



FROM THE *flock*

MAY 2012 • VOLUME 9 • ISSUE 5

IN THIS ISSUE:

- 1-2 CSF and Producers
- 3-4 Scrapie Control
- 5-6 Livestock Transport Requirements in Canada
- 7-8 Producer Feedback

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.

The CSF and the Producer

The Canadian Sheep Federation (CSF) was founded by Canadian sheep farmers who saw the need to have a national organization to work on national issues and with the Federal government. Each CSF Board member is a sheep farmer elected by provincial sheep organizations to bring the view and issues of provincial partners to a national table. Similarly, they are elected to the provincial organization from local areas to bring the views and concerns of their neighbourhoods to the provincial level. In essence, all Canadian lamb producers are in this together – we are the Canadian Sheep Federation.

For the past 8 months, the Canadian Sheep Federation (CSF) has been working through a renewal process aimed at improving understanding and commitment within the partnership. The CSF and its partners work to grow and sustain our industry, and wish to have the CSF act as the place where member organizations come together to work on national issues where collaboration leads to greater industry and producer success and profitability.

Focus Items

Staff Involvement: As with any renewal exercise this process has been fluid. To contribute to this process, the CSF has developed a Staff Advisory Committee (SAC), made up of provincial General Managers or producer representatives from each member organization. Discussions have focused on two issues; the development of a new business plan and identifying sustainable funding sources for the organization. Over the course of the next few months, the member organizations will be reviewing the draft business plan for the 2012-13 Fiscal Year. This business plan will become the CSF's work plan for the year.

The Move to Stable Funding: Additionally, the Staff Advisory Committee has been asked to provide input on how the CSF can secure stable funding in the coming years, needed to enable the CSF to continue its work on behalf of member organizations and producers at a national level. One of the proposed methods for sustainable long-term funding has been the consideration of a National Check-Off, which, if implemented, would be applied not only to Canadian producers, but also to imported product. The concept has been considered for some years and remains a time-coming longer term development which does not negate the need for stable interim funding as the CSF progresses on important work. Discussions around funding and budgets are always challenging. Governments are currently in deficit reduction mode, producers and provincial organizations are struggling financially and so too, are national organizations, including the CSF. We need to strike a balance between what is required of a national organization to support the kind of industry that producers want and what the industry can afford. This is not easy, since budget discussions often turn to the need for organizations, including the CSF, to demonstrate its value to producers. That is why I would like to take this opportunity to update you on what the CSF has been working on this past year, in addition to the renewal process.



Biosecurity: The CSF, in conjunction with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), is developing a voluntary national farm-level biosecurity standard for the sheep sector. This has been deemed especially important as there have been indications from governments that, in the future, producers will only be eligible for compensation if they can demonstrate that they tried to mitigate against the risk of disease. A good on-farm biosecurity program will significantly reduce possible disease outbreaks on a farm.

Codes of Practice for the care and handling of farm animals: Sheep: With the ever-increasing involvement of consumers in the methods of food production, most notably in the hog and poultry sectors, it is imperative that our industry update its, science-based set of Codes that support food safety and help our producers identify appropriate production methods. The CSF's participation in this ensures that producers have direct input into the document.

National Identification and Traceability: The CSF continues to work with the federal and provincial governments to implement a traceability program that works and is affordable for Canadian producers. Two of the ongoing issues facing producers are the quality of tags provided, and their cost.

On-Farm Food Safety: The CSF continues to work on ensuring that producers have access to a CFIA certified OFFS program. A number of provinces have linked a producers' ability to access funding to their certification on the program. As such, it is important that the CSF ensures this program remains technically relevant and available to producers who need it.

Scrapie Eradication: Scrapie eradication efforts are essential to the continued growth and health of the small ruminant industry in Canada. Positive cases of the disease continue to pose a considerable threat to the health of the national sheep flock and, of course, to the individual producer. Not only is eradication important to the industry, but international perception of pro-active disease control is essential. Recognition of domestic efforts to minimize the risk of disease can help build a robust trade based industry on both domestic and international levels.

