



# FROM THE *flock*

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## IN THIS ISSUE:

- 1-2 Codes of Practice
- 3 Shearwell Data
- 4 OFFS
- 5 Scrapie Canada
- 6-7 Aborting Ewes
- 7 Uk Shearers

## RECOGNITION

Funding for the Canadian Sheep Identification Program and the Canadian Sheep Federation's Food Safe Farm Practices Program, has been provided by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada through the Canadian Integrated Food Safety Initiative under Growing Forward.

Funding for the Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program has been provided through Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's (AAFC) AgriFlexibility program.

Opinions expressed in this document are those of the Canadian Sheep Federation and not necessarily those of AAFC.



## Revisions to the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Sheep Underway

**(Ottawa) 21 March 2011** - The Canadian Sheep Federation (CSF) is pleased to announce the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Sheep is being updated through the National Farm Animal Care Council's (NFACC) Code of Practice development process.

"Renewing the Codes of Practice provides a good opportunity to ensure the Codes are based on the most current scientific literature," states Andrew Gordanier, Chair of the Canadian Sheep Federation. "As production systems and management evolves, reviewing the Codes of Practice helps ensure they remain relevant and well-used by producers. This assures stakeholders and the public that Canadian sheep and lambs continue to be produced under sound management and welfare practices that promote the well-being of the animal."

Codes of Practice set out national guidelines for the care and handling of farm animals. They provide recommendations and requirements for housing, management, transportation and other animal husbandry practices. The Codes are prepared with input and support of scientific experts and by consensus of diverse groups involved or interested in farm animal care and welfare. The revision work for the Code of Practice has been made possible by funding received from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Agri-Flexibility program.

"Practical solutions that address farm animal welfare concerns require a commitment from everyone to work together for progress and success," says Geoff Urton, of the BC SPCA. "NFACC's Code development process provides a forum for this level of collaboration." The Canadian Federation of Humane Societies is an active participant in the process.



## Sheep Codes continued

"The Codes represent our national understanding of animal care requirements and recommended best practices," says Edouard Asnong, Chair of NFACC. He stresses that responsible farm animal care is important to everyone, from the animals themselves to the producers and consumers.

Nadine Meade has been contracted as a Code Development Secretary and will facilitate the work of the sheep Code Development Committee. Nadine has a Master of Animal Science degree. Her work experience includes facilitating interactive discussions with diverse groups; including strategic planning and consensus building sessions, and working with Boards and industry groups to develop solutions to industry issues. Nadine is also the Code Secretary for the mink and ranched fox Code development committees.

The existing sheep Code was created in 1995. The revised edition is expected to be complete in 2013. For more information on the Codes of Practice and NFACC's Code development process visit [www.nfacc.ca](http://www.nfacc.ca).

**About NFACC** - NFACC is a collaborative partnership of diverse stakeholders created in 2005 to share information and work together on farm animal care and welfare. It is the national lead for farm animal care issues in Canada. NFACC would like to acknowledge the Canadian Animal Health Coalition (CAHC) for their role in securing funding for this project.

**About CSF** - The Canadian Sheep Federation (CSF) is a national non-profit organization that represents all Canadian sheep producers. Established in 1990, the primary responsibility of the organization is to set national policy for the sheep industry. The mission of the CSF is to represent all producers in providing leadership aimed at cooperative work among all levels of government and industry-related organizations, both domestic and foreign, to further the viability, growth and prosperity of the Canadian sheep, wool and dairy industry.

*Code of Practice updates initiated from 2010 to 2013 are part of the project: Addressing Domestic and International Market Expectations Relative to Farm Animal Welfare. Funding for this project is made available through the federal government's AgriFlexibility Fund, which is delivered by Canada's Economic Action Plan (EAP). The EAP focuses on strengthening the economy and securing Canada's economic future. For more information on AgriFlexibility and Canada's Economic Action Plan, please visit [www.agr.gc.ca/agriflexibility](http://www.agr.gc.ca/agriflexibility) and [www.actionplan.gc.ca](http://www.actionplan.gc.ca).*

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## Canadian Sheep Federation meets with Mr. Mike Fletcher from Shearwell Data

On February 19 2011, Daniel Dion, the CSF National ID coordinator, had the opportunity to meet with Mr. Mike Fletcher from Shearwell Data to discuss the developments in traceability and the use of Radio Frequency ID tag technology for the sheep industry in Canada and other markets.



During this visit, Mr. Fletcher also met with the Chair of CSF, Mr. Andrew Gordanier, at his farm south of Shelburne, Ontario. A visit to the Gordanier farm gave the chance to see the Shearwell tags that had been used as part of year 1 of CSF's National RFID pilot project during 2010-11, and have discussions on the tags, taggers and the general use of RFID technology for the Canadian sheep industry. Mr. Gordanier also had the chance to discuss mandatory RFID tagging that will be coming up for the sheep industry in the near future and the distribution of approved RFID tags in Canada.

