



FROM THE *flock*

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR THE CANADIAN SHEEP INDUSTRY

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Provincial Highlights

With each issue of From the Flock, we will highlight the activities and achievements of provincial sheep associations across Canada. In this issue we would like to point out some of the recent work done by the Ontario Sheep Marketing Agency (OSMA), a producer operated organization representing all aspects of the sheep, lamb and wool industries in the Province of Ontario. For more information about OSMA, visit their website at www.ontariosheep.org.

Read more on page 8.



What's New at the Canadian Sheep Federation

Traceability Consultations

The Canadian Sheep Federation is currently reviewing elements of a national traceability system proposed by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). In particular, the Canadian sheep industry needs to explore options for national ID, movement reporting, tag retirement and program data management. The Canadian Sheep Federation is interested collecting feedback from Canadian producers in order to help design a system that works for everyone. Please take a moment to visit the following survey <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/SQND9VQ>, and encourage other producers to do the same. Your opinion counts!

The Canadian Sheep Identification Program (CSIP)

The Canadian Sheep Identification Program became mandatory for the Canadian sheep industry January 1, 2004. Under the current CSIP, producer and stakeholder responsibilities include:

- All sheep and lambs must bear an approved CSIP ear tag before they leave their farm of origin. This includes animals leaving the premises temporarily (e.g. exhibitions, veterinarian clinics, community pastures). It is illegal to transport animals not bearing an approved tag.
- CSIP tags must be purchased from an approved distributor
- Sheep producers and feedlot operators are required to keep a record of:
 - o All sheep or lambs entering your flock for breeding purposes
 - o All sheep 18 months or older leaving your farm, other than those sold directly to a federally or provincially inspected abattoir
- Imported sheep must have an approved CSIP tag applied either before importation or within 7 days of the sheep reaching its initial destination.
- All sheep purchased must bear an approved CSIP ear tag. If a tag is subsequently lost, you must immediately apply a new CSIP ear tag; report the new identification number and, if known, the former identification number; and record information about the origin of the sheep as is known.
- Approved CSIP ear tags must not be removed from any live sheep or tampered with for any reason and must not be re-used. If a sheep dies on your property, the tag may be removed. The identification numbers of the approved tags borne by the sheep carcasses disposed of by the operator must be reported within 30 days after disposing of the carcass. There are no record-keeping or reporting requirement for the on-farm disposal of carcasses not bearing an approved tag.
- Auction marts, livestock dealers and packing plants are required to accept only sheep and lambs bearing an approved CSIP ear tag.

Producers are reminded that as a mandatory and legislated program, program requirements are enforced by Canadian Food Inspection Agency inspectors. Monetary penalties will be imposed on producers, auction marts, livestock dealers and packing plants who do not follow program requirements. For more information about CSIP, contact the Canadian Sheep Federation by calling 888.684.7739 or by emailing info@cansheep.ca. For a list of CSIP approved tags, visit the Canadian Sheep Federation website at www.cansheep.ca.

Canada Sheep and Lamb Farms, Manitoba's newest farming venture

In March of this year, Sarto Sheep Farms Inc of Manitoba and Integrated Foods Ltd of New Zealand announced the formation of a their new farming venture, Canada Sheep and Lamb Farms. Canada Sheep and Lamb Farms anticipates growing the Sarto Sheep Farms ewe flock from today's 5,000 head to 30,000 breeding ewes in 5 years, with potential growth to 50,000 ewes beyond that. Patrick Smith, President of Canada Sheep and Lamb Farms says "I'm very excited by the potential to leverage 40 years experience developing our breeding ewes to their current level of productivity in this new venture".

Canada Sheep will contract multipliers to help build the flock quickly over the short term, drawing on the genetics developed by Sarto Sheep Farms and benefitting from the use of existing facilities to do so. This will also help support the growth of a number of family farms. The first multiplier contract has been signed with the Sytse van der Zijl family from Beausejour, Manitoba, with plans to sign 3 more in 2014 and 5 in 2015. Canada Sheep and Lamb Farms intends on marketing lambs through the Canadian Lamb Producers Cooperative (CLPC). The additional production of market lambs is expected to help ensure that the CLPC can service domestic demand. Gary Alexander, Chairman of Canada Sheep stated "I'm impressed by the productivity of the Sarto Sheep operation and believe we can add real value in expanding the marketable lamb flock to meet the tremendous unserved demand for fresh lamb in Canada and internationally".

