

In this issue:



- ▶ Food Health Claims1-3
- ▶ Identification and Traceability 4-5
- ▶ Scrapie Canada 6-7
- ▶ Anaplasmosis in Manitoba 8
- ▶ Livestock and Climate Change.....10
- ▶ Ovine Symposium 2009 Registration 11



From the flock

MAY 2009 • VOLUME 6 • ISSUE 5

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR THE CANADIAN SHEEP INDUSTRY

An Update on Submissions for Food Health Claims

By Lorraine Hall, National Coordinator On-Farm Food Safety

Health Canada has revised its guidance document on preparing submissions for food health claims. The guidance document was first prepared by Health Canada in 2002. Now, after a few years of use, the objective of the updated guidance document is clearer submission requirements and processes. In response to feedback from stakeholders for a more streamlined and clearer regulatory review process, the document has been revised into a more user friendly version.

The mandate for claim submission is derived from the Food and Drug Act that states: “no person shall label or advertise any food in a manner that is false, misleading, or deceptive.” A health claim is any representation in labeling and advertising that states, suggests or implies that a relation exists between a food or component of that food and health. A food is defined by Health Canada as any article manufactured, sold, or represented for use as a food or drink for humans, chewing gum and any ingredient that may be mixed with a food for any purpose. For the purpose of a health claim submission, a food refers to a food category (fruits) a food (type of breakfast cereal) or a constituent of a food added or inherent (e.g. A nutrient or other

non-nutrient bioactive substance). Bioactive refers to any effect on, interaction with, or response from living tissue.

For the purpose of a health claim, a health effect refers to a body function, health condition or disease risk, or mental or physical performance. There are three categories of health claims with different types of requirements. The first type encompasses disease risk reduction and therapeutic claims (i.e. reduces risk of heart disease or lowers blood cholesterol). Function claims deal with functions associated with health or performance (i.e. promotes regularity). An example of a nutrient function claim would be “aids in normal bone and tooth development”.

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Food Health Claims continued

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Finally, there are general health claims, which don't require as much substantiation as the other two. A general health claim could be “include product X as part of healthy eating”.

The first five disease risk reduction claims were authorized by regulatory amendment in Canada in 2003. Companies wanted to use the same claims for food that were permitted by regulation in the U.S. Currently, Canada has reviewed 15 of the 16 health claims that are allowed in the U.S. The five disease risk reduction claims that have been authorized are:

1. Saturated and trans fats and heart disease
2. Sodium, potassium and hypertension
3. Calcium, vitamin D and osteoporosis
4. Vegetables, fruit, and some cancers
5. Non-fermentable carbohydrates and dental caries

These claims were authorized in response to requests from stakeholders who wanted to use claims that were allowed in the U.S. To view the complete list of claims that have been reviewed, please visit: <http://w.on24.com/r.htm?e=134290&s=1&k=DA4B7F31669D9EAF2B8592909C3B3DA3>. Claims that are currently being reviewed include folate and neural tube defects; and vegetables, fruit, whole grains, and heart disease.

The updates provide specific guidance on the preparation of a structured, systematic review that is needed to support a food health claim. The process has 13 steps for claim validation.

Continued on the next page



Food Health Claims continued

The main requirements of a submission include:

- Details pertaining to the proposed health claim
- Status of the health claim in other jurisdictions
- Characterization of the food- that the composition and manufacturing of the food meets quality standards
- Characterization of the health effect: Why an interest in the claimed effect? What biomarkers are used and why? (a biomarker is defined as a specific physical trait used to measure or indicate the effects or progress of a disease or condition)
- Evaluation of claim validity- the causality and generalizability to the target population
- Dietary intake estimates: current intakes and expected intakes; subgroups expected to have highest intakes
- Nutritional composition of the food, including amount of bioactive substance if applicable

The guidance document consists of 13 steps that applicants must follow. Addressed in the steps are consistency of the health effect, the strength of the association, and the relationship between food exposure and the health effect (dose response). Among other changes, the explicitness of guidance at each step is new to the revised document.

As individuals, it is unlikely that we will ever have to concern ourselves with the process involved in getting a food health claim approved. However, it is comforting to know that our regulatory system requires a significant amount of substantiation for food health claims to be made. It is also noteworthy that Health Canada is listening to stakeholders and has made revisions to improve the process for submitting these claims.

