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By Jennifer Fleming, Executive Director

Last month the CSF held its Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Montreal, Quebec. Over the course of the three day meeting, CSF Board Members worked through an aggressive agenda, focusing primarily on the Marketing Development Strategy. In addition, there were presentations from the Federation des producteurs d'agneaux et moutons du Quebec, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, and the American and Mexican sheep industries.

Martin Gooch and Terri-Lyn Moore from the George Morris Centre launched the meeting by bolstering the Board's industry optimism with their updates on the Market Opportunities and Value Chain projects. Gooch and Moore presented findings which, as we have published before, indicate that there is huge market potential for Canadian lamb. There are, however, some real obstacles when it comes to our ability to meet our potential; the primary obstacle being our inability to provide a consistent product, consistently.

The inability to provide a consistent product consistently was reiterated again by Hugh Maynard of Qu'anglo Communications who is working on our Retail and Food Service Marketing Manual Project and Ray Price of Sunterra Meats, who spoke to the Board for over an hour on the last day of the AGM. Changing our current production systems to supply a year-round consistent product is a bit challenging – daunting even. However, the deliverables from the marketing project will provide interested producers with the tools to make the changes necessary to meet the challenge.

AGM attendees also participated in a Strategic Planning workshop, the aim of which was to provide the CSF with some guidance on where the industry should focus its time and energy over the course of the next three to five years. The resulting business plan will be produced by early spring. This planning session, along with the individual interviews conducted by Rana International, is providing the CSF with valuable information and will ensure that we are working on issues prioritized by the industry.

As revealed in the workshop, not only are the results of the market development project going to be a real asset to the sheep industry, but it was evident that participants at the AGM are dedicated to seeing the sheep industry reach its potential.

Other highlights: Ndeye-Marie Diallo from the *Fédération des producteurs d'agneaux et moutons du Québec*, provided an up-date on the development of Quebec's single desk marketing agency, which is set to begin on June 1, 2007. Between now and June, the FPAMQ will be negotiating the price of heavy lambs with buyers, transportation compensation for producers, develop a handbook for producers and negotiate agreements with agents.

Ray Price of Sunterra Meats spoke about his family's company and their commitment to lamb production. Ray underlined much of what the Market Development Research has been proving, which is that the lamb industry needs to improve its products' quality and consistency

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He indicated that in order to facilitate the expansion of lamb, they have constructed a lamb feedlot to supply grain feed to lambs year round to Canadian and export markets. Their capacity, which they hope to reach by summer 2007, is 15,000 lambs.

In terms of what Sunterra is doing to make that happen, they have implemented quality grading and payment system for lambs, are participating in research to improve quality, renovating and improving the slaughter floor at their Innisfail facility, and offering contracts to producers to supply feeder or finished lambs at a profitable price.

They are also interested in working with producers to research and understand production and processing costs in Canadian and competitive markets.

Canadian Sheep Identification Program: The Canadian Sheep Identification Program (CSIP) strategic plan was reviewed, as it is at every AGM. At this meeting though, the plan was reviewed in the context of 1) the industry's ability to track animal movements, 2) retire tag numbers and 3) identify premises.

The Federal Provincial Territorial Traceability Task Team has identified these three areas as the basis of a Canadian traceability model. While provincial governments have indicated that they will be responsible for the development and implementation of premises identification, animal movement and tag retirement are issues that the industry has been asked to deal with.

The federal government has committed to discussing with each industry their ability, or inability, to track animal movements and retire tags. The CSF Board has indicated that in addition to entering into discussions with the federal government: (a) the Ketchum pink tag will remain a tagging option; (b) tag retirement is a problem for the industry since the majority of processing occurs in provincially inspected plants; (c) permanent ID for breeding stock could be a more elaborate option one than for animals going to slaughter and that perhaps a two pronged ID strategy should be investigated and; (d) the government should help with the development of management software and readers, as well as helping processing plants to retire tags and assist in producer education.

The updated CSIP Strategic Plan will be posted on the website (www.cansheep.ca) in early January 2007.

CSF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING — THANK YOU

The CSF would like to thank everyone for another successful AGM. In particular the CSF would like to acknowledge all of the guest speakers for their well delivered presentations and constructive discussions.

Mr. Burdell Johnson (American Sheep Industry) and Dr. Javier Lara (Mexican Sheep Industry) provided an overview of their industries, as well as some of the challenges and opportunities that they face. The CSF is looking forward to our continued partnership with your organizations.

