



# FROM THE *flock*

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## 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.

## Ensure the welfare of your sheep when tail docking

If you are docking tails, it is important to follow practices that ensure the health and welfare of your lambs. Most sheep breeds are born with long tails which can accumulate large amounts of manure in the wool. The accumulated manure attracts flies, which lay eggs under the skin of the animals hind quarters (and elsewhere on the animal), leading to flystrike (maggots). Particularly if lambing indoors where manure can accumulate quickly, tail docking serves to reduce length of the tail and, as a result, reduce possible manure accumulation. Lambing on pasture or monitoring manure levels in the barn and keeping the bedding reasonably dry can also help to mediate this problem.

However, if you do choose tail docking, there are some very important considerations which serve to mediate the welfare concerns for your sheep and lambs. A great resource for sheep and lamb producers is the Recommended Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Sheep. The most up to date version of the Code can be found on the National Farm Animal Care Committee's website at: <http://www.nfacc.ca/codes-of-practice>, as well as the Codes for a variety of other livestock species and information on the Code Development Process.

Tail docking is considered a surgical procedure, and should be done prior to seven (7) days of age, preferably at 2-3 days of age. However, make sure the animal has had the opportunity to consume colostrum prior to tail docking to ensure immunity to fight infection. Prior to seven (7) days of age, the animals are easily restrained, the tail is small and research suggests the process is less traumatic on the lamb. After seven (7) days of age, it is highly recommended to contact your local veterinarian for advice on performing the procedure. While the procedure is performed on the farm, cleanliness is still important and should be given consideration.

There are a number of methods for tail docking. However, some are much less humane than others. The Code of Practice recommends the following methods for tail docking:

- Electric or gas heated docker;
- Rubber ring;
- Crush and cut device; or,
- Rubber ring plus crushing device.



## Tail Docking continued

If tail docking for the first time, you may consider consulting your veterinarian for advice on what method would work best for your particular operation and breed of sheep.

When docking the tail, it is important to leave enough tail to cover at least the anus in rams and the vulva in ewe lambs. While a 'no tail' dock may have been appealing in the show ring many decades ago, research has shown that leaving no or minimal tail stub can damage the tissues surrounding the anus predisposing the sheep or ram to a number of conditions, such as rectal prolapse.

Again, if you have any concerns or questions when tail docking, refer to the Code of Practice and your local veterinarian for sheep. Hard copies of the Code of Practice are also available from the Canadian Sheep Federation. Contact us at [info@cansheep.ca](mailto:info@cansheep.ca) or 1.888.684.7739.

## New Forum Gives Consumer Associations a Clear Voice in Food Safety

Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz launched a new roundtable focused on giving consumers an additional opportunity to raise concerns and discuss ways to further improve Canada's food safety system. This new forum is another way the Government of Canada is improving transparency, consultations and communications with Canadians, as recommended by the 2008 report of the independent investigator, Sheila Weatherill.

"Canadian families have always played a front-line role in food safety, whether it's in their kitchen or when providing valuable feedback to our Government," said Minister Ritz. "Food safety is a top priority for our Government and this new, consumer-focused forum will help make Canada's food safety system even stronger."

The roundtable will improve collaboration with consumer associations and will share information and ideas important to all Canadians. The forum will give consumers a stronger voice in food safety and related issues under the mandate of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

Eight core consumer associations with national or significant regional representation will make up the roundtable. Additional representatives, experts and speakers will be invited to participate. See the backgrounder for more info.

Dr. Brian Evans, of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), and Chief Food Safety Officer and Chief Veterinary Officer for Canada, will chair the roundtable, which will take place at least twice annually, with contact being maintained throughout the year as issues requiring input arise.

For additional information, please visit the CFIA website at [www.inspection.gc.ca](http://www.inspection.gc.ca).

**Source:** [www.inspection.gc.ca/english/corpaffr/newcom/2010/20101208e.shtml](http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/corpaffr/newcom/2010/20101208e.shtml)

# Canadian Sheep Federation National RFID Pilot Project

The Canadian Sheep Identification Program (CSIP) was implemented in 2004. The Program requires that sheep and lambs leaving their farm of origin, for any reason, be uniquely identified using an official CSIP tag.