Good news for New Zealand lamb and beef exports

Source: www.meatpoultry.com

Despite the difficult global economy, export figures indicate New Zealand lamb and beef prices continue to grow stronger. For the first six months of the export year (October 2008 to March 2009), export lamb returns were up 27% to \$8,670 per tonne, when compared with the same six month period in the previous year, according to Meat & Wool NZ and the Meat Industry Association. Export beef returns increased 22% to \$5,420 per tonne.

This was especially positive news in the current trading environment, said Mike Petersen, chairman of Meat & Wool NZ. "While there has clearly been a contraction in lamb supply, this industry is producing a top-end, high value-added consumer-ready product. And because of this, we have avoided the commodity slump that has affected many other industries".

New Zealand lamb had been able to more than hold its position in spite of the recession because meat companies were delivering a quality product — the premium positioning of which was supported by farmer levy-funded promotion, said Bill Falconer, chairman of the Meat Industry Association. "Farmers are delivering quality lambs, processors are turning those into a high-value product and farmer-funded promotion is enhancing companies' own product positioning in key markets," he added.

During the past year, lamb prices staged a remarkable recovery and farm gate returns have increased nearly 60% from this time last year, reflecting the more export-friendly New Zealand dollar value and the continued growth of higher-value chilled sendings to New Zealand's key export markets, Mr. Falconer said. The current average farm gate price for a 19 kg lamb is around \$105 net. Last year the same lambs were fetching about \$67. These improvements can be sustained, Mr. Petersen believes. "The sector partnerships are delivering for farmers and we are confident that we can continue to build on this," he added. "Food production is New Zealand's comparative advantage, and lamb, along with other meat exports is playing a key role in keeping the engine room of the New Zealand economy ticking over.



National Identification and Traceability

By Sean McKenzie, National ID and Traceability Coordinator

Last month I attended the first annual World Animal Health Organization (OIE) Conference on Animal Identification and Traceability as a member of a relatively large Canadian delegation of industry and government representatives. This was an excellent conference and gave me the opportunity to see and learn what is happening in other parts of the world on animal ID and traceability as well as some of the drivers for this from an international perspective.

The OIE, originally named the Office International des Epizooties and thus OIE, is now referred to as the World Organisation for Animal Health. This organisation was established originally in France as an organization responsible for the improvement of animal health worldwide in response to Rinderpest in Belgium. It is now recognised as the oldest international standard setting body recognized under the Sanitary (animal and human) and Phytosanitary (plant) Agreement of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The OIE is recognised by the World Trade Organization as a reference organization for animal health related issues, and is mandated with the development of international standards relating to animal disease including the identification and traceability of animals and zoonoses. The OIE is made up of 174 member countries, has affiliations with 36 other international and regional organizations and has regional and sub-regional offices on every continent. Canada has been a member of the OIE since January of 1952.

At the conference the topics for discussion often centered on the inclusion of developing nations, the standards that are being established and how the OIE and OIE member states can work to ensure that standards are applicable and achievable for all countries and not just developed nations. The main point being that animal identification and traceability are essential tools for controlling animal diseases but effective control can only be achieved through the participation of all.

Failure on the part of one country can place all others in danger. So with this in mind it was very interesting to hear the presentations from some of the developing nations in attendance and learn about their programs.

I found one of the most interesting presentations was delivered by Dr. Musa Fanikiso, former Chief Veterinary Officer for Botswana. This presentation was honest and upfront describing the challenges they've experienced as developing country working to establish and maintain their export market. The significance of this accomplishment is made even more impressive when you consider that significant percentages of the population are dealing with major issues of high unemployment, poverty and personal health. (A 2003 estimate was that 30% of the population was living below the poverty line and the HIV prevalence rate in adults was estimated to be 23.9% in 2007.)*

Botswana, with a population of only 2 million people, has 3 million cattle. Of this 80% of the cattle herd is owned by people with 1-20 cattle. However the vast majority, again 80% of this is sold for export; 70-75% to the EU, 15% to South Africa and 10% to Norway which therefore means any change or requirement within these international markets has a significant impact on the export of Botswana beef. To prepare for this, and maintain their export market Botswana realised they needed to establish a strong traceability system. Traditionally, branding was used to identify cattle at the herd level with the owner. In 1997 the EU introduced Council Directive EC820/97 which made it mandatory for beef going to the EU to be identifiable and traceable through a computerised system. This Directive totally changed the landscape for animal identification and trace-back in Botswana and the country could not fulfil the requirement of that Directive using the traditional branding system

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Identification and Traceability continued

The Livestock Identification and Trace-back System (LITS) is Botswana's national system for cattle identification and traceability. Based on pilot projects executed in 1999, extensive stakeholder consultations and feasibility studies the LITS is country wide, however it is limited to cattle only. Individual electronic animal ID is achieved through use of an EID bolus. The initial establishment of the system was fully funded by government at a cost of over US\$35 million. They have established a cost recovery system through a levy on slaughter and provide field operations assistance through departmental staff of the Department of Veterinary Services.