Tianna MacInnes (CFIA) and Curtiss Littlejohn (Ontario Pork & Canadian Animal Health Coalition) provided information regarding the OIE animal welfare group and the zoning initiative in Canada, respectively

Finally, we would like to extend a special thank you to the *Fédération des producteurs d'agneaux et moutons du Québec* for hosting this year's AGM in Montreal. Their hard work in helping to plan the meeting was instrumental to its success.

COMMENT FROM THE CHAIR

By Florence Henning

I am honoured to have been re-elected for another year as Chair of CSF. Last year was exciting and challenging and with the final recommendations and proposals of the Market Development and Value Chain projects nearing completion, 2007 will again be another exciting year for the sheep industry.

We know our industry has enormous potential and with these tools we will look forward to building and expanding our accomplishments of the past and developing and implementing new projects to reach our goals.

2007 will also bring meetings with the American and Mexican sheep industries, where we will continue to foster our good relationships for the betterment of cross-border trade. At the World Sheep and Wool Congress in Mexico we will also promote the Canadian Sheep Industry.

Nationally we will be involved in traceability, zoning, animal health, OFFS to name a few and the board will remain busy with their commitments to their own provincial boards and their on-going projects. Involvement in CSF is a commitment both in time and energy but as all directors will agree it is a rewarding and learning experience. Looking forward to an "explosion" in lamb opportunities in 2007.

Henning Headed for Second Term As Chair of the Canadian Sheep Federation

Florence Henning, a sheep producer from Rochfort Bridge Alberta was re-acclaimed Chair of the Canadian Sheep Federation (CSF) at their Annual General Meeting in Montreal Quebec last week.

Henning along with her husband and 4 children moved to Alberta in 1987 from Northern Ireland, and currently operate a flock of 450 commercial ewes. Henning has been a dynamic member of the sheep industry for many years; she has been a member of North West Sheep Producers and has represented zone 6 on the Alberta Sheep and Wool Commission. Presently Henning is involved with the flock health and Canadian Sheep Identification programs, as well as the traceability committee.

"It is a privilege to have been re-elected chair of the CSF," says Henning adding that "This coming year will be an exciting one as the Federation completes its Market Development Strategy. The mid-term information provided on the marketing projects in progress was encouraging and we are all feeling incredibly optimistic about the future of the Canadian sheep industry".

Andre Trépanier of Ste.Sabine Quebec was also re-acclaimed this year as Vice Chair. Trépanier has been a member of the CSF's board for the past six years, and has also been on the executive of the Fédération des producteurs d'agneaux et moutons du Québec for a number of years.

Rounding out the CSF's Executive Committee are Vince Stutzki and Dwane Morvik.

Stutzki and his wife Heather run a 600 head commercial sheep flock in Paisley Ontario. Stutzki has been a member of the CSF Board for the past two years and a member of the Ontario Sheep Marketing Agency Board for the past 6 years.

Morvik and his wife Jaime run a 350 head commercial Targhee sheep flock and 25 head of Angus cattle in Eastern Saskatchewan. Morvik has been a member of both the Saskatchewan Sheep Development Board and CSF Board for 2 years.

The Canadian Sheep Federation is a national, non-profit organization that represents all Canadian sheep producers. Its mission is further the viability, expansion and prosperity of the Canadian sheep and wool industry. For more information contact the Canadian Sheep Federation at **1-888-684-7739** or admin@cansheep.ca.

On-Farm Food Safety

By France Lanthier, OFFS Coordinator

History of OFFS in Canada (adapted from www.coffs-safc.ca)

There are four main drivers for on-farm food safety: consumer concerns, government initiatives, customer demands and the actions of Canada's competitors. To respond to these demands, and to provide documentation that Canadian food is among the safest in the world, the agricultural community worked with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada to develop on-farm food safety programs. The farm organizations have also worked with the federal, provincial and territorial governments to establish a process through which these programs can be officially recognized by the CFIA for technical soundness and administrative effectiveness.

During the early 1990's, the national commodity groups and general farm organizations identified the new expectation that farms would need to implement on-farm food safety programs. They determined that they had the following options: do nothing and wait for government regulation, have programs dictated to them by customers and be faced with competing programs at the farm gate, or take the initiative to develop national, commodity-specific on-farm food safety programs for their members.

The agriculture industry decided to be proactive and began to develop the framework for the Canadian approach and to develop commodity specific, HACCP-based on-farm food safety programs. This initiative was based on a common set of objectives. Canadian on-farm food safety programs would be: Producer-led, national & accessible, Commodity-specific, HACCP-based & auditable, Consistent, modular & expandable, Recognized in Canada, Internationally accepted, Affordable and practical.

