrapie list in the future and will no longer need to be destroyed. The goat ID requirement for scrapie programs will be the same as sheep in order to meet the surveillance goals. During the Q&A period, the question was raised by me whether USDA would be following the OIE proposal to change the code of conditions that excludes males originating from a monitored flock as it relates to exports to Canada. Dr. Sutton's reply was that USDA is working with Canada (CFIA) on this. This is an issue to keep an eye on as it directly affects producers that import breeding rams from the USA.



ASI Convention

USDA has spent over 15 million dollars on sheep research, mostly in the sheep health field with 29 research scientists employed in this endeavour. In 2010, the current budget allocation is 16.4 million with the majority of it being spent on scrapie control and eradication as well as transmission of atypical scrapie. The Animal Disease Research Unit of USDA also performs work on OPP, malignant catarrhal fever (mitigation of transmission risks), Brucella Ovis (improving diagnostics) and overall flock genetics.

Animal Rights Activism and Animal Agriculture's Position

Kay Johnson-Smith had not appeared at the ASI convention in sometime but her message was one that stirred the crowd in that meeting room and confirmed fears shared by many producers. Animal agriculture as we know it is coming under the gun from many organizations whose ultimate goal is the removal of all animals used for food production. The logical leader in this cause could have been PETA, or so many thought until Kay produced some little known facts about the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS). With a \$300 million budget they are a very powerful force in the USA and one with political clout as well. The HSUS website has automated the art of form letters to congressmen to a point where all they require is the supporters name and they take care of the rest in getting the message to the white house. They were able to direct the Obama administration to form an Animal Protection Caucus to help deliver their message quickly through legitimate political channels.

A few little known facts were presented such as the \$30 million in wages the HSUS spends on its staff, and how it recently spent \$24 million on fundraising to raise \$85 million during their last campaign. The dog and cat crowd in the USA is an estimated \$43 billion market and growing.

Yet of that \$300 million dollar budget the HSUS controls, only \$450,000 was given to dog and cat shelters this past year. Where does the rest of it go? A lot goes back to advertising to raise more money to continue the campaign to eliminate animal agriculture. Fox news is also a recipient of many advertising dollars and it was explained that this is mainly because the viewers of Fox tend to be more conservative in nature and more faith based. Translated, this means they are more committed and passionate and tend to give more dollars to the HSUS which keeps this organization doing what it does best.

It might take producers weeks to cover all the information presented at the ASI convention and while some of it may not be relevant to all Canadian production practices, for the most part, attending the ASI convention is very educational and well worth the time. Reno, Nevada is hosting the convention next year Jan. 19-22 and I bet anyone it would be worth your time to attend.