With Canada moving toward a fully traceable supply chain for the livestock sector, the Canadian Sheep Federation was eager to determine the readiness of the sheep industry to be able to comply with new regulations, and to determine the possible impacts on the production of sheep and lambs in Canada by its members.

RFID technology is seen as the logical means to be able to read and report unique identifiers electronically. The Canadian Sheep Federation (CSF) Board of Directors approved the mandatory use of RFID tags in order to meet the requirements for traceability. While a tough decision to move to a more expensive tag, no other viable options could be identified that would allow the industry to meet the expected requirements for traceability.

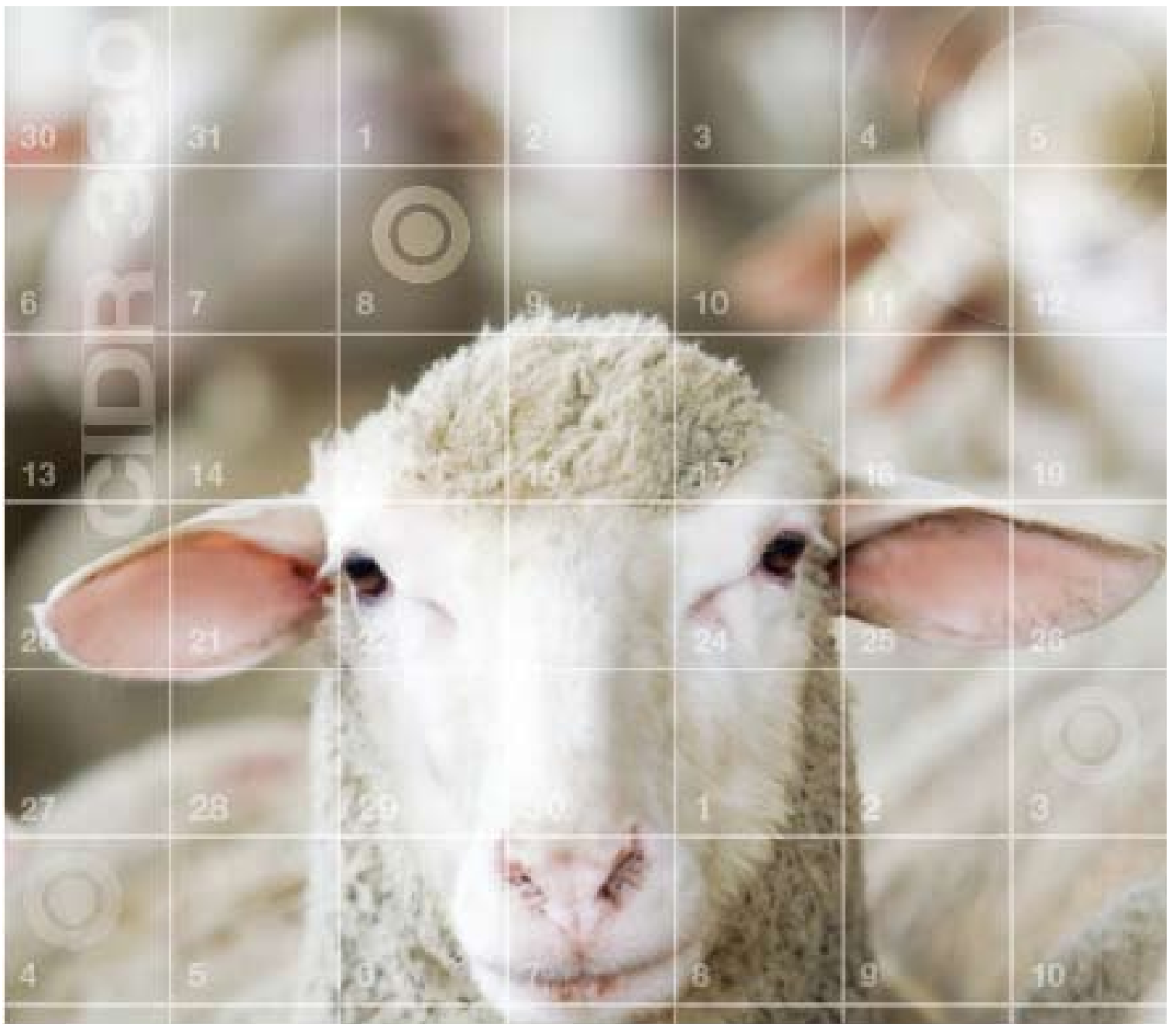
In 2009, the CSF proposed conducting a national on-farm RFID pilot project and applied for funding to operate the pilot, with a planned implementation date of October 2009, in order to gather information with which to make these assessments. The overarching goals of the National RFID pilot project were;