Mr. Fletcher had the chance to give detailed comments on the improvements that have been made to the SET tag, called the ASET tag in its new and improved form. The tag has been changed to be stiffer around the pin, and the angle and length of the pin has been changed slightly to allow for easier application in mature animals. The ASET tag also allows for the use of an "automatic" tagger that is in its final stage of development and will be able to hold 10 tags. CSF continues to work with CFIA on whether any additional trials will be necessary to allow the new ASET tag to be available to Canadian sheep producers as a Canadian Sheep Identification Program (CSIP) approved tag. Mr. Fletcher also presented the new Stick reader that will be available from Shearwell.



# Industry growth and its impact on the Food Safe Farm Practices (FSFP) Program

By Niki Petrie - Interim National On-Farm Food Safety Program Project Coordinator

The Sheep industry is growing according to the recent 2011 Statistics Canada numbers. **What does this mean for the On-Farm Food Safety program: FSFP?** From a Project Coordinators point of view, it means that we will be busier than ever ensuring that producers are provided with the service they require in order to effectively implement and maintain the FSFP program. The program will be under an increased pressure to perform.

What I mean by this is that, the working group developed the FSFP program based on the knowledge, understanding and appreciation that the sheep industry is very broad and is often a portion of a mixed farming operation and not a standalone farm. For this reason, among others, it was very important that the food safety measures were risk-based, focused on risk reduction, and were justified by scientific research. The FSFP program has this.

Farmers, who have already adopted the program, have indicated that they did not see a big change in their production practices. Generally speaking, they were already following many of the good agricultural practices that supported food safety.

The FSFP standards do not discriminate against, but rather encourage, diversified farming operations. They are easily adopted by large scale or small mixed farming operations and are appropriate to the scale of the enterprise. Therefore, growth in the industry will be easily supported by the FSFP program.

The most difficult component will be under the traceability section. FSFP does not require more than good, basic recordkeeping (one-up, one-down) of all sales. This is the same regardless of scale. By starting when flock numbers are small, you will be able to hone your skills and prepare for increases as they come along.

For more information about the FSFP program, visit [www.cansheep.ca](http://www.cansheep.ca) or email me at [n.petrie@agrapoint.ca](mailto:n.petrie@agrapoint.ca)



## Scrapie Canada: Alberta Is Enhancing Its Scrapie Surveillance in Sheep and Goats

In an effort to improve its surveillance programs for scrapie in sheep and goats, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) is implementing three different surveillance programs in the province:

The Alberta Scrapie Prevalence Study (Program) will test approximately 2,000 samples collected by four selected abattoirs over the next 2.5 years.

This study will determine the prevalence of scrapie in the healthy sheep population at slaughter. Testing this group will complement Alberta's surveillance programs, since up to 17% of slaughtered sheep have been found positive for scrapie in the U.S. In addition, a larger proportion of the total number of Ontario scrapie cases corresponds to healthy slaughter.

The National Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program (VSFCP), which has been active for a number of years nationwide, received new funding in August 2010 and is strongly endorsed by the Canadian Sheep Federation (CSF) and the Canadian National Goat Federation.

In December 2010, ARD and the CSF signed an agreement to test samples from certified sheep and goat flocks of the Western Canadian provinces. Under this Agreement, participating producers on the VSFCP will be reimbursed for the veterinarian's fees associated with sample collection and delivery, and testing will be performed at no cost to the producer.

Producers are required to provide history on those animals to be tested. Producers in Alberta are given the option to submit sheep or goat heads for sample collection to any of the ARD labs (Airdrie, Edmonton or Lethbridge).

Alberta producers who are not part of the VSFCP, but who want their animals (sheep or goats) tested for scrapie, have the option to bring in heads (not the carcass) to any of the ARD labs at no cost to the producer. In the case of a trophy head, the producer must book an appointment in advance.

Along with diversifying scrapie surveillance in Alberta, sampling numbers will significantly increase, supporting national scrapie surveillance and expanding the existing knowledge about the prevalence of this disease.

These initiatives will facilitate control and eradication programs; having the added benefit of enhancing scrapie surveillance credibility that will facilitate international market access for Canada's small ruminant industry.

For more information about scrapie surveillance in Alberta, please address your questions to the ARD Programs Section at 6909-116 Street, Edmonton, Alberta T6H 4P2 or by phone at (780)-644-2148.

# Isolate all aborting ewes to minimize spread of disease

SOURCE: <http://www.independent.ie/farming/sheep/isolate-all-aborting-ewes-to-minimise-spread-of-disease-2579270.html>

The lambing season is well under way around the country and we're seeing all the associated difficulties at the clinics each day. It can be anything from ringworms to tetanias and difficult lambings, with the odd abortion thrown in from time to time.