Proposed changes to import requirements

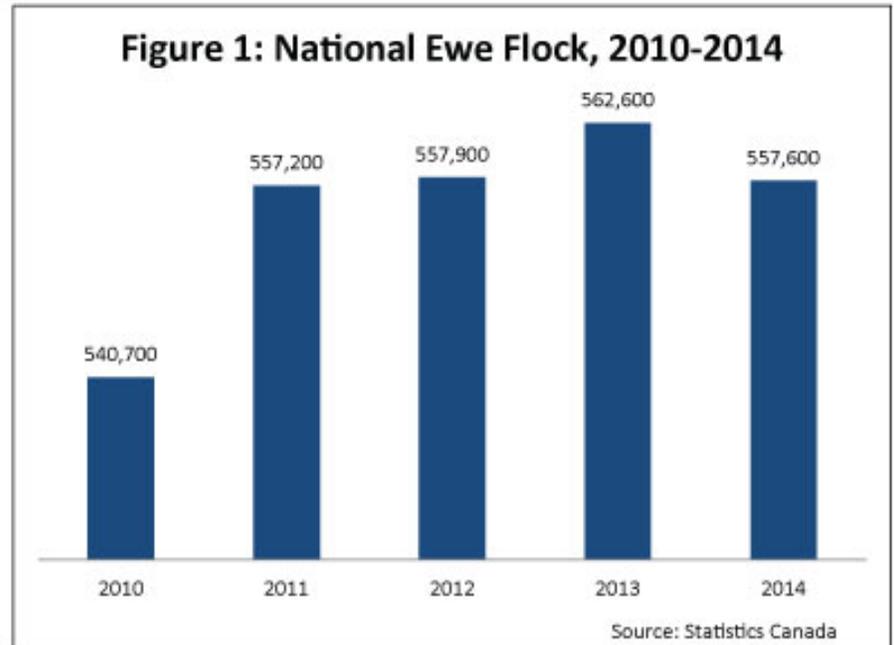
The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) recently released for comment its proposed changes to the requirements for importing small ruminants from the United States. The proposed requirements for small ruminants imported from the United States for breeding, domestic or captive purposes represent an extensive revision of an earlier policy presented in 2013. Amendments to previous versions were made in response to industry comments made during the 2013 consultation. Major revisions include restricting the imports of females to those from US negligible risk flocks where previously females could be imported either from negligible risk flocks or from flocks enrolled in the USDA Scrapie Flock Certification Program provided they were imported to a flock enrolled in the Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program (VSFCP). A number of options for importing males include importing from negligible risk flocks, importing from any US flock provided they are imported to a VSFCP enrolled flock and never leave the importing flock or they are imported from any flock into any flock provided the ram has an AA/RR or AA/QR genotype.

The Canadian small ruminant industry has until May 30, 2014, to provide comments on the proposed import policy changes and the Canadian Sheep Federation will work closely with industry stakeholders to provide feedback to the CFIA. If you are interested in reviewing the proposed changes and/or wish to provide comments about the policy, please contact the Canadian Sheep Federation by calling 888.684.7739 or by emailing info@cansheep.ca

Canada's 2014 Ewe Flock

Statistics Canada released the January 1st, 2014, sheep statistics reporting a modest decrease in the Canadian ewe flock compared to 2013 (Figure 1). There were 557,600 ewes in the national flock in 2014 compared to 562,600 in 2013, a decrease of 5,000 ewes or 0.89%. The 2014 ewe flock remains 3.1% larger than it was 5 years ago, when there were 540,700 ewes on-farm. The 5-year ewe flock average is 555,200 ewes.

Looking across the country, Quebec and Saskatchewan lost national ewe flock market share, down to 25.36% (from 25.79%) and 10.19% (from 10.49%), respectively. Newfoundland (0.22%), Prince Edward Island (0.65%), New Brunswick (0.79%) and British Columbia (4.59%) have each maintained their proportions of the national flock in 2014. Gaining market share are Nova Scotia (2.30%, up from 2.26%), Ontario (33.36%, up from 33.17%), Manitoba (5.74%, up from 5.51%) and Alberta (16.88%, up from 16.58%). Despite gaining 0.19% of the national ewe flock, total ewe inventories in Ontario are down by 600 head in 2014 from 2013.



