

## From the Chair *By Florence Henning*

This past January I went to the American Sheep Industry Convention in Arizona and while there, I attended the Animal Identification, Producer Education and Research Council and Animal Health Committee workshops. One of the key things I learned while at the Convention was that American sheep producers are facing the challenges of implementing similar strategies and programmes that Canadian producers are (e.g., National Identification, Scrapie Eradication).



Six national associations took part in the convention including the American Sheep Industry, the National Lamb Feeder Association, the

American Lamb Board, the National Sheep Industry Improvement Centre, the Western Range Association and the National Livestock Producers Association.

The U.S. sheep industry continues to expand with both the number of sheep producers (~67,000) and the number of sheep rising. Replacement lamb numbers increased 10% in 2005 from 702,000 in 2004 to 711,000. And, while prices for heavy lambs dropped in the late fall, they are expected to rebound again. The Caribbean and Mexico continue to be the leading buyers of US lamb; exports rose 31% in 2005.

Tammy Beckham DVM PhD., and Woody Lane PhD, were two of the various guest speakers at the Convention. Dr. Beckham is Chief of the Forensics/Disease Threat Assessment Program at Plum Island Animal Disease Centre New York. She spoke about foreign animal disease threats and how they would be handled. She directs the bio-forensics satellite programme, providing insight for the development production, evaluation and execution of diagnostic assay systems.

Woody Lane PhD from Oregon spoke on the importance of iodine in sheep diets and recommended that they gain FDA approval to include this in mineral. Wool experts also spoke to the Board about the use of wool in the armed forces, primarily as underwear. Samples were available. A military battalion will be testing the underwear to determine wear-ability and field sustainability. Compliance in the Scrapie Programme is slated to begin on September 30 for all animals.

In terms of animal identification, the USDA does not have a timeline in place for when it will become mandatory. Currently they are encouraging voluntary participation. There has been much discussion on the issue of animal identification and the consensus is that it must not be an economic burden to the US sheep industry.

### In this Issue

From the Chair	1-2
Canadian Sheep Identification Program	2-3
On-Farm Food Safety	4-6
Scrapie Surveillance Program	7
Scrapie Project Update	8
Around the World	9-13

## FROM THE CHAIR CON'T

There has also been discussion around the implementation of Group Lot Identification for lambs going to through the feeding channels, with another Group Lot Identification when they move to slaughter. It has also been suggested that the focus on tracking should only be for animals that are co-mingled.

Overall, the intentions for animal identification are that it should proceed slowly and deliberately. The industry does not foresee an electronic system being implemented within the next 10 years as they do not believe it operates at the speed of commerce.

The American Sheep Industry has extended their existing Memorandum of Understanding for a further three years with the Tri-Lamb group (USA, Aust. and N.Z). They have also signed the Memorandum of Understanding to participate in the North American Sheep Coalition with Canada and Mexico.

I would like to extend my congratulations to Paul Frischknecht (Utah) who was re-elected as President of the ASI. As well as to Burdell Johnson (North Dakota) who was elected Vice-President and Glen Fischer (Texas) who was elected Secretary/Treasurer.

## Canadian Sheep Identification Program

*By Jennifer Fleming, Executive Director*

Since its inception, the Canadian Sheep Identification Program (CSIP) has been dynamic in nature – changing to suit the needs of the industry as well as individual producers. To facilitate, if needed, the timely changes to the program, the CSF formalized the program review process by developing a five year CSIP Strategic Plan. The Plan was also designed to answer concerns that producers and the industry had regarding National ID. (For a copy of the plan, please visit [www.cansheep.ca](http://www.cansheep.ca)).

To facilitate the production of the document, surveys were distributed out to provincial associations and individual producers for feedback. It is difficult to quantify how many surveys were circulated, as the provincial associations may have distributed copies as well, but 24 surveys were returned. The responses, along with information from the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency, Agri-Traçabilité Québec, CanTrace, the Canadian Livestock Identification Agency, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, a summary of sheep identification programs in Australia, New Zealand, Mexico, the United States, Ireland, and the European Community, and national ID updates from other livestock groups were all used to formulate the five-year Strategic Plan.



