



# flock

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR THE CANADIAN SHEEP INDUSTRY

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## Leadership, credibility and vision. The strength of a strong national sheep federation

By Dwane Morvik, CSF Chairman

As I reflect on the happenings over the course of the last year I can't help but thinking back to the first Canadian Sheep Federation meeting that I attended in Ottawa close to twenty years ago -- how much has changed and yet in some areas of the sheep world how much remains the same. One thing that has improved over that time has been the price of lambs and breeding stock. Not to date myself, but I can remember shipping lambs on a load that went to Toronto and receiving only \$29.00 per head, while at the same time selling wool for \$1.80 per pound.

Having stayed in the business over the long haul we can look back and comment on the good and bad decisions that were made along the way. It's like that in the CSF as well. Decisions are made as a board based on the best information available at the time yet looking forward to the future not knowing what situations (BSE, scrapie, CDN dollar) may affect our business plan. It's with this in mind that we take a look back on this the 20th anniversary of the CSF and look just how far we've come. In reviewing the perspectives on 20 years, I was happy to hear terms like leadership and credibility being echoed by people who have been connected to the industry over these years.

CSF was formed after the demise of the Canada Sheep Council because industry stakeholders believed that our industry needed national representation and a national voice. And they were right!

Over those 20 years, we've seen an increasing need for our industry to work with stakeholders -- including government and the entire value chain -- to address domestic and international issues; a need for animal health requirements due to trade in seed stock, semen and embryos; and new files that have emerged such as on-farm food safety and traceability.

The last 20 years have produced tremendous evolution in the entire food production business. To ensure that the interests of sheep producers are heard, CSF now spends a considerable amount of time talking to and working with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada and many others.





## CSF future continued

It's true, working with government can be a double-edged sword -- quite often the more you give them, the more they want. But the reality is we rely an awful lot on government. And it has been a significant supporter of our industry.

At CSF we've worked hard to build a relationship that gives us a seat at the table when issues that affect our industry are brought for discussion. As your representative, we draw on the knowledge of a board of directors that brings insights from east to west. And we need these perspectives because we face challenges; there is continued change afoot. The need for traceability and mandatory Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tags is just one example of change and requirements that will impact our industry. RFID is not something everyone in our industry wants, but finding the best alternative for delivering a traceability system requires strong leadership and a national voice. It requires tough decisions.

For CSF, now is the time for 2020 vision; for leadership that sets its sights squarely on the future challenges and tremendous opportunities that the next 20 years present for our industry.

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## CSF – Staff is changing, momentum is not

By Barb Caswell, Interim Executive Director

As the demand for lamb in Canada grows and we have focused around the need to capitalize on the growing domestic market, it is with both fear and excitement that I congratulate Jennifer MacTavish and her husband John as they prepare to grow their family and welcome their first child and prepare to step in as Jennifer's replacement during her time off.

I'm taking this initial opportunity to both introduce myself, for those who haven't already met me, and to inform you that I hope to continue the momentum Jennifer has created with moving the industry forward.

It is with much excitement and anticipation that I leave the position as National Food Safety Coordinator and step into the very large shoes Jennifer has left to be filled. We hope this will be a smooth transition. I have spent the last six months learning the history of CSF and the Canadian lamb industry, as well as the past and current activities that CSF is working on that are crucial to expanding the industry and keeping Canadian lamb producers profitable and competitive in the market. Over the past month, I have spent time in the office with Jennifer in order to learn the day-to-day activities that keeps the CSF progressing. The office will remain open, as it has been. If you prefer, please email me directly at [barbara@cansheep.ca](mailto:barbara@cansheep.ca) with any questions or concerns you may have.

The staff has been hard at work creating our Annual Review, which reflects on the 20th anniversary of the CSF, as well as a vision forward to the next twenty years and what can accomplish. While I'm still fairly new to the industry, I have heard it said it is hard to believe it has been twenty years since the CSF was created to be the national voice of the industry back in 1990. And the CSF has evolved over that time, growing with the industry and expanding its directives and the capacity to meet those directives through increases in resources, funding and knowledge. That is certainly not to say it's been all sunshine over the past twenty years. The stories of 'growing pains' I have heard from producers and others in the industry make it clear that many have worked hard to get us where we are today. And it doesn't appear as though the road ahead is going to be without its ups and downs. However, the commitment demonstrated by many to continue the momentum we have garnered suggests that the hills ahead are ones we can overcome. I look forward to working with the industry in this new capacity over the upcoming months.