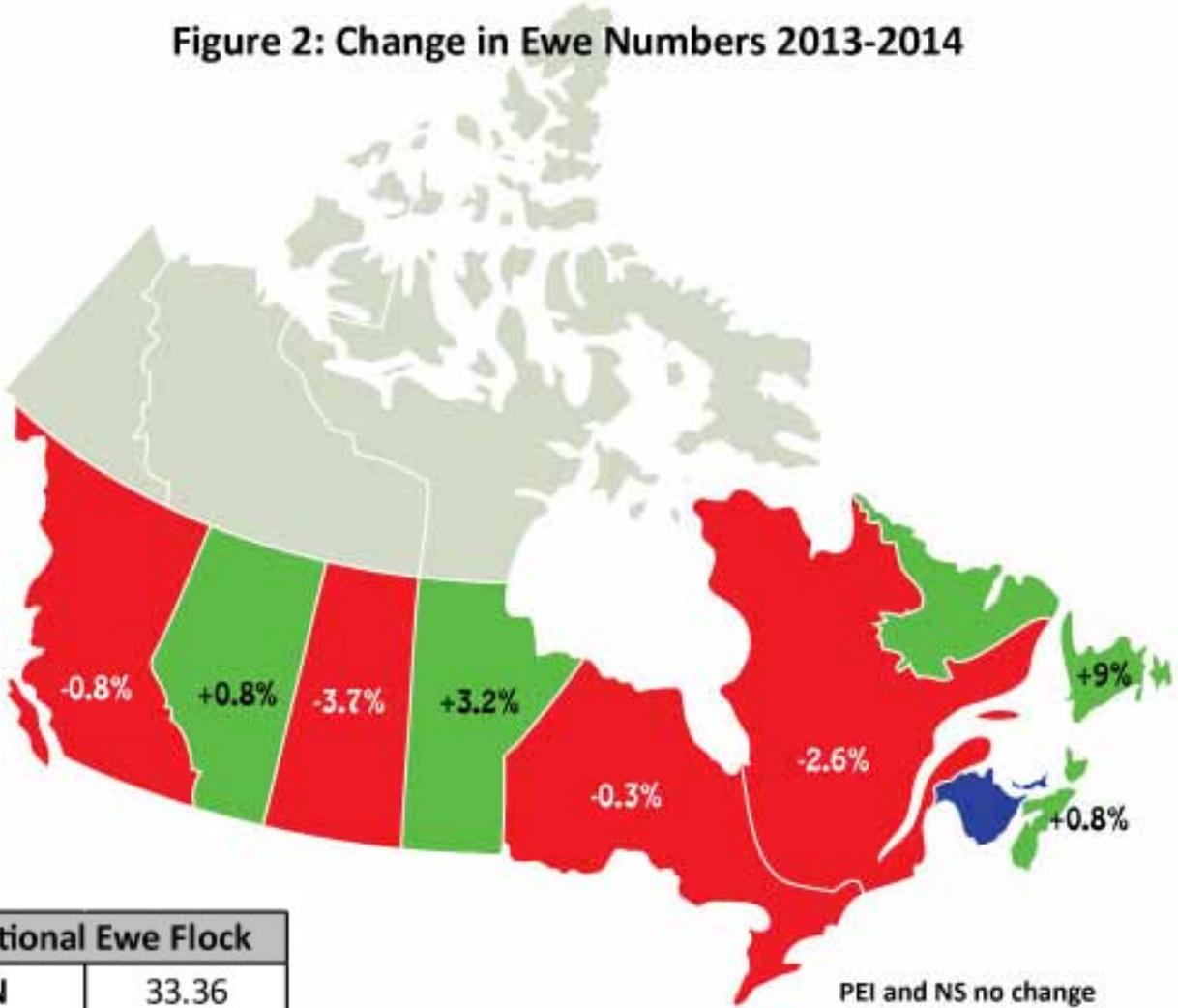
Market Lambs

January 1st holdings of market lambs nationally were down 0.59% in 2014. There were 220,000 market lambs on-farm in 2014 down by 1,300 lambs or 0.59% from the same time in 2013. Market lambs on hand January 1st, 2014, represented a greater percentage of total inventories at 24.64% of total sheep and lamb numbers, an increase over the 24.54% of 2013. Prince Edward Island, Ontario, Manitoba and Alberta reported more market lambs on-farm in 2014 over 2013 with Ontario and Alberta each reporting increases of 500 head. All other provinces reported fewer market lambs on-farm in 2014, with Quebec holding 3.1% (1,700 head) fewer than in 2013.

Replacement Lambs

The number of replacement lambs on-farm January 1, 2014, was down in all provinces except Manitoba with a national decrease of 2.1% or 1,900 head. Manitoba is the only province reporting an increase in the number of replacements in 2014, with 9.1% (500 head) more than in 2013. This trend of proportionally fewer replacement lambs and higher market lamb inventories (as a proportion of total inventories) suggest that the downward trend in the national flock size may continue in 2015.