Almost every project has made use of input from suppliers and customers, and have availed themselves of reviews by the CFIA, farmers and other experts. Farm organizations have openly shared information amongst the projects - both successes and challenges. As a consequence, the On-Farm Food Safety (OFFS) programs that have resulted and are being developed are technically sound, practical, producer friendly and auditable. Furthermore, the programs being developed are designed to be adaptable and to complement currently existing programs in order to avoid duplications in record keeping on the farm and in administration.

Developing a technically sound program is only the first step. Producers also need to be able to demonstrate to their customers, over time, that they have implemented the program and that they are maintaining it. The Canadian approach permits them to do this. National producer organizations are offering developing systems to provide certification services to producers. The on-farm programs are designed to be auditable, so that if producers meet the requirements of the program, they can be audited and certified. The administrative management of the certification schemes is being designed to meet specific government criteria which will ensure a common approach to management.

The Canadian Approach has several strengths, including a consistent approach to program development, collaborative action amongst farm groups and a strong industry/government partnership. The success of on-farm food safety programming in Canada is dependent upon demonstrating the value of these programs to farmers and customers and continuing collaboration amongst national commodity organizations, farm groups and governments.

Beginnings In the Sheep Industry: Producer Manual Development and Technical Review Part I: The Canadian Sheep Federation has been involved in the Canadian On-Farm Food Safety initiative since its inception. A technical committee, made up of producers, and provincial extension people met formally for the first time in September of 1997 to initiate the development of what would become the *Canadian Sheep and Lamb Food-Safe Farm Practices Program*. This group was composed of sheep producers, provincial sheep producer representatives, veterinarians, and provincial government employees from across Canada. While this is a simplified summary, the group's tasks were essentially:

On-Farm Food Safety con't

1. Identify potential on-farm food safety risk on sheep operations
2. Identify at which point these hazards can be prevented or eliminated
3. Establish risk limits
4. Establish methods to monitor and record
5. Develop methods to correct problems when they occur and to prevent them in the future
6. Package steps 1 – 5 in a comprehensive document

After approximately 8 years of discussion and hard work the group achieved its objective and produced an on-farm food safety manual to guide producers through addressing food safety concerns on their operations. In July of 2005, the Canadian Sheep Federation was rewarded for the group's efforts by receiving a letter of Technical Review Part I from the CFIA, which signified that the producer manual for the *Canadian Sheep and Lamb Food-Safe Farm Practices Program* met the technical requirements of established by the CFIA.

Briefly, the letter of Technical Review Part I is the acknowledgement that the Canadian Sheep Federation's on-farm food safety program is addressing the potential on-farm food safety risks on sheep operations and that appropriate preventive and control procedures have been identified. Throughout the program development process, information was communicated to producers through provincial associations and CSF bulletins. Formal program information sessions started in 2004 and are still available.

Continuation: Developing the Management System and Technical Review Part II: Changes in CSF personnel, restructuring of the OFFS working group committee, and changes in provincial agricultural priorities resulted in the *Canadian Sheep and Lamb Food-Safe Farm Practices Program* development team dismantling, nonetheless, the second phase of the program began to take shape.

In November 2005, a restructured CSF OFFS technical committee, composed of provincial sheep producer organization representatives and provincial government extension personnel was assembled, and in June of 2006 three veterinarians joined the committee as well. With the assistance of the CFIA, this new group, named The Canadian Sheep Federation On-Farm Food Safety Technical Committee (CSF OFFS-TC) was presented with the task of developing a program management system. The management system is comprised of essentially two parts 1) the Registration Manual and 2) the Registration Procedures; both working in concert to assure administrative efficacy and efficiency. The management system covers every aspect of the Food-Safe Farm Practices program (ie: Producer registration, on-farm audits, auditor training, appeals and complaint, etc.)

The development of the Registration System Procedures was initiated in November 2005 and a first draft was presented to the CSF Board of Directors and the CSF OFFS TC in November 2006. The Registration System Manual, which describes how the system procedures interact, will be developed once the procedures are finalized. Once the Management System is completed and implemented, and once we are confident that it works, the CSF will be able to present the system to the CFIA for review. A successful Part II review will indicate that the CSF along with Provincial Delivery Agents are adequately managing all aspects of the program.