# RFID management tools working for our flocks and the Canadian Sheep and Lamb Industry: PART 1

By Stefan Kaiser, Traceability Extension Team

By now many producers have heard of Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) and new management systems that have emerged to the marketplace for the sheep industry. While you are only required to adopt RFID tags and the corresponding tagger to meet the requirements of the program on January 1, 2012, you may be one of those choosing to go one step further and asking, 'What exactly can RFID tools and technology do for me and my industry?'

Firstly, there are specific areas that a farm should target as to where investment could occur to best fit the scope, size and management needs of the operation.

- **Basic management systems** will often include RFID ear tags, a wand or stick reader, a flock software program and a manual sheep sorter or chute with a hanging dial scale.
- **Midline management systems** would often include RFID ear tags, a wand or stick reader, a flock software program and a partial automatic sheep sorter or chute with a hanging digital scale.
- **Advanced management systems** will often include RFID ear tags, a PDA or mass storage device recorder/reader, a flock software program and a fully pneumatic/automatic sheep sorter or chute with weighing load bars accompanied by an intelligent blue tooth scale as well as an intelligent panel reader with blue tooth.

The aforementioned categories should be fitted firstly, according to the desired investment at the farm level in flock management technology; and secondly,

according to the size of the flock and desired use of technologically advanced management capabilities. To better describe where an individual business will fit we can look at an example: A flock owner of 100 commercial ewes in an extensive environment (pasture all year, one lambing per year) will be well suited for a basic system. Whereas, a flock owner of 100 pure bred ewes in a semi-intensive environment (pasture/confinement mix, accelerated lambing) may realize greater benefit to move directly to the advanced systems.

The simple adoption of an integrated approach of sheep management systems can have a tremendous impact on long term flock management, which can lead to both increased productivity and ultimately profitability. ***It all begins with an ear tag.***

Although RFID tags are more expensive than a conventional dangle or panel tag at this time, we can still find a tremendous amount of productivity increase by the simple use of the tag accompanied by integrated management systems. The Canadian sheep industry has been working hard to improve flock performance in areas of genetics, nutrition and overall management. All of which are areas that require data and information collection; one cannot find any definitive or recognizable progress from an unrecorded starting point. Thus, it is imperative to beginning recording data in more efficient and accurate methods. In the past, industry has had to rely on the accuracy of paper records and manual data entry for all stock recording purposes. With the new management technology available, industry can record animal ID's with confidence and increased speed.



## RFID continued

Captured data via various RFID readers can be translated to sheep software programs. Upon scanning, recording and transferring data to a software program, one can then access records with ease on a computer. With some of the flock software available, one can create management groups for various purposes, for example breeding, movements, treatments, sales and much more. The ease of sorting entire flocks or groups of animals within a flock on the computer can translate to incredible time savings in the field or at chute side.

There is more great aspects to the management tools available for the sheep industry, please look forward to Part 2 of "RFID management tools working for our flocks and the Canadian Sheep and Lamb Industry" in upcoming From The Flock newsletters.

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## Animal Health Week: Identification Keeps Animals Safe

Source: CFIA, [www.inspection.gc.ca](http://www.inspection.gc.ca)

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) want to remind producers that their efforts to build Canada's livestock traceability systems are keeping animals safe. This week marks the CVMA's Animal Health Week and this year's theme, "Let's See Your ID," promotes animal identification—a key component of Canada's strategy to protect its animal resource base.

"In an emergency, the quicker we can respond the less impact a disease outbreak will have on the economy, environment and on Canadians," said Dr. Brian Evans, Chief Food Safety Officer and Chief Veterinary Officer of Canada. "Traceability systems allow animal health authorities to conduct rapid and thorough investigations in response to outbreaks."

Producers can practise animal identification by participating in traceability systems and by using proper ear tags and other identification means. In addition, tattoos, brands and paper-based logbooks and record keeping remain important and effective tools to identify animals.

"Proper animal identification allows veterinarians to easily identify infected animals and quickly address cases of disease," said Dr. Doug Roberts, president of the CVMA. "In turn, this minimizes risks for other animals, producers and the public."

There are existing industry-led cattle and sheep identification programs that are mandatory in all provinces. Industry and governments are working together to develop additional programs. For more information, please visit [www.inspection.gc.ca](http://www.inspection.gc.ca) or call 1-800-442-2342.

Animal Health Week is an annual public awareness campaign that runs from October 3-9, 2010 to promote animal health, veterinary medicine and responsible animal ownership across Canada. For more information, please visit [www.canadianveterinarians.net](http://www.canadianveterinarians.net)

For more information:

[Canadian Food Inspection Agency  
Media Relations](#)  
613-773-6600

[Canadian Veterinary Medical Association \(CVMA\)](#)  
Kristin McEvoy  
Communications & Student Program  
613-236-1162, ext. 128



## Ag ID premises program aimed at protecting food system

Source: [www.carmanvalleyleader.com](http://www.carmanvalleyleader.com)

Manitoba has introduced a new agricultural Premises Identification program a part of a larger scale national livestock traceability system. "It's quite an important program," said David Hunt, the MAFRI Agri-Food Traceability Co-ordinator who supervises the central region including the Carman-area. "It's a tool that can be used in an animal health emergency. "It's about obtaining information that we don't have right now."