Figure 2: Change in Ewe Numbers 2013-2014



% National Ewe Flock	
ON	33.36
QC	25.3
AB	16.88
SK	10.19
MB	5.74
BC	4.59
NS	2.3
NB	0.79
PEI	0.64
NL	0.21

Comparing January 1, 2014, statistics within provinces (Figure 2), Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Manitoba and Alberta have increased ewe numbers by 9%, 0.8%, 3.2% and 0.8% respectively. Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick's ewe flocks remain stable while Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan and British Columbia's ewe flock sizes have decreased (2.6%, 0.3%, 3.7% and 0.8% respectively). Quebec demonstrated the greatest loss in the number of ewes this year, down 4,000 from 2013, marking a 5-year low and continual decline for the province. In 2010, Quebec was home to 154,200 ewes compared to the 141,100 in 2014, marking a loss of 13,100 ewes or 3.15% of the national flock. Manitoba had the single largest increase of 1,000 ewes in 2014 over 2013.

Manitoba has shown the most significant growth trends over the past few years, reaching a 5-year high in 2014 of both the provincial ewe flock and proportion of replacement lambs on hand. At this stage, the numbers suggest there will be continued expansion in the province. Conversely, Quebec has exhibited marked decreases in production capacity reporting 5-year lows in the provincial ewe flock, replacement lambs and market lambs on-farm. Ontario remains the largest sheep producing province in Canada, maintaining well over 30% of the national ewe flock for five consecutive years.

The Scrapie Eradication Strategic Plan



The Canadian Sheep Federation (CSF), in conjunction with the Canadian National Goat Federation (CNGF), Canadian Sheep Breeders' Association (CSBA), Canadian Livestock Genetics Association (CLGA), Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) and the Universities of Saskatchewan and Guelph has completed the Scrapie Eradication Strategic Plan. This strategic plan creates a roadmap by which the Canadian small ruminant industry can eradicate scrapie from Canada.

The Scrapie Eradication Strategic Plan marks the culmination of the 4-year National TSE Eradication Plan and draws from the successes of that project. A national scrapie prevalence study was carried out under the National TSE Eradication Plan and provides the basis for the work outlined in the Scrapie Eradication Strategic Plan.

Scrapie prevalence was established separately for the national sheep flock and goat herd. Over a period of 2 years, a total of 11,704 testable sheep samples were collected from abattoirs across Canada based on a sample collection strategy created by the study's epidemiologist. From these samples, the prevalence of scrapie in the national sheep flock was estimated to be 0.08% or 1 in 1,300 mature sheep. The goat scrapie prevalence study collected 761 goat samples from abattoirs during the same period and the prevalence of scrapie was cautiously estimated at 0.26% or 1 in every 383 mature goats. The estimation of goat scrapie needs to be more critically interpreted as the final sample size was small, not allowing for the same level of precision as in the sheep prevalence estimation.

The Scrapie Eradication Strategic Plan steering committee developed a national scrapie surveillance strategy aimed at identifying all remaining positive cases of scrapie. The surveillance strategy calls for the collection of 11,000 testable samples every two years (1,050 goat samples and 4,450 sheep samples annually) for a minimum of four years in the first phase of surveillance.

The second phase of the surveillance strategy will begin once there have been 5 consecutive years of no positive scrapie cases identified. During the second phase of surveillance, 3,000 samples will be tested annually; at least 570 goats and 2,430 sheep per year.

In addition to the scrapie surveillance, the strategic plan will focus on communicating eradication efforts to Canadian producers, industry stakeholders and trading partners. Considerable effort will be placed on providing scrapie education for all industry stakeholders and encouraging engagement in eradication efforts by Canadian producers.

The plan will continue to support administration of the Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program (VSFCP) and encourage program uptake. The VSFCP provides a means for producers to control scrapie on-farm and recognizes efforts producers through a certification process.

For more information about the Scrapie Eradication Strategic Plan or the Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program, contact Scrapie Canada at 866-534-1302 or by emailing admin@scrapiecanada.ca.

The Schmallenberg Virus

The Schmallenberg virus was first discovered in Germany in November 2011 and has now been found in The Netherlands, Belgium, United Kingdom, France, Luxembourg, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Austria and Ireland. The virus has NOT been detected in North America and a number of import restrictions on live animals and germplasm have been implemented to protect against inadvertently introducing the virus into Canada. None the less, it is important to be vigilant for the virus and take precautionary measures wherever possible.