Role of the CSF and OFFS Technical Committee: Like many other federally funded programs, the Canadian Food Safety and Quality Program (CFSQP) funding, which funds the development of the CSF's OFFS program, is only accessible by National Producer Organizations. Through this funding the CSF is able to hire a program coordinator, fund committee meetings, and provide producers with program information and manuals. The role of the CSF OFFS Technical Committee is to assure that program development corresponds to producer needs and follows provincial and national regulations. The goal of the CSF is to complete the Management System by March 2008. That is, to have an agreed upon on-farm audit cycle, the cost of audits and program maintenance, and a plan on how to proceed, by March 2008. While it is unlikely that OFFS programs will come at no costs to producers, the CSF is determined to develop and explore cost efficient methods of providing this program.

POTENTIAL MARKET OPPORTUNITIES FOR SHEEP PRODUCTION IN CANADA

The purpose of this report is to provide a market opportunity analysis for the Canadian Sheep Federation and identify industry readiness for capturing those opportunities; then to develop recommendations for how the Canadian lamb industry can grow in accordance with market demands. The opportunity analysis will cover all levels/sectors that together comprise the Canadian lamb industry. It will begin by identifying consumers, customers and stakeholders' current perception and level of satisfaction felt toward the Canadian sheep industry compared to its major competitors.

The report compares the apparent effectiveness of current domestic supply arrangements for meeting market opportunities compared to a series of industry based international production and marketing initiatives that are deemed to have achieved a level of success that significantly surpassed the effectiveness of previous initiatives. This process includes an assessment of the relationships that exist between industry stakeholders. Consideration is then given to whether the same approach could likely be adopted by the Canadian sheep industry in order to more effectively respond to the drivers of change, thereby taking advantage of market opportunities.

Today's consumers spend less time preparing and cooking meals than in the past. They increasingly seek value-added products or ready to cook meals in order to lessen effort in preparation and/or cooking time. Value added products command a higher price for two main reasons. Firstly, they are costlier to prepare. Secondly, they offer greater value through saving consumers' time in preparation and/or offering greater consistency and a pleasurable eating experience. A third reason is better presentation and perceived added value to a potential consumer. According to McDonalds, the chicken industry has been a leader/trend setter in value-adding meat. There are many value-added chicken products available that are heat and serve, including marinated breasts or breaded chicken fingers. Other commodities such as beef and pork have been relatively slower to develop these types of products. One consequence of that is losing market share to the poultry industry.

A review of the literature pertaining to the sheep and lamb industries of Canada, New Zealand, Australia and the United States, identified significant gaps between their relative capabilities and available resources. Furthermore, the speed at which the gaps are expanding appears to be increasing. Particularly when comparing the Canadian and New Zealand sheep industries. Of the four sheep industries analyzed during this review, New Zealand appears the most market-focused and innovative. Improvements in productivity, meat quality, processing, transport, and promotional capabilities have occurred quicker in New Zealand than any other country researched. This includes in comparison to their closest competitor, Australia.

Since the abolition of income support for producers and the deregulation of much of its agricultural industry during the 1980's, the New Zealand sheep industry has changed radically. In two decades, fewer sheep are producing a similar number of lambs to before, and meat rather than wool is producers' primary source of income (Sheep & Wool New Zealand, 2006). Improvements in genetics and flock management have improved productivity per ewe, and consistency in terms of quality, value and yield of meat per lamb. These improvements, combined with greater coordination between processors and producers, and innovations processing, packing and transportation practices, and the adoption of new business models, have seen the viability of New Zealand's sheep and lamb industry increase markedly over the last decade. One example of developments in processing is the widely used practice of using innovative technology to accurately grade meat against specifications that reflect known market requirements. The result: improvements in the quality, consistency and value of lamb produced by New Zealand; and the ability to collect and share information with suppliers in order to improve flock management and breeding activities.

MARKET OPPORTUNITIES CONTINUED

The Australian sheep industry is becoming increasingly focused on producing consistently high quality lamb that meets the demands of its target markets and provides a pleasurable eating experience. Industry structure and practices have changed radically over the last decade. With the federal government investing considerable funds in initiatives such as the Sheep and Wool and Meat and Livestock Australia to research market requirements and increase the capability of industry to meet customer and consumer demands, the business model applied by the Australian sheep industry will undoubtedly continue to change as well.



The research findings suggest that much of the Canadian lamb industry currently follows practices that limit its ability to take full advantage of market developments and opportunities, particularly compared to international competitors such as New Zealand. If the expected increase in competition from the Australian lamb industry materializes, the future competitiveness of Canada's lamb industry may rely more than ever on developing the ability to produce and supply consistently high quality lamb graded according to tightly controlled specifications that reflect specific changing market demands. More than ever, one size will not fit all markets. Succeeding from this change in a profitable and sustainable manner will require much of the Canadian lamb industry to adopt more sophisticated production, processing and marketing techniques than is currently the case.