While the use of a bolus for sheep and especially in young animals is currently limited by the size of the device, the technology is continuing to develop and the fundamental design of the program are sound. The issues now are that the device cannot be applied any earlier than 3 months of age, which means a potential loss of connection to the dam, and secondly here in Canada slaughter facilities are not equipped to collect the bolus post slaughter.

A centralised computer system stores and processes all information on animal identification, brand registration, bolus insertions, movement records and imports. Information is protected through the use of codes and filters that restrict access and who can enter or manipulate data. Extension officers collect field data direct to computer and assist with bolus application, carry wands/static readers for collection of data and issue movement permits and/or ownership verifications. The bolus is used as it was found to have the highest retention, readability and reliability for this program. Inserted only into branded animals at 3 months of age, the bolus number is linked to the animal owner, geographic location of insertion and zone of residence (of animal).

At slaughter boluses are collected and recycled, the (original number being erased and then re-programmed) which reduces the overall costs (\$2.50 new, \$1.45 recycled). All these components I found extremely impressive.

Dr. Fanikiso described the challenges that will continue to be faced going forward, which include the difficulty in accessing equipment, equipment breakdowns due to rough terrain, limited supply of the boluses and the lack of private sector service provider support. Despite these challenges Botswana, a country with 1/50th the GDP of Canada has managed to establish for their cattle herd a full traceability system including animal ID, movement and premise ID from farm all the way to export; *and where are we?*

*Economic statistics from the US CIA World Fact Book: www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/print/bc.html



Scrapie Canada: Important Changes to the Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program

By Courtney Denard, National Scrapie Coordinator

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has announced that requirements around the importation of female sheep and goats into Canada from the US are set to change in the fall of 2009. These changes are in line with the message the CFIA has been communicating to the Canadian sheep and goat industries since 2002, that in the future only flocks and herds that are fully certified (on the Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program) will be able to export to other countries.

So if we're concerned about export, why do importation regulations have to change?

As Canada moves towards scrapie eradication we have to tighten up our import protocols to reduce the risk of bringing scrapie into the country. One of the ways this will be accomplished is by establishing import conditions that are in keeping with the policies laid out by the World Organization for Animal Health, more commonly referred to as the OIE.

Current and potential trading partners such as the US, Mexico and South America take into account whether Canada follows OIE regulations when considering trade agreements with us. Also, the US has made it very clear that they are trying to follow OIE criteria when it comes to scrapie. They have publicly stated that they are working towards eradication and want to be recognized as "scrapie free" in accordance with OIE standards by 2017.

The latest proposed import changes, which are listed below, are the CFIA and the industry's next steps in moving towards becoming more OIE compliant and also achieving scrapie eradication.

Proposed changes:

- Intact female sheep or goats are to be imported to a premises that has been enrolled in the Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program (SFCP) in Canada for at least 12 months with at least one annual inventory having been completed (the initial inventory is not considered an annual inventory).
- The exporting premises must have been enrolled in the US Scrapie Flock Certification Program for at least 12 months with at least one annual inventory having been completed (the initial inventory is not considered an annual inventory).
- The exporting US premises must be enrolled on the Export Monitored program level; OR enrolled on the Complete Monitored program level (with additional testing of all deads over 18 months of age for at least 12 months).
- The exporting premises in the US must be of an equivalent or higher status than the importing premises in Canada.

In addition, new protocol is being proposed for the importation of intact female sheep/ goats going into a flock/ herd that does not 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.

Continued on the next page



Scrapie Canada continued

The new protocol proposes:

- Intact female sheep or goats may be imported to a property in Canada that is not on the SFCP if they are subject to a recto-anal biopsy test prior to importation. The exporting US flock/ herd will also not be required to be on the US Scrapie Flock Certification Program as long as they have been assembled as a group for at least 12 months and recto-anal biopsies are completed.
- If the female sheep/ goats are under one year of age, their dams must be subject to the recto-anal biopsy test prior to importation into Canada.
- Once imported into Canada, the female sheep/ goats must be subject to a recto-anal biopsy test prior to any movement off the importing premises.
- Annual inventories and surveillance of any on-farm deads will be required for a period of five years or until recto-anal biopsies have been repeated 24-30 months after importation.
- The availability of this protocol is subject to operation feasibility at the local CFIA district office.