Epidemiology & Symptoms

The Schmallenberg virus has been found to naturally infect cattle, bison, sheep and goats and experimentally infect red deer, alpacas, mouflons and wild boar. The virus is believed to be transmitted primarily by midges (Culicoides) and to date a number of culicoides species have proven to be competent virus vectors. Mosquitoes have not yet been implicated in the transmission of the Schmallenberg virus. The virus causes fever, diarrhoea and production losses (reduced milk yield) in infected animals. Symptoms in live animals have been observed mainly during the active midge season (April – November) and subside within a few days with a very short viral period of only 1-5 days. Fetal infection during pregnancy plays a much more severe role in this disease. If a pregnant female is infected during a vulnerable phase of pregnancy, thought to be 28-36 days gestation in sheep, the virus could infect the fetus causing serious damage. Observed birth defects include severe arthrogryposes (tendon shortening of the ankle), torticollis (contraction of the muscles of the cervical spine) and hydrocephalus (accumulation of water on the brain). In small ruminants, infected ewes rarely show any symptoms of the virus until they give birth to lambs with congenital malformations.

Treatment

There is currently no specific treatment for the Schmallenberg virus. Inactivated vaccines are commercially available in some countries although are not currently approved in Canada. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has indicated that although Schmallenberg vaccines are not currently available in Canada, they could be accessed easily should the virus be identified in North America. In countries where the virus has been identified, the World Organization for Animal Health (the OIE) recommends controlling potential vectors during the vector-active season to help decrease transmission of the virus. The OIE also suggests rescheduling the breeding outside the vector season to decrease the number of foetal malformations.

Canadian producers who experience a higher than normal rate of stillbirths, abortions or congenital defects in their lamb crops are encouraged to have the lambs tested for the Schmallenberg virus. Private practice veterinarians have been updated on the epidemiology of the virus and the CFIA's North American Foreign Animal Disease Laboratory (NCFAD) has developed testing capacity for the virus. Schmallenberg is not a reportable disease and infected animals are not subject to disease control actions. This means that if the virus is ever identified in Canada, the industry will need to manage the disease outcomes and work to contain its spread. Unfortunately, this also means that producers will not be eligible for reimbursement of animals lost to the virus. Should the virus ever occur in Canada, knowing about it early will help the industry implement preventative measures and gain access to vaccines. Vigilance will be important for the protection of the Canadian sheep industry.

Master Shepherd's Course

Applications are now being accepted for the updated Ontario Master Shepherd's Course. This course is being developed for producers wishing to expand their production and business management skill base. The program consists of twelve two-day education modules that will cover topics such as business planning, genetics, nutrition, feeding systems, infrastructure, flock health management, lambing, predation, marketing and future planning. Over a period of 14 months, producers will hear from leading experts, seasoned producers and Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food specialists. Also included is the opportunity to participate in practical demonstrations and farm tours.

Market Development

OSMA has joined forces with Ontario Veal, Ontario Rabbit and Ontario Goat to implement a Market Development project. This project will provide the commodity organizations with a better understanding of the opportunities and challenges associated with various consumer segments; insight into current market penetration of meat products and assess the future potential of targeted ethnic communities. Information will be provided as to where and how to market products to maximize purchasing and how the buying habits of the ethnic consumer compares to the average Ontario consumer. An economic analysis will be done to determine whether or not there is a price differential between ethnic and mainstream markets and what product/price different ion strategies can be employed to optimize returns for producers.

MOA with Ontario SPCA

OSMA and the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Ontario SPCA) have just agreed upon a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). This Agreement will allow sheep industry representatives to accompany Ontario SPCA inspectors and provide them with technical assistance when on sheep specific farm calls. OSMA and Ontario SPCA will have joint education sessions on an annual basis to exchange information and experiences related to on-farm care and the Codes of Practice. The aim is to reduce the tension of inspections and promote understanding and knowledge-sharing between Ontario SPCA inspectors, OSMA and sheep producers.

MOU with OMAF MRA on Provincial Premises Registry

OSMA has recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food and Ministry of Rural Affairs on Provincial Premises Registry. This MOU will allow OSMA to update Premises Identification numbers (PIDs) on behalf of all consenting producer members, while ensuring confidentiality of producer information.

OSMA continues to work with the Purebred Sheep Breeders of Ontario in planning the 2014 Classic in Ancaster July 9-12th. We are looking forward to welcoming producers from across Canada.