In percentage terms, lamb clearly appears to have greater opportunity for growth than any other red meat sector; particularly in terms of what could be achieved in the next decade. The extent of market opportunities and the accuracy of the findings were underlined by the almost uncanny resemblance between results attained from the consumer and retailer / foodservice research. By and large, they clearly understand their consumer market. This finding alone justifies the need for the Canadian lamb industry to find ways to work with retailers and foodservice to develop commercially sustainable business models for supplying Canadian lamb to the consumer market.

Even without the addition of any extensive marketing or promotion of Canadian lamb, a number of respondents estimated that the overall opportunity for lamb is double the current scale of production. As seen from the economic modeling, achieving this on a financially viable footing given current costs of production will require investment in value-added products and marketing/supply initiatives. The level of challenges that exist will however likely lead to the Canadian lamb industry experiencing growing pains as it wrestles with securing market opportunities and reacting to the increasing competitiveness showed by international lamb suppliers.

Lessons learnt from the experiences of other nations and sectors of agriculture is that the suppliers that do not choose to follow more strategic business approach than has traditionally been reflective of the lamb industry may well miss opportunities to retain their long-term profitability; and even market share in the face of an increasingly discerning consumer market. It therefore stands to reason that, if Canadian suppliers do not develop the capabilities necessary to serve the growing Canadian lamb market and take advantage of opportunities that exist ahead of their increasingly capable international competitors, the industry could lose a phenomenal commercial opportunity.

MARKET OPPORTUNITIES CONTINUED

The Canadian sheep and lamb industry may therefore be at a crossroads. Failing to earnestly invest the resources and determination into capturing market opportunities may lead to the industry slipping further in terms of its commercial capability compared to New Zealand, Australia, and even potentially the United States. It is foreseeable that a time will occur when that gap could become so great that Canadian lamb is relegated to predominantly niche markets and loses the current empathy that the majority of consumers have for domestically produced lamb. A paradox already exists between empathy that many Canadian consumers express towards domestically produced lamb and their purchasing behaviour. Currently, in large part this is due to the domestic industry's inability to consistently supply lamb in terms of the required quality and/or volume. Additional loss of commercial capability compared to international competitors would extend the gaps that already exist. Particularly given Australia's growing emphasis on producing feedlot lamb that may taste more like Canadian than New Zealand lamb, it is not inconceivable that any disparity could reach the level where many consumers, more familiar and satisfied with imported lamb, begin to shun Canadian lamb: regardless of its availability.

BLUE TONGUE INFORMATION UPDATE

Epidemic Bulletin by EFSA Epidemiology Working Group: (Outbreak Period until 12 Dec 2006)

Main observations:

1. The current bluetongue serotype 8 epidemic is now into its 17th week, with the case total having risen to 2012 herds, compared to 1994 herds last week. This week's data confirm the trend of a decrease in the number of new cases.
2. Due to this small number of new cases, there are no major changes in this report, compared to last week's report. Nevertheless, it should be noted that these recent cases have been reported at a considerable distance from the original primary focus (see weekly time series animation at URL above).
3. The Netherlands reported again no new cases this week. Luxembourg reported its 2nd and 3rd bluetongue cases. All new cases occurred in cattle.
4. The spatial pattern of cattle herd density indicates that the separation between the original outbreak area (central cluster) and the eastern cluster is through an area of very low cattle density. In contrast, high cattle herd density does not appear to coincide with spread along the east-west axis, suggesting other phenomena must play a role.
5. The relative risk map for cattle (expressing case density relative to the cattle farm density) shows that cattle farms in the central and eastern cluster have been most severely affected. In contrast, the risk for cattle farms in the western cluster has been lower.
6. Visual assessment of the data thus far available for sheep supports the findings for cattle. These findings imply that this year some high sheep and cattle herd density areas in the vicinity of the central cluster outbreak area have only been mildly affected. There are several possible explanations for this phenomenon, including the fact that the epidemic reached these high-density areas, such as the western cluster, relatively late during the progression of the epidemic.

BLUE TONGUE—QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What does it mean to be deemed bluetongue free?

Criteria for the recognition of Bluetongue free country or zone are proposed at Chapter 2.2.13.2 of the Terrestrial Animal Health Code of the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE): www.oie.int/eng/normes/mcode/en_chapitre_2.2.13.htm#rubrique_fievre_catarrhale_du_mouton

Bluetongue must be notifiable to the competent regulatory authority (CFIA in Canada) and have a surveillance program in accordance with OIE standards (not clearly defined yet) that has demonstrated no evidence of bluetongue virus in the country during the past two (2) years.