Value Chain Roundtable: The Sheep Value Chain Roundtable was launched in 2011 to develop a shared understanding of the key market challenges and opportunities facing the industry and to enhance co-operation and interaction among all stakeholders in the sheep value chain. The priority issues identified as roadblocks keeping the industry from realizing its potential are: 1) improving the productivity of sheep producers to increase Canadian lamb production and 2) access to medications to enable our producers to obtain the same medications as those in other countries.



What the CSF brings to the table

The CSF has built a strong reputation with government and worked tirelessly in its efforts to represent and bring forward the collective voice of sheep producers

The CSF is always trying to protect the producer from "program overload". This means that the CSF works with the provincial sheep organizations to make sure that the national programs driven by agricultural and public policy considerations are implemented in a way that is the least disruptive possible for our producers.

The on-going work of the CSF is aimed directly at moving the national sheep industry forward and providing Canadian sheep producers with the best chances of success. The CSF has also been making the case for sheep producers every opportunity it can, e.g. in presenting the research needs of our industry to the Senate Committee on Research and Innovation.

Specifically, the CSF:

- Has worked with the CFIA to increase compensation amounts for animals that have been ordered euthanized;
- The CSF is working with the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency, Agri-Traçabilité Québec and the CFIA to launch more tag trials in Canada;
- The CSF oversees the implementation of the Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program and the CSF National TSE Eradication Plan is working to establish the prevalence rate of scrapie in Canada aimed at developing an effective eradication program;
- Given that scrapie is linked to trade, the CSF is in ongoing negotiations with the CFIA to continue to allow the importation of rams from the US.
- The CSF has been working with the Canadian Animal Health Institute to work with the Veterinary Drug Directorate and Pharmaceutical companies to increase the number of medications approved for use in sheep



Scrapie Control

Scrapie is a disease that can be transmitted from mother to offspring at birth or from one animal to another through a contaminated environment. Scrapie is most commonly spread at birth through contact with the placenta and birthing fluids; although the scrapie prion has been found in other bodily fluids and tissue. Healthy animals can become infected by ingesting contaminated materials in an infected birthing environment, and newborn lambs or kids are extremely susceptible to infection. The scrapie prion is not easily destroyed and can remain infectious outside of the animal and in the environment (e.g. soil) for years. This disease can be difficult to identify because of its lengthy incubation period, frequent lack of clinical signs, and because there is no 100% reliable live animal test. Infected animals do not demonstrate disease symptoms after initially being infected, but over time they can shed the prions and spread scrapie before showing any signs of illness. Infected animals that appear healthy can often live and spread the disease in flocks and herds without being detected. Unfortunately, the only way to be sure an individual animal has scrapie is to test a section of the brain, which is only possible when the animal is dead.

Both the federal government and small ruminant industry have programs in place to eradicate scrapie from Canada. Industry programs that contribute to this goal administered under the National TSE Eradication Plan, with financial support from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's (AAFC) Agricultural Flexibility Fund, include the National Prevalence Study and the Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program (VSFCP). Additional industry programs like the Canadian Sheep Identification Program (CSIP) and the Voluntary National Goat Identification Program help support disease eradication efforts. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) under its own National Scrapie Eradication Program umbrella also has several programs that contribute to this goal, such as scrapie disease control actions on infected premises, the national scrapie surveillance program, animal identification and traceability, and the VSFCP. CFIA and the small ruminant industry work collaboratively on the VSFCP, the National Prevalence Study and traceability.

Due to the insidious nature of scrapie, every animal that is unknowingly incubating the disease and goes undetected may potentially infect numerous animals and farms over its lifespan. The sale and movement of animals can lead to one positive cases of scrapie eventually spanning provinces and affecting a large number of owners, animals, and farms. When a positive test of scrapie is identified, it is impossible to determine with certainty if the animal contracted the disease at birth or if it became infected later on in life from any premises where it may have lived. With eradication as the goal it is, therefore, imperative that each scrapie investigation examine all potential links so that every associated scrapie case is identified and acted upon. As part of its scrapie disease investigation, the CFIA investigates the farm where the case was identified, farms that purchased animals from the infected farm, and farms that sold animals to the infected farm.