The program was officially introduced by Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives Minister Stan Struthers. The province has set aside \$400,000 to help fund the program.

### Protect Food System

"Protecting our food system is vital to the future of our agriculture industry," said Struthers in a prepared statement. "Producers understand that this new premises identification database program is an essential tool for planning and managing animal health, food-safety issues and emergencies, while also supporting trade and market access."

Struthers said an agricultural premise is land where animals, plants or food are grown, kept, assembled or disposed of. The program that was unveiled Sept. 30, will enable agriculture officials to track the location of animals in case of an animal disease, a public-health related emergency or an emergency such as a natural disaster affecting animals and people. "It allows us to make better informed decisions like in a flood situation," Hunt said. "If we know ahead of time where and how many animals are in a certain area, we can plan ahead of time on how to respond instead of just being reactive."

### Collecting Information

The Manitoba program is already underway collecting information on livestock and poultry production locations.

And earlier this year, livestock producers began submitting premises identification information as part of applications for funding under the Growing Forward program. The producer information, including owner, type of livestock or poultry and legal land description, was entered into a database for future reference. But Hunt noted the information can only be used for animal health emergencies. It won't be used for anything else. "Privacy is protected under provincial legislation," he said. All provinces are responsible for developing a premises identification database, in accordance with national standards.

Hunt added it will be part of a national traceability system involving federal, provincial and industry partners that is scheduled to be implemented by 2012.

### Calling all Breeders

Innovis in the UK is planning to start a Canadian semen collection quarantine in early December.

If there are any Canadian breeders who wish to get UK semen for 2011, please contact Abigail Stanley at [Abi@innovis-malv.org.uk](mailto:Abi@innovis-malv.org.uk) for more information. **There will only be ONE shipment for all orders.**



# Maintaining Credibility Through Producers and Government

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

While there are many things that add to the credibility of the Food Safe Farm Practices Program, there are two that stand out. First, the program was designed for producers, by producers. While science provides the logic and backing for the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points approach which the program is based on, the participation of producers in the program's design, development and continuous review creates an approach that is both science based and practical on the farm.

Secondly, and a point for which this article serves to provide some additional detail on, is the adherence to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's On-Farm Food Safety Recognition Program (OFFSRP). While it speaks volumes to have producer involvement, as well as input from various avenues including veterinarians and industry experts, adhering to the OFFSRP allows credibility of the program on a wider basis, and provides justification that not only does CSF offer a program that is practical on-farm, but recognized nationally and internationally

So what does it mean to adhere to the OFFSRP requirements, a process that we begin for the second time on August 30, 2010? Full recognition is a long process, involving three stages. Stage 1 is Technical Review, and is broken out into two parts. Part 1 is Technical Review of the generic HACCP model and Producer Manual, while Part 2 is Technical Review of the management system and training material. Currently, CSF has completed Part 1 Technical Review of our HACCP model and Producer Manual. However, the program must maintain this standing through regular reviews. The reviews are part of the requirement to demonstrate management of the system, but also require CSF as a result

to submit all changes that occur as the result of our regular reviews to ensure the program continues to meet the requirements of Part 1.

Technical review of the HACCP Model and Producer Manual involves an approximate 14-week schedule, during which the program is reviewed by government in regards to various technical aspects. The opportunity for the government to question any areas of concern where hazards may remain allows CSF to identify any areas that may be not adequately address the risk of a food safety hazard, and it is still up to CSF and its committee of producers as to how those concerns get addressed. This interplay with officials, experts and producers creates a truly credible program that accomplishes the goal of minimizing the risk of food safety hazards on-farm.

The Food Safe Farm Practices Program first achieved Part I of Technical Review in 2005, and since that time the program has been reviewed regularly. However, the latest review, completed over 2009-2010 resulted in addressing the entire program, including the HACCP model, and making numerous changes to improve both the ability of the program to address risks, as well as make components clearer to understand and easier to implement for the producer. As a result, we have decided the best way to address the number of changes was to submit for a re-review, rather than explain each individual change. With regards to the current review, the end of October brings us to approximately the ninth week of our review.