Other methods of qualifying are:

If that the country lies wholly north of 50°N and is not adjacent to a country not having free status (Canada can not qualify as such as we are adjacent to the USA which does not have free status)

OR

vector surveillance has demonstrated no evidence of a *Culicoides* likely to be a competent vector (in Canada, the only known competent vector is *Culicoides sonorensis* which is present in some western provinces).

Canada's on going national sero-surveillance program (last two in 1998-99 & 2002-03) is used as the foundation for claiming country freedom for bluetongue to the OIE. OIE also propose criteria for the recognition of seasonally free zone (see Chapter 2.2.13.3 of the Terrestrial Animal Health Code). In a bluetongue seasonally free zone surveillance demonstrates no evidence either of bluetongue transmission or of adult *Culicoides* likely to be competent bluetongue vectors.

At what point, and who, defines if bluetongue is established in Canada?

The CFIA will define if BT is established and will need virus isolation and through surveillance be able to show that the virus has established itself in Canada.

If and/or when Canada gets BT, will it affect our export certificates?

Yes. Cases will be made for zoning as: FREE in eastern Canada (absence of competent vector) or SEASONALLY FREE (incursion areas) in western Canada.

Is the CFIA prepared to add serological testing for BT to our current testing requirements in quarantine facilities?

Canada will continue to require pre-testing of ruminants imported from countries other than USA if they are not BT free. BT testing requirements defined in the Canadian Artificial Insemination Program will still be necessary. Countries other than USA importing animals from Canada will still have pre-testing requirements in Canada if those countries are bluetongue free.

Currently the competence of the BT vector in Canada is severely limited. Is the CFIA committed to ongoing research to determine if and/or when the competency of the vector changes?

One of the key scientific considerations in the bluetongue consultation paper was that local strains of the midge, *C. sonorensis* found in southern Alberta and northern Montana appear to have a very poor capacity to spread bluetongue virus. Through an expanded surveillance system that will monitor Canada's negative population, the CFIA will be able to detect and monitor the existence and competence of vectors in this population.

BLUETONGUE CONTINUED

While it is believed that Canada can “self cure” for BT, due to our winter, can cattle act as a vector and if so, will that influence the competency of the vector?

No, cattle are not vectors of BT and will not infect other cattle or ruminant. The official viremia period in cattle is 60 days according to OIE. Therefore the cattle would likely not be able to maintain a virus through Canadian winters. Insect vector competency is intrinsic to the insect species.

What does BT surveillance entail? How will it affect Canadian sheep producers?

The CFIA is developing bluetongue surveillance to meet OIE standards. It may include:

- (i) annual statistical serological sampling
- (ii) targeted surveillance of imported ruminants
- (iii) targeted surveillance in sheep with suspect clinical signs
- (iv) on going annual sentinel herd surveillance in the Okanogan

Will sentinel flocks be used as part of the CFIA surveillance?

As sheep are sensitive indicators of the presence of bluetongue virus, surveillance of sheep with clinical signs will be part of CFIA surveillance. In addition, the sentinel herd program in the Okanogan is being continued to monitor for the presence of bluetongue in the highest risk region of Canada.

Will the international requirements for surveillance change if our BT status changes?

No, the international requirements for surveillance are outlined in the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code. The CFIA is designing a surveillance program to meet OIE requirements.

Is there a biological control for the vector (a predator or substance)?

There is no known biological control. However previous CFIA recommendations for control of bluetongue included eliminating habitat for midge vectors:

- Inspect and repair waterers to prevent leaks
- Grade and compact pens to prevent water collection
- Prevent animals from access to wastewater collection basins
- Ensure wastewater lagoon shorelines have slopes of $\geq 30^\circ$ to prevent silt accumulation
- Pumped lagoons should not be refilled for at least a week

If large numbers of midges are observed before dusk, insecticides can be applied either directly to the animals or as an area-wide spray

Does a producer have to await CFIA and their testing to know if it is an exotic strain and therefore compensated? Will the area be zoned off pending the results as it could really affect others in the industry?

The details of a domestic policy are under development including quarantining and compensation provisions if applicable. Compensation will only occur if the sheep are ordered destroyed by the CFIA. Animals that die prior to being ordered destroyed would not be compensated. It must be emphasized that bluetongue is NOT a contagious disease and can only be transmitted by competent midge vectors or management practices that entail the transfer of infected blood. The domestic policy will include midge vector control measures to prevent further transmission.