Scrapie Control continued

Whether additional farms are classified as scrapie-infected depends upon assessment of multiple risk factors related to transmissibility such as animal age, lambing/kidding history, clinical history, laboratory results and interpretation, and farm residence duration/history. A live-animal screening test may be applied to a potentially infected flock/herd as part of the overall risk assessment. Scrapie Canada is not part of those investigations but advises that good record keeping and traceability on-farm will help a producer during an investigation.

There are also preventative measures you can take to minimize the risk of developing scrapie on your farm. The Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program is one such option, and was designed to help enrolled producers implement an on-farm program that mitigates the risk of developing the disease and provides recognition for program participation. The program is run by the Canadian Sheep Federation and is overseen and endorsed by the CFIA as a scrapie risk management program that will also benefit producers by increasing trade opportunities. After 5 years of program compliance, the producer is eligible for full certification and designated as a negligible risk flock or herd by Canadian standards. Producers not wanting to enrol in the program can still follow the program basics on their own to help reduce the risk of developing scrapie on their farm. These basics include limiting the sources of incoming females to closed flocks/herds or those that take disease prevention measures, tight inventory control, and testing deadstock for scrapie. Testing deadstock would involve removing the head (or obex from the brain) of animals found dead or killed on farm and sending them for testing.

There are a number of labs in Canada that can do these tests for you at about \$50 per sample (for VSFCP-enrolled producers, the cost of scrapie lab testing is currently covered by the program). CFIA surveillance under their National Scrapie Eradication Program includes, at no cost to the producer, scrapie testing of any mature small ruminant that dies on farm or exhibits unexplained weight loss, problems standing or walking, or changes in behaviour. Arrangements to have a sample taken for testing, can be made through the nearest CFIA district office.

Limiting acquisitions of females is not always an option for some producers, so another option in reducing scrapie risk is to genotype test for scrapie resistance and then selectively breed animals that have resistant genotypes.

If you would like more information about Scrapie Canada's National TSE Eradication Plan or are interested in enrolling in the Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program, please do not hesitate to contact us or visit our website: www.scrapiecanada.ca. Also, if you would like information regarding any aspect of the CFIA's National Scrapie Eradication Program, please contact the CFIA or visit their website at www.inspection.gc.ca

Funding for the National TSE Eradication Plan is provided through Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's (AAFC) Agricultural Flexibility Fund, as part of Canada's Economic Action Plan. Opinions expressed in this document are those of the Canadian Sheep Federation and not necessarily those of AAFC.

Livestock Transport Requirements in Canada

Every person responsible for transporting animals in Canada must ensure that the entire transportation process—including loading, transit and unloading—does not cause injury or undue suffering to the animals. The federal requirements for animal transport are covered under the Health of Animals Regulations, Part XII. They are enforced by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) with the assistance of other federal, provincial and territorial authorities.

These federal requirements regulate the transport of all animals, including pets, livestock, and exotic animals by all modes of transport—land, air and sea. Some provinces also have additional regulations related to animal transport. Federal requirements for transporting livestock define:

- the conditions under which an animal is considered unfit for travel
- the transportation practices to be used during loading, transit and unloading

It is the responsibility of both the transporter and any person having animals transported to ensure all animals being shipped are fit for the trip. This should be done by someone familiar with the animals or a veterinarian.

Is That Animal Fit for the Trip?

If you are responsible for transporting animals, you must be familiar with—and follow—Canada's animal transport requirements. If you do not comply with the regulations, you could be fined or prosecuted. If your actions or neglect are considered animal abuse, you could also be charged and convicted under the Criminal Code of Canada and/or provincial regulations. If you are not sure an animal is fit for the trip, contact a veterinarian or the CFIA at 1-800-442-2342.