The industry has been given the opportunity to voice its thoughts and concerns on the proposed changes before they are finalized. Please send your comments in writing to Scrapie Canada at 130 Malcolm Road, Guelph, Ontario, N1K 1B1 or by e-mail at admin@scrapiecanada.ca.

If you are interested in seeing a draft of these comments prior to their submission to the CFIA, please contact Scrapie Canada at 1-866-534-1302 or by e-mail.

More on the OIE

The need to fight animal diseases at the global level led to the creation of the Office International des Epizooties in 1924. In May 2003, the Office became known as the World Organization for Animal Health but kept its historical acronym OIE.

The OIE is the intergovernmental organization responsible for improving animal health worldwide. It is recognized as a reference organization by the World Trade Organization (WTO) and has a total of 174 Member Countries and Territories. The OIE maintains permanent relations with 36 other international and regional organizations and has Regional and sub-regional Offices on every continent.



Anaplasmosis found in eight Manitoba herds

Source: [Canadian Cattle Magazine](#)

Eight cattle herds in eastern Manitoba are under federal quarantine in what may mean a temporary end to Canada's status as free of anaplasmosis, the Manitoba Co-operator reported Thursday.

Dr. Lynn Bates, a veterinary program officer with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) in Winnipeg, told the Co-operator's Ron Friesen the herds are in an area west of the Winnipeg River in the rural municipalities of Lac du Bonnet and Alexander. Within the 8 herds are a total of 305 infected cattle, or "reactors," detected through a periodically conducted national bovine serological survey, Bates said.

Anaplasmosis is a reportable livestock disease in Canada, caused by a parasite of red blood cells. It affects domestic and wild ruminants but only cattle show clinical signs. The disease can be transmitted in infected red blood cells by biting insects and through contaminated instruments such as hypodermic needles and dehorning equipment.

Since anaplasmosis is blood-borne and it's not possible to avoid insects, changing needles frequently and disinfecting dehorning equipment in between use are the best ways to limit exposure to the disease, said Dr. Wayne Lees, Manitoba's chief veterinarian.

"If you're in an endemic area or an area where you think anaplasmosis is an issue, it's probably a worthwhile expense," Lees told the Co-operator.

The cause of the outbreak is not certain, but the disease was most likely brought into the area by infected livestock imported from the U.S., Bates said.

Anaplasmosis, endemic in much of the lower continental U.S., is not a regulated disease in that country but costs the U.S. cattle industry an estimated USD 300 million per year. Canada is considered anaplasmosis-free, but the Manitoba cases, the province's 1st since 1970, may change that status. CFIA was obliged to report the case to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), Bates told the Co-operator.

Canada, until 2004, required anaplasmosis testing of live cattle imported from the U.S. during the biting insect season. But new rules in 2004 allowed U.S. feeder cattle from 39 states considered "low-risk" for the disease into Canada without testing at any time of year.

Dozens of cattle in Manitoba slaughtered due to disease

Source: www.winnipegfreepress.com

Dozens of cattle in eastern Manitoba have been slaughtered since January after federal inspectors found they were infected with a tick-borne disease that destroys the animals' red blood cells.

Canadian Food Inspection Agency disease control specialist Sandra Stephens said inspectors are still investigating the outbreak of anaplasmosis in the rural municipalities of Lac du Bonnet and Alexander. "We will keep looking until we turn up all negatives," Stephens said of the ongoing testing at several cow-calf operations.

Cattle in Alberta and Saskatchewan are also being tested, as animals from Manitoba producers often go out of province to large feedlot operators. This disease is not common in Manitoba and is believed to have been introduced by an animal purchased from the United States.

Anaplasmosis is more common in the U.S. It's only been found in Canada seven times since 1969. An animal in Saskatchewan tested positive last year.

Stephens said that in Manitoba, anaplasmosis is most likely spread by ticks and biting flies. The disease is deadly for older animals and serious but rarely fatal in animals one to two years old. It causes fever, anemia, weakness and respiratory distress. Infected dairy cattle also have a rapid decline in milk production. Stephens said the disease poses no risk to humans. "There is no evidence tying this to infection in people," she said.