PRODUCING FOR A SPECIFIC MARKET CAN BE BENEFICIAL FOR SHEEP PRODUCERS

Consistently producing top quality prime lambs to meet the needs of the discerning local butcher and catering trade can be difficult to sustain. But a North Yorkshire sheep producer is determined to supply this market and is breeding and feeding lambs specifically for the job.

He is finishing lambs on an unconventional diet of ad-lib rolled barley and although using a high proportion of first and second cross Texel ewes in the flock, any reduction in lambing percentage is being more than compensated for by the higher value of the lambs produced. Although the bulk of this flock's annual output of 500 prime lambs is targeted at the late spring hogget trade - and the entire management system is geared to late season marketing - an early draw of its April-born Texel-cross lambs was sold straight off grass in early October.

Achieving quality

With no supplementary feeding these lambs weighed up to 52kg and topped the day's trade at 117p/kg. "The aim is to produce the right type of lamb with the ability to achieve the conformation, performance and carcass quality capable of earning premium prices from the catering market and the local butcher trade."

That's how North Yorkshire beef and sheep producer Tim Parkinson sums up the prime lamb output from his flock of 350 Texel-cross ewes run at Thirlby, Thirsk. Based on Mule ewes for the first cross with the Texel, it is three-quarter-bred Texel ewes put back again to a Texel that produce most of the flock's best lambs.

Texel rams, unregistered and with some Beltex breeding, are bought from Peak District producer Martin Shaw. Tups are turned out in mid-November for a mid-April lambing ewes are not housed, but are supplemented with silage around Christmas time.

Heavy Lamb Finishing

Barley-based diet

High value lamb

Grass reliant

Well-shaped ewes

"Although we aren't lambing until April, we like to start giving ewes a handful of feed from early February. We step up feeding until lambing, but give nothing once ewes have lambed. We rely totally on grass." Hardy and easy lambing and with no loss of milkiness, Texel cross ewes produce the type of lamb ideally suited to the farm's feeding and marketing systems. But there are fewer lambs. Compared with

Mules at 200%, the Texel crosses achieve 170% in a good year, while the norm is 150%. "While we're losing numbers of lambs we're still gaining on overall income through the higher value of the lambs we sell. One-and-a-half lambs at £75 a lamb is better than two lambs at £40 a lamb," reckons Mr Parkinson.

Ready for sale

Lambs are weaned in late September and that is the first time any are drawn for sale. "We don't consider selling anything before then. Any lambs ready by early October are a bonus for me because my main selling period is late spring." After weaning this autumn, a batch was drawn off grass. "For lambs born from 20 April and to reach 52kg by early October and make 117p/kg straight off grass is pretty good going. And we had some smart, smaller lambs weighing 41kg at £50," adds Mr Parkinson. Most of the 500 lambs on the farm in late October will be aimed at the late spring hogget market - apart from some pulled out for the Christmas trade. The key to managing the long-keep lambs will be to tick them over without losing too much flesh in the coming months. Silage will be offered as soon as grass quality deteriorates followed by feed blocks, but trough feeding won't start until after Christmas.

Finishing diet

This is a system based on lambs bred to respond well to feeding, but the finishing diet will certainly raise eyebrows among conventional lamb finishers. It's simply rolled barley with a 50% protein supplement based on urea. Additional copper is fed for the first three weeks of the finishing period. The mix comprises 900kg rolled barley, 75kg protein supplement and 25kg molasses. It is initially fed in troughs to appetite and then switched to ad lib via a creep feeder. "I know everyone says you can't feed ad-lib barley to lambs and particularly not with added urea, but we've been careful and have had no problems." Spring hoggets will be targeted to reach 45-55kg costing about £10 a head to finish.

SOURCE: www.fwi.co.uk/Articles/2006/11/27/99846 Producing+for+a+specific+market+can+be+beneficial+for+sheep.html

INDIVIDUAL SHEEP RECORDING WILL BE FINAL STRAW FOR PRODUCERS

Regulations requiring sheep movements to be recorded on an individual basis would be the final straw for thousands of producers, according to [National Sheep Association](#) chief executive Peter Morris. Speaking in Perth this week at the NSA's Scottish conference, Mr Morris warned the impact of regulation was already having a profound and crippling effect on the sheep industry, which has contracted by 15% in Scotland in the past five years. "What is so frustrating is that everyone can live with rules if they understand their logic, practicality and proportionality but so many of the regulations are impractical, unworkable and disproportionate," he said.