Aborting ewes frighten us whenever we see them. One abortion may be just that, a once off. Or it may be the first of an abortion storm. A query that comes up time and again is how do we protect ourselves from picking up whatever disease it is that may spark the problem.

There are several infections in sheep that cause abortions and that can also spread to humans. Such diseases are called zoonoses and can cause similar disease in humans as they do in sheep. Salmonella, toxoplasmosis and chlamydia abortions in sheep spring to mind when we think of zoonotic diseases at lambing time.

Women, in particular, are advised to wear gloves at lambing time and keep strict washing and disinfectant protocols in place when handling sheep at this time. Pregnant women are well advised to keep clear of the lambing shed at this time of year and the shepherd should be careful with clothing and footwear when going from the shed to the kitchen and back again.

An aborting ewe can spring up in the middle of any pen of lambing ewes, and by the time we realise that this ewe is aborting, we will already have come into close contact with it.

Toxoplasmosis was found in almost 20% of submissions of aborted foetii at the Regional Veterinary Laboratories (RVL's) last year. Chlamydia abortus was found in about half that amount and bacterial agents were found in the remainder. Sometimes such infections are active in the flock, even though the lamb is born alive and up to term.

However, the lamb will be weak and show poor thrift or even die early post partum if the ewe is infected at the time.

With such diseases lurking around the lambing area, we must prevent their spread and place obstacles in their path, such as:

- Isolate ewes that have aborted from the rest of the pregnant ewes;
- Remove the foetus and all the placental membranes and dispose safely;
- Disinfect the pen and change to a new lambing area if possible;
- Step up the hand washing with easy access to hot and cold water and disinfectant soaps;
- Antibiotics are of limited use but sometimes are used in the case of severe abortion storms; Vaccination can be recommended, depending on findings at the RVL.
- Probably the most important thing to do is to get samples away to the laboratory. Your vet will advise you on what to bring to the regional laboratory.
- Disinfection - Once we notice even one case of lambs born early or lambs aborted, then we must immediately step up all disinfection protocols around the flock. The aborted foetus with all its membranes should be packaged and transported fresh to the laboratory.
- Anyone handling ewes must wear protective clothing and gloves. Wash your hands and face thoroughly when finished in the lambing house and change clothes before heading back home. We must be especially careful with the hands to the mouth, to avoid ingesting the disease.
- Footwear must come under severe scrutiny as that is the easiest way to transport any disease from one shed to another.

## Aborting ewes continued

- The ewes that abort during an outbreak must be recorded and culled for future years. These abortion diseases can lay dormant in the recovered ewe, only to flare up again at a later date. Hence, buying replacement breeding stock should be approached with caution. Ideally, bought-in ewes should be sourced from accredited disease-free flocks, but that is simply not practical at the present time.

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## UK confirms visa concessions for sheep shearers

SOURCE: <http://www.expatsforum.com/britain/uk-confirms-visa-concessions-for-sheep-shearers.html>

Sheep shearers get visa concession - The UK has pledged to introduce a concession so that sheep shearers from New Zealand and Australia can work this year after their occupation was removed from the approved list for UK visas.

The transitional scheme will mean that they can enter and work in the country on a concessionary basis which that they do not have to get a visa but they must prove to immigration officials that they are genuine shearers.

Every year hundreds of skilled shearers are recruited from the southern hemisphere for the shearing season in the UK. Chief Executive of the National Association of Agricultural Contractors, Jill Hewitt, said her organisation had been working with the UK government to put the scheme in place that will allow shearers to come on a seasonal temporary basis.

'The NAAC has been actively involved in the process and is confident the UK will not suffer from a shortage of shearers this year,' she said.

'We are working closely with shearing contractors in the UK, and shearing associations in New Zealand and Australia, to try and ensure the smooth passage of shearers to the UK,' she added.

Around 500 professional shearers have been travelling to the UK for decades to cut the fleeces of the country's 25 million strong flock. Two years ago they faced visa problems because of the introduction of biometric processing and a new points system.

It is hard and relentless work, with each shearer dealing with up to 400 sheep a day during the shearing season from April to the end of June. 'From April we will introduce a concession that gives Australian, New Zealand and limited other non-visa nationals the opportunity to work during the season. It rests on the fact that they are strictly seasonal and agricultural, and filling a role for a very short time,' an immigration spokesman said.

The National Farmers Union has welcomed the change of heart. NFU Shropshire spokesman Oliver Cartwright explained that there are excellent shearers in the UK but not enough.

'Across the country we do rely on foreign contractors because of the large numbers of animals that need shearing in a very short timescale, normally during the early summer months. Shearing animals in time is a necessity, especially when it comes to animal welfare, and it reduces the possibility of diseases like fly strike and helps the animals cope with hotter temperatures,' he added.