- To test the readiness of the sheep industry to comply with traceability requirements
- To identify gaps, challenges and issues in implementing a traceability system along the supply chain.
- To assess the true costs of implementing traceability using RFID technology on farmers and to determine if the increased costs of tags and labour can be offset by improved management and efficiencies.

To achieve these, the project laid out seven specific objectives;


1. Select 25 producers from across Canada to implement RFID systems, test the traceability standards and become ambassadors of RFID systems
2. Identify and provide solutions to challenges that the industry faces in implementing RFID systems (tag performance, software, readers, producer education/training) using provincial/regional support personnel
3. Develop a communication pathway (software) for processors and producers to be able to share information on carcass quality
4. RFID technology systems implementation to raise the level of the sheep industry's knowledge and expertise (including tags, readers and software)
5. Provide an analysis of the cost/benefits of implementing RFID systems
6. Determine the capacity of RFID systems to aid in the industry's ability to meet the animal identification and movement standards
7. Provide the industry with the knowledge required to decide if RFID systems will be mandatory as of January 2012

As the first year of the National Pilot wraps up, it is clear there is still work to be done. CSF is seeking a second year of funding from Agriculture Canada in order to continue the work that has been completed in the first year of the pilot. Look for future information from CSF on the application process for year two of the National RFID Pilot, pending funding approval.



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## Import Regulations

By Courtney Denard, National Scrapie Coordinator

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has announced that requirements around the importation of sheep and goats into Canada from the USA are set to change in 2011.

### CHANGES TO IMPORT REGULATIONS- FEMALE SHEEP AND GOATS

As of January 2011, female sheep or goats for breeding, domestic or captive purposes can only be imported from a property enrolled in the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Scrapie Flock Certification Program (SFCP) and determined to be from a "*negligible risk premises*." This is not a change from the current rules in place.

What will be changing are the rules around how long Canadian producers must be enrolled on the Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program (VSFCP) prior to importing female sheep or goats from the USA.

The new rules state that Canadian producers (with sheep and goats already on the property) wanting to import females from the USA may do so as long as they have been enrolled on the VSFCP for at least 24 consecutive months and have completed two annual inventories. The same applies for the exporting American producer. [This is an increase from the 12 month waiting period that was implemented in June 2010.](#)

A grandfathering clause has been put in place for producers who enrolled on the VSFCP during the years 2009 and 2010. These producers will be permitted to import female sheep and goats from the USA as long as they have been enrolled on the VSFCP for at least 12 consecutive months and have completed at least one annual inventory.

The clause also states that Canadian producers who enrolled on the VSFCP during the years 2009 and 2010 will still be required to import from American producers who have been enrolled on the USA program for at least 24 months and have completed two annual inventories. [The grandfathering clause will only be valid until January 1, 2013.](#)

The CFIA, at this time, does not anticipate further increasing Canadian producers' wait time prior to importing females. This means Canadian producers' wait time will not be extended beyond two years.

Enrollment time for American exporters, however, will continue to increase as Canada ramps up its scrapie eradication protocols.

### CHANGES TO IMPORT REGULATIONS- MALE SHEEP AND GOATS

Changes around the importation of males will also be changing but not right away. The CFIA has announced that some internal discussion on the matter has taken place but nothing concrete has been proposed.

Moving forward, the CFIA will review current literature on the topic and then set up discussions with the USDA. An internal consultation phase within Canada will then follow. This is when industry will be given the opportunity to comment.

Once the consultation phase is complete, new policy will be developed and moved through the approval process. No specific timeline has been set in place, however, the CFIA has indicated that the industry will be given sufficient time to comment and will be made aware of all changes prior to their implementation.