Referring to regulations relating to TSEs, individual identification and fallen stock Mr Morris said the biggest red tape threat to the industry would be the introduction of a requirement for farmers to record the individual identities of every animal every time it is moved. He said this would see thousands of farmers walk away from the industry, arguing there was no justification for this, given animal health measures were undertaken on a batch basis.

Lack of understanding by government, particularly south of the border, was a major factor, he said, and too often industry representatives were only consulted when it was too late to influence decision-making. Perthshire hill farmer, Alex Murray, said there were hundreds of thousands of acres of hill and upland north of Perth now devoid of sheep. Sheep farming in these areas could offer employment opportunities to 400 young people, he said, lambasting the government's failure to offer young people the same financial support for new entrants being offered in other EU countries.

However, quality assurance assessor, John Morison, said there were indications that progressive landowners were returning sheep to the hills in a move to control tick populations and protect the sporting quality of their property. He said one Cairngorms estate was putting on 4500 ewes and a shepherd and other landowners should be encouraged to follow suit.

SOURCE: www.fwi.co.uk/Articles/2006/12/06/100010/individual-sheep-recording-will-be-final-straw-for-producers.html

LAMB GOOD SOURCE OF VITAMIN D

New research shows beef and lamb are rich sources of a type of vitamin D, something we usually get from sunlight. Dietary sources of vitamin D are becoming more and more important as we heed health messages to protect ourselves from the sun's harmful rays. A study led by Associate Professor Roger Purchas, Ph.D., at the Institute of Food, Nutrition and Human Health, estimates that one serving of lamb can provide half the daily vitamin D requirement and beef about a quarter when both forms of the vitamin are taken into account. This form of vitamin D, 25-hydroxyvitamin D, is three times more potent than other types. "Recognizing the contribution beef and lamb can make to our vitamin D intake is both timely and important. "Food sources have been limited primarily to oily fish, eggs and some dairy products; beef and lamb can now be added to the list," Purchas says.

SHEEP FARMERS GET NEW FLOCK REGISTERS AND DISPATCH DOCUMENTS

The Minister for Agriculture and Food, Mary Coughlan has said that new sheep flock registers and dispatch documents were now being sent direct to 40,000 sheep flock owners in the country. She also said that an explanatory note on the completion of the documents will accompany them. The Minister said: "These new documents meet EU requirements and reduce the amount of recording that will have to be undertaken by flock owners. Dispatch documents will also be more user-friendly, with certain details pre-printed." The Minister also confirmed that she was providing for a significant change to the tagging requirements for bought-in sheep under NSIS (National Sheep Identification System). Under the new arrangements, sheep bought for fattening may be tagged on exit from the new holding rather than on entry as required heretofore (however, all such sheep must be tagged by May 1 following purchase). This new regime will allow for sequential tagging and recording with a consequent reduction in workload for flock owners. Minister Coughlan stated that the changes now being put in place following detailed discussions with producer representatives.

SOURCE: www.sligoweekender.ie/news/story.asp?j=31034&cat=farming

Real Cost of Cattle and Sheep Production—Revealed

The true cost of producing beef cattle and sheep on English farms was revealed today (Friday) in new costings data published by the English Beef and Lamb Executive (EBLEX).

With the support of the industry, the 2005/2006 farm costings data contained in the latest edition of EBLEX Business Pointers does not include the Single Farm Payment, and also incorporates a number of non-cash costs.

Taking these elements into consideration, the statistics show that average beef producers are making a loss of between £74.37 and £425.39 per head and average sheep producers are losing between £2.45 and £49.25 per head.

EBLEX Chief Executive Richard Ali said: "These figures make for uncomfortable reading, but are the first to treat

the farm business on the same financial footing as any other business.

"EBLEX firmly believes these figures provide a sound starting point for everyone involved in the industry to understand what needs to happen to achieve a more sustainable future for the beef and lamb sector."

Mr Ali stressed that although a sustainable future was not just about price, retailers could play their part in building a profitable supply chain: "Consumers have sent clear signals that they want to buy quality, home - produced assured beef and lamb.

"Ensuring that product is clearly differentiated on retail shelves is vital both to help shoppers to make informed choices and ensure the much talked-about reconnection of the beef and lamb chain really does happen - because the reality is that imported meat does not help maintain the English countryside."

The wide performance gap between the top third and average producers in Business Pointers clearly shows there is scope for the critical mass of farmers to look at their costings and work out where positive changes could be made.

"That is where the EBLEX Better Returns Programmes for Beef and Sheep can help producers.

These programmes highlight simple, practical advice in a number of areas where farmers can make a real difference to their returns," added Mr Ali. The fourth edition of EBLEX Business Pointers is available to download from www.eblex.org.uk.



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