Vector-Borne Diseases To Be Featured At 113th USAHA/AAVLD Annual Meeting

Source: www.cattlenetwork.com

St. Joseph, MO – Emerging concerns of vector-borne diseases continue to face livestock industries globally. The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) and American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians (AAVLD) are prepared to take a hard look at the United States ability to address these diseases. During the annual meeting of USAHA and AAVLD a Joint Plenary Session entitled “Emerging Vector-Borne Diseases: What’s the Risk?” has been scheduled. The Annual Meeting will be held October 8-14, 2009 in San Diego, Calif., at the Town and Country Resort and Hotel.

“Bluetongue virus is an emerging threat to the livestock industry, and a primary example of the potential impacts from vector-borne diseases,” says Dr. Richard Breitmeyer, California State Veterinarian and President-elect of USAHA. “As we look at recent trends in Europe it is important for the U.S. to consider current capabilities and future needs to effectively address surveillance, preparedness and response strategies if this virus or other emerging vector-borne diseases were to become prevalent here.”

A vector-borne disease is commonly defined as one in which the infection is transmitted by an arthropod, such as a tick, mosquito, or gnat. Many vector-borne diseases are zoonotic in nature, although Bluetongue virus in particular is not known to infect humans. Other important vector-borne diseases include African horse sickness, babesiosis, ehrlichiosis, West Nile virus, and vesicular stomatitis.

“As we look at the body of knowledge on vector-borne diseases, there’s an opportunity to bring that new information to the forefront of veterinary medicine as an area we need to be better prepared,” says Dr. Gary Anderson, Kansas State Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory Director and AAVLD President-elect. “The Joint Plenary Session will look at the various facets of vector-borne diseases, and draw on experiences both in the U.S. and internationally to give members of our organizations a chance to reflect and address the regulatory and diagnostic needs in this area.”

The session will be held on October 12 from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m., during the organizations’ Annual Meeting. For more information, please go to www.usaha.org or www.aavld.org.



Livestock face climate change quagmire

Source: ec.europa.eu

An alarm has sounded on how global warming could impact European livestock. Speaking to members of the Society for General Microbiology (SGM) recently, Professor Peter Mertens from the Institute for Animal Health (IAH) in the UK cautioned that ruminants have been dealt major blows within the last decade, triggered by the rising temperatures on Earth.

More than two million ruminants, especially sheep, have fallen victim to outbreaks of bluetongue (BT) in Europe since 1998 and experts believe the rising temperatures are responsible for this problem. Sparked by the Bluetongue virus serotype (BTV-8), the outbreak reared its ugly head in Belgium and the Netherlands in 2006, and then spread to other European countries such as the UK the year after.

The experts note this outbreak, which was the first ever recorded in northern Europe, was not an isolated event. Concerns over related viruses emerging have grown. For example, the African horse sickness virus shares the same insect vectors as Bluetongue, and can prove fatal in over 95% of cases.

'We have seen outbreaks caused by 12 strains, from 9 distinct serotypes of bluetongue virus, which have arrived in Europe via at least 4 different routes since 1998,' explained Professor Mertens. 'This indicates that there has been a fundamental shift in bluetongue epidemiology, linked to climate change.'

Last year, the UK vaccinated more than 10 million sheep and cows against BTV-8. 'The UK was the only country in Europe to successfully suppress the disease outbreak,' Professor Mertens noted. 'However, different BT virus types have subsequently arrived in northern Europe which represent further threats to the UK for 2009 and beyond.'

Based on what has occurred in recent years, the entire region is vulnerable to further incursions of the BT virus and other insect transmitted viruses, he said, adding that these viruses could wreak havoc on human lives as well.

'Although the vaccines against BT virus currently available for use in northern Europe are relatively crude, as they are made from inactivated virus grown in tissue culture cells, it is clear that they can work against BTV-8,' the scientist told the SGM members. 'However, more advanced vaccines, made from the protein-subunits of the virus, along with diagnostic tests that can distinguish vaccinated from infected animals, are urgently needed.' The biting midge *Culicoides imicola* is responsible for spreading bluetongue, and it recently colonised the northern Mediterranean coast, which triggered outbreaks in the affected regions. It should be noted, however, that other vector species of midge, such as *C. pulicaris* and *C. obsoletus*, also contribute to BT outbreaks. These two have surfaced in central and northern Europe.

The experts state that rising temperatures can increase the rate of infection and virus replication in the midge, effectively intensifying their activity in northern Europe.

Contact Us



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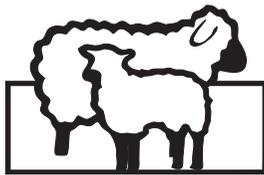
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