# Import Regulations continued

The CFIA estimates that changes will not be made until the summer of 2011 at the earliest.

## WHY THE IMPORT RULES ARE CHANGING

The CFIA first announced these changes in early 2009 as part of the industry's move towards scrapie eradication. In order to achieve total eradication, Canada must tighten up its import protocols to reduce the risk of bringing scrapie into the country.

Tightening import protocols is important for a number of reasons. Prior enrolment in the country's flock certification program is a key bio-security and risk mitigation component, especially as risk tolerance for scrapie is decreasing.

Ramping up is also important for Canada to achieve scrapie eradication and receive the status of "scrapie free" from the World Organization for Animal Health, more commonly referred to as the OIE. One way of accomplishing this is by establishing import conditions that are in line with the policies laid out by 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. In fact, in past negotiations, these countries have questioned Canada's OIE compliance.

The U.S. has made it very clear that they are following OIE scrapie criteria. The U.S. has publicly stated that they are working towards eradication and want to be recognized as "scrapie free" in accordance with the OIE by 2017.

They have told Canada that if a trading relationship between the two countries is to continue, Canada must follow a similar path towards scrapie eradication.



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## Food Bill Aims to Improve Safety

Recent data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that one in six people in the United States suffers from food-borne illness each year. Over the past few years, high-profile outbreaks related to various foods, from spinach and peanut products to eggs, have underscored the need to make continuous improvements in food safety.

The Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) gives FDA a mandate to pursue a system that is based on science and addresses hazards from farm to table, putting greater emphasis on preventing food-borne illness. The reasoning is simple: The better the system handles producing, processing, transporting, and preparing foods, the safer our food supply will be.

Under the provisions of FSMA, companies will be required to develop and implement written food safety plans, FDA will have the authority to better respond and require recalls when food safety problems occur, and FDA will be able to better ensure that imported foods are as safe for consumers as foods produced in the U.S.

FDA Commissioner Margaret A. Hamburg, M.D., says the bill—which President Barack Obama signed into law on Jan. 4—lays the foundation for a prevention-based, 21st century food safety system that makes everyone in the global food chain responsible for safety.

“This law helps us take the critical steps toward strengthening the food safety system that is vital to the health and security of the American people,” Hamburg says.

The legislation, which FDA experts say transforms the food safety system, includes the following major provisions:

- Food facilities must have a written preventive controls plan that spells out the possible problems that could affect the safety of their products. This plan would outline steps that a food facility would take to prevent or significantly minimize the likelihood of those problems occurring.
- FDA must establish science-based standards for the safe production and harvesting of fruits and vegetables. These standards must consider not only man-made risks to fresh produce safety, but also naturally-occurring hazards—such as those posed by the soil, animals, and water in the growing area.
- FDA is directed to increase the frequency of inspections. High-risk domestic facilities must receive an initial inspection within the next five years and no less than every three years after that. During the next year, FDA must inspect at least 600 foreign food facilities and double the number of those inspections every year for the next five years. With the availability of resources, FDA will build the inspection capacity to meet these important goals.
- FDA is authorized to mandate a recall of unsafe food if the food company fails to do it voluntarily. The law also provides a more flexible standard for administrative detention (the procedure FDA uses to keep suspect food from being moved); allows FDA to suspend the registration of a food facility associated with unsafe food, thereby preventing it from distributing food; and directs the agency to improve its ability to track both domestic and imported foods.

## Food Bill Aims to Improve Safety continued

While FDA is charged with regulating almost all food products, the legislation also recognizes that food safety is a responsibility shared among U.S., state, local, territorial, tribal, and foreign food safety agencies. This new legislation clearly endorses the efforts already underway among FDA and our regulatory partners toward creating a truly integrated food safety system.

Dr. Hamburg says the new law represents a critical step in strengthening the U.S. food

safety system but acknowledges challenges in achieving full implementation as the legislation did not include sufficient fee resources to cover the costs of the new requirements. The commissioner says: "We ask Congress, industry and other stakeholders to work with us to ensure that FDA has sufficient fee resources to achieve our shared food safety and food defense goals."