Taking the action of applying for a 're-review' does not in anyway move us backward, as behind the action surrounding the review, CSF has been creating and updating the



## OFFS continued

management and training needed to move the program forward for Part II of the Technical Review, which will hopefully take place in 2011. However, as I mentioned, this process truly speaks to the credibility of the program, because there are still two stages after Parts I and II of Stage I are complete.

The next step is implementation, both on the farm and making sure the management system and training components are functioning efficiently. At this time, we can begin to move forward with Stages II: Third Party Audit; and, Stage III: Implementation Assessment. These final two stages, once complete allow a program to be fully recognized by the CFIA OFFSRP. These are the longer term goals for the Food Safe Farm Practices Program. While this may all seem somewhat like a bunch of technical jargon, it serves as a reminder of the hard work that goes into the Food Safe Farm Practices Program, and the credibility the program maintains.

## Recognition



Agriculture and  
Agri-Food Canada

Agriculture et  
Agroalimentaire Canada



*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.*

*The Canadian Sheep Federation's scrapie projects are funded by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's (AAFC) Agricultural Flexibility program. Opinions expressed in this document are those of the Canadian Sheep Federation and not necessarily those of AAFC.*

## New Support for Producers Enrolled on the Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program

By Courtney Denard, National Scrapie Coordinator

As part of the new funding from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, producers enrolled on the Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program (VSFCP) will once again receive reimbursements for their contributions to the program.

From now until December 17, 2012, the following support applies:

- \$100 per year towards the cost of the annual veterinarian inventory visit.
- Brain testing for scrapie at designated laboratories will be paid for by the program (see below for more information).
- \$110 towards the cost of hiring a veterinarian to come to the farm and remove a brain sample meant for scrapie testing.
- \$20 per shipment to send brain samples to designated laboratories.

Producers must submit copies of all receipts to Scrapie Canada at 130 Malcolm Road, Guelph, ON, N1K 1B1. Producers who completed their annual inventory or shipped brain samples to a laboratory for testing between April 1st and October 31st, 2010 are permitted to send in their receipts for reimbursement.

As of November 1st, 2010 receipts must be submitted within 30 days of the billing date on the veterinarian invoice or shipping receipt to be eligible for reimbursement.

The Canadian Sheep Federation, who administers the financial aspect of the program, will be responsible for mailing out reimbursement cheques to producers.



**New Support for Obex Testing:** Producers enrolled on the VSFCP are required to submit a brain sample from all animals over 12 months of age that die on the farm. If no animal dies on the farm within a one year period, producers are required to submit a cull for testing (the cull must be at least 24 months of age).

Support for brain testing is once again available through the VSFCP at the following laboratories until December 17, 2012:

- The University of Guelph's Animal Health Laboratory in Guelph, Ontario
- Prairie Diagnostic Services in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
- Alberta Agriculture Laboratory in Edmonton, Alberta

Producers will not be required to pay upfront for obex testing; however, they must submit the appropriate sample submission form with their sample in order to avoid being charged the testing fees.

Submitting the sample submission form with the sample will tell the laboratory that the producer is enrolled on the VSFCP and will notify the lab to invoice the program - not the producer. If producers do not submit the sample submission form with their sample, they will be charged the full cost of the testing fees. Sample submission forms are available by contacting Scrapie Canada.

The VSFCP will only pay for testing fees. If producers submit an entire head or carcass to a laboratory there will be sample removal costs, plus disposal costs for the head or carcass. Sample removal and disposal costs will be invoiced to the producer.

**Laboratory Requirements for Submitting Samples:** Each laboratory has a different requirement for submitting samples. Producers should read this information before submitting their sample.

Producers should share this information with their veterinarian if they are working with a vet to collect and submit a sample. Or, tell their veterinarian to contact Scrapie Canada for more information.

The University of Guelph's Animal Health Laboratory in Guelph, Ontario:

1. The obex sample or entire sheep/goat head be shipped to the laboratory in a frozen state.
2. Producers must follow the outlined instructions for packaging and shipping frozen samples to the laboratory for scrapie testing. Packaging and shipping information is available by contacting Scrapie Canada.

Prairie Diagnostic Services in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan:

1. The obex sample or entire sheep/goat head be shipped to the laboratory in a frozen state.
2. Producers must follow the outlined instructions for packaging and shipping frozen sample to the laboratory for scrapie testing. Packaging and shipping information is available by contacting Scrapie Canada.

Alberta Agriculture Laboratory in Edmonton, Alberta:

1. The brain stem and retropharyngeal (submandibular) lymph node (RPLN) be shipped to the laboratory in a frozen state. If the RPLN is not available then the tonsils should be included.
2. Producers must follow the outlined instructions for packaging and shipping frozen samples to the laboratory for scrapie testing. Packaging and shipping information is available by contacting Scrapie Canada.