Source: <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/anima/trans/polie.shtml>

DO NOT TRANSPORT

Some animals are completely unfit for transport. In this case, you must delay transport until the animal is fit for the trip if it is humane to do so (for example, when an animal has recently given birth). If delaying transport could result in undue suffering and if the animal is unlikely to get better on its own, the animal must either be treated or euthanized on site. Some examples of conditions where animals must not be transported include (but are not limited to):

- the animal is unable to stand without assistance or to move without being dragged or carried;*
- the animal, after splitting, cannot walk, or suffers severe pain when walking, or requires hobbles to stand or to prevent further injury (i.e. non-ambulatory animal);*
- the animal cannot rise without assistance and is reluctant to walk, and exhibits halted movement;*
- the animal cannot be transported without undue suffering because of lameness (Health of Animals Regulations 138[2][a]);*
 - it has a fractured limb;
 - it has a fracture to the pelvis;
 - it has a rupture of the pre-pubic tendon (splitting);
 - it has other fractures that considerably hamper mobility or are likely to cause severe pain when the animal is manipulated for loading or when it is being transported;
 - its body condition score indicates emaciation and weakness;
 - it is suffering from dehydration;
 - it is suffering from exhaustion;
 - it is a stressed hog;
 - it is in shock or dying;
 - it has a suspected or confirmed nervous system disorder;
 - it has a fever;
 - it has uterine prolapse; and/or
 - it has a hernia that meets one or more of the following criteria:
 - o impedes movement (includes conditions in which the hind legs of the animal touches the hernia when the animal is walking),
 - o is painful on palpation,
 - o touches the ground when the animal is standing in its natural position, and/or
 - o includes an open skin wound, ulceration, or obvious infection.

TRANSPORT ONLY WITH SPECIAL PROVISIONS

If you can take steps to prevent additional injury or undue suffering, you can move some compromised animals. Transport these animals for immediate slaughter directly to the nearest appropriate slaughter establishment, keeping transport time to a minimum. On the advice of a veterinarian, you can transport a compromised animal to a veterinary clinic for treatment or diagnosis.

Some examples of conditions where animals may only be transported with special provisions include (but are not limited to):

- frostbite;
- bloat (if not weak or already down);
- laboured breathing;
- penis injury;
- blindness in both eyes;
- an amputated or missing limb;
- rectal or vaginal prolapse;
- heavy lactation (animals in heavy lactation requiring milking every 12 hours, or they will become unfit for transport);
- a recent operation such as dehorning or castration that has not fully healed;
- a recent birth (the animal has delivered in the past 48 hours);
- open wound (depending on the severity of the wound, the animal may be unfit);

A compromised animal must always be transported to the nearest suitable place where it can receive care and attention.

What Is Meant by "Nearest Suitable Place"?

Compromised animals that are fit for transport are not to go through auction markets or assembly yards. They must go directly to their final destination. If compromised animals are to be sent to slaughter, they must not travel long distances to the slaughter facility, even if the only slaughter facility is far away. Rather, they should go to local slaughter facilities or be killed humanely on-farm (or treated).

If an animal becomes compromised during the journey, consider the nearest suitable place (that is, a nearby veterinary hospital, farm, auction market or assembly yard, slaughter plant) where the animal can receive care or be euthanized. If you are not sure what special provisions to take when moving a compromised animal, always ask a veterinarian. He or she may suggest, for example:

- emergency veterinary care prior to transport;
- providing extra bedding;
- loading the animal last and unloading it first;
- separating it from other animals in the shipment; or
- transporting it with a familiar animal to help it remain calm.

TRANSPORTATION PRACTICES

It is illegal to cause undue suffering to an animal at any point in the transportation process. Practices that can help protect animals during transportation include:

- using loading and unloading facilities as well as containers and transport vehicles suitable to the animals being loaded;
- using movement devices (e.g. pig boards) that do not frighten the animals or cause injury or undue suffering;
- providing adequate space and headroom for animals to stand in a natural position;
- providing feed, water and rest at required intervals;
- providing adequate ventilation for all animals;
- providing non-slip, textured footing surfaces suitable to the animals being transported;
- providing protection from the weather; or
- providing immediate attention, including veterinary treatment at the scene if necessary. If an animal becomes unfit for transport during the trip, it must be cared for, treated or euthanized.

Feedback

When producers were asked if, knowing that a positive case of scrapie on farm could result in depopulation of your breeding stock, they would voluntarily participate in a program that reduces the risk of scrapie on their farm, responses included; "We've been participating for years", "we use both (a disease control program and scrapie genotyping)" and "we need as a country to stop this attitude that it's all about ME and get into the mindset that it's all about the sheep industry".