Source: [www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm237758.htm](http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm237758.htm)

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## Fears that winter freeze will slash spring lamb crop

Speculation is mounting that the freezing weather could result in fewer lambs on the ground next spring. Sheep farmers struggling to manage snowbound flocks during the recent cold spell could be facing a double whammy of higher winter costs and lower litter size, experts have warned.

Flocks due to lamb down after St Patrick's Day could be worst affected because the mating coincided with the worst weather, claimed Teagasc sheep expert Michael Gottstein. Both nutrition and fertility levels have been affected by the cold weather, he warned. Hill ewes brought down to the lowlands for mating normally benefit from a higher plane of nutrition and gain body condition score before and during the mating season. During a normal year, the ewe could improve from a body condition score of 2 to 2.5 or 3 during their six to seven weeks on lower ground.

However, in many cases, the nutritious lowland pastures have been covered by frost and snow for at least three weeks and, as a result, there is concern that ewe body condition scores will not improve enough. In fact, there is a risk that the ewes will lose more body condition by searching for grass, despite being fed hay or silage. "If the ewes do not receive adequate flushing, this could have a negative effect on both the litter size and their chances of survival on the hill this winter," Mr Gottstein said.

In some cases, thinner ewes will have to be taken back down off the hills for supplementary feeding, driving up production costs on the farm. However, the negative effects of frost and snow are not limited to the females. "There is potentially an issue with rams walking in snow," he said. "Some breeds, particularly the continental breeds, have less wool covering on the testicles and the low temperatures could have a negative impact on semen quality."

Meanwhile, the Department of Agriculture has insisted that the requirement to electronically tag sheep will not be extended to include lambs destined for slaughter. Last week, the ICSEA sheep committee chairman, Mervyn Sunderland, predicted that electronic tagging would be extended to lambs going directly from their farms of birth to slaughter.

However, this suggestion was rejected by a Department spokesperson, who said there were no plans to change the existing derogation which allows lambs going directly for slaughter to be tagged with conventional tags.

Source: [www.independent.ie/farming/sheep/fears-that-winter-freeze-will-slash-spring-lamb-crop-2459476.html](http://www.independent.ie/farming/sheep/fears-that-winter-freeze-will-slash-spring-lamb-crop-2459476.html)

## Canadian Pork Industry Targets 48 Hour Swine Movement Reporting

The Manager of PigTrace Canada says the faster information can be reported on the movement of swine the more effective a new national swine traceability system will be.

Proposed federal regulations designed to accommodate the creation of a new national swine traceability system are expected to be published for public comment in Canada Gazette-1 in the first quarter of 2011.

Under the proposed regulations stakeholders will be required to report information on the movement of swine within 48 hours.

Jeff Clark, the manager of PigTrace Canada an initiative of the Canadian Pork Council, acknowledges there have been concerns expressed that 48 hours might not be practical.

Right now that's in the regulations for a couple of reasons.

It's an international standard.

If we can accomplish it it'll give the Canada pork sector a very very good reputation in terms of not just our excellent pork quality but also a very strong traceability system that's becoming more and more of an interest to the importing countries that buy Canadian pork.

There's reasons to really hit that 48 hours.

When you're looking at an emergency situation, the worst one being a foreign animal disease, a foot and mouth disease issue but even production diseases like PRRS, the quicker you can get on top of it and find the source of the contamination or disease infection and then eradicate it you'll prevent spread and then potentially the quicker you can get back into business.

We do know from economic studies that have been done, the longer it takes to get the traceback information, the longer it takes to actually do the investigation and the financial repercussions are exponential so the tighter we can get it the better the return on investment will be. Of course if we can get real time on the hour it would be great. We know that's not achievable for most people. 48 hours is kind of a happy medium.

Clark says, while there are no guarantees traceability will improve market access, a growing number of the high value importers are demanding traceability and in some cases it could become a requirement to sell pork into certain markets.

**Source:** [www.farmscape.com/f2ShowScript.aspx?i=23561&q=Canadian+Pork+Industry+Targets+48+Hour+Swine+Movement+Reporting](http://www.farmscape.com/f2ShowScript.aspx?i=23561&q=Canadian+Pork+Industry+Targets+48+Hour+Swine+Movement+Reporting)