J. Graham Rannie

Binscarth, Manitoba

I am disturbed by several things I have seen and read in the past couple of weeks.

I was willing to give qualified support to the proposed import regulations on rams, as shown in a previous CSF newsletter. I could only support the CFIA proposed changes if the provision remained, that rams can be imported if they have a scrapie resistant genotype, and don't necessarily have to come from or go to a flock on the respective countries Scrapie program. At one time sheep producers realised we are such a small industry, we must support each other no matter which breed or management style each person chooses. The people who want to eliminate minor breeds are definitely short sighted.

Though breeds like the Rideau and Canadian have a place in the industry, several breeds classified as minor or rare play important roles our industry as well. The fine wool breeds have very few purebred breeders in Canada, but there are thousands of fine wool commercial ewes in Western Canada. The producers that have them rely on US rams for genetic improvement. Other minor breeds like the Lincoln, Cotswold and Romney are valued by people that like working with wool, while they also produce very good lambs. We produce Border Cheviots and have sold breeding stock to six provinces in the last two years. Many of our ram sales are to producers wishing to breed ewe lambs.

The lambs have low birth weight while producing good carcasses at acceptable weights. Breeds that are in favour now may not be popular in the future. Look at the Shropshire. At one time there were more registered Shropshires in Canada than any other breed. Oxfords were very popular 90 years ago and can produce a finished lamb directly from pasture without grain. They also fell out of favour. The market for Suffolks softened when Spider Syndrome emerged.

A few prominent breeders in each breed dominate the genetics in each of those breeds. The CSF, CFIA and sheep breeders need to remain cognisant of that. The problem of concentration of genetics will become significantly greater if the border becomes essentially closed. There is no incentive for many breeders to become part of the Voluntary Scrapie Program in Canada if a significant number of other producers in their chosen breed do not also participate. There are only a small number of breeders in the US that have participated in their Scrapie program long enough to qualify send rams to Canada under the new proposal. Not all breeds have purebred breeders participating. When you look at the number that are producing the type of sheep needed for the Canadian market the choice of breeders in many cases disappears.

Using imported semen is not the answer for all breeds. We have looked into importing semen from other countries. Unfortunately not all breeds are found in countries we can import from with relative ease. We looked into bringing Border Cheviot semen from Australia and New Zealand. The breeders were willing to work with us.

Feedback continued

Unfortunately the breed societies allow grading up so the CSBA will not recognise their registrations. We looked at bringing Rambouillet semen in from the US. The breeders and semen collection facilities willing to work with us were in areas that have Bluetongue. They vaccinate all animals so they would not pass the tests to allow importation to Canada. The flocks I contacted in South Dakota and Minnesota did not know of any access to semen collection facilities that would satisfy CFIA protocol. They were also unwilling to go to the expense of meeting the protocols to collect one set of semen.

Though I find the current Voluntary Scrapie Program is not workable for people raising minor breeds I am concerned about the other option of breeding only Scrapie resistant sheep. The elimination of the Q allele at codon 171 may have some unknown consequences. Anecdotally we have noticed animals in our flocks that are QQ have superior breed type, rate of gain and carcass conformation to the RR's. Also in my Rambouillet flock the animals that are QQ have better wool production than my RR's (at similar micron counts they tend to have a longer staple). Breeders with other breeds have also noticed similar phenomenon.

J. Graham Rannie
Binscarth, Manitoba
204-532-2008
e-mail: grannie@inetlink.ca

Bill

Ewe Kids Farm, ON

I am VSFCP...certified. I don't know at times whether that's good or bad. All that I know is that I believe that the VSFCP is eventually not going to be "voluntary" at some later date and the producer will be obligated to belong if he/she wants to conduct any business "off the farm". Currently you have to belong to VSFCP to import Does and you have to be in "Pathway #1" to export Does. I ask you to consider, at your leisure time (what leisure time) at least looking into the program. It might be beneficial to you in terms of new breeding stock, different genetics, etc.

e-mail: bill@ewekidsfarm.com