Pages 10-13 of the Strategic Plan outline all of the answers that were provided by respondents; which were primarily individual producers. While I do not want to take up your time here listing all of the answers, here is what some of the respondents had to say:

- The program will probably not be good enough to meet requirements in five years
- Concerned regarding the ability to enforce the program
- No assurance that the animal identification stays with the carcass
- The program is too labour intensive for larger flocks
- The use of RFID tags is too cost prohibitive
- More tagging options re needed including RFID
- Need tags that can be used for management and traceability (including databases, genetic improvement, date of birth, etc)
- The sheep industry does not have the mass numbers needed to bring down the costs of the RFID tags *(continued on page 2)*

## NEW ZEALAND FAILS TO FILL E.U. LAMB QUOTA

New Zealand failed to fill its tariff-free export quota for sheepmeat to the European Union for the first time ever in 2005, Meat and Livestock Australia has reported.

According to the New Zealand Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's (MAF) *Situation and Outlook for New Zealand Agriculture*, lamb export volumes fell by 1.9 pc in March 2005, as poor weather conditions delayed the availability of lambs for export slaughter.

New Zealand's 2005 quota of 227,600 tonnes clean weight was raised by 1154 tonnes in 2006, to account for the 10 new EU member countries.

Australia's tariff-free export quota remains at 18,650 tonnes.

**Source:**  
[www.farmonline.com.au/news\\_daily.asp?ag\\_id=32170](http://www.farmonline.com.au/news_daily.asp?ag_id=32170)

## CSIP con't

Given all of the information available to us, the CSF's National Identification Working Group spent two days in Ottawa hammering out a five year plan. Pages 15-17 outline the key objectives for each year, right through to 2009. In terms of RFID tags though, the plan outlines the following activities (again this is a limited selection of what is printed in the plan):

- CSF to continue investigate the costs of other tagging options including RFID tags, DNA tags, DNA/RFID tags
- Investigate cost-saving possibilities including discussions with other livestock groups and sheep industries in the United States and Mexico
- Continue to lobby the federal government; animal identification is a public good

While the plan does suggest that the CSF enter into negotiations with a tag manufacturer to have RFID tags made available to Canadian sheep producers by 2009; there a few things to keep in mind:

- Having the RFID tags made available to producers is on the basis of the CSF being able to find *affordable* tags
- The Strategic Plan *is not* geared towards making RFID tags mandatory. The goal is to have alternative tag options available to producers, but that does not necessarily mean that these alternative tag options are RFID tags.



In light of the fact that this plan has been developed in response to producer and industry concerns, it is dynamic in nature. Each year at the Annual General Meeting, the Strategic Plan, and the Identification Program, will be reviewed to ensure that we continue to meet the needs of producers. As such, you may find that by this time next year the activities under each year have changed if the needs of producers and the industry have changed. Therefore your feedback is incredibly important, and I urge you to review the document and provide comments that can be included in the review slated for November 2006.

## On-Farm Food Safety Update

By France Lanthier, National Coordinator On-Farm Food Safety

### Addressing Producer Concerns Part 1: The international playing field

Having had the opportunity to attend a number of producer meetings to talk about the Canadian Sheep and Lamb Food-Safe Farm Practices (FSFP) program producers have expressed some concerns about the program. The next three On-Farm Food Safety Updates will aim to address concerns and some misunderstandings about the FSFP program. In this issue, OFFS programs from the major Canadian sheep meat import countries will be discussed.

Currently, Canadian sheep producers supply approximately 50% of the domestic demand while the remainder is imported from New Zealand (33%), Australia (15%) and the USA (2%)<sup>1</sup>. One of the first questions I was challenged with was “why is Canada developing these on-farm programs while other countries are not?” In Australia there is an array of HACCP-based and non HACCP-based programs (Table 1, page 5). While multiple programs may offer the producer options, this could potentially lead to abattoirs and processors selecting certain programs thus forcing producers to adopt multiple programs or to limit their sales to specific outlets.

Since our industry relies heavily on imported product to supply the domestic demand, there is a concern that food safety legislation will become prohibitive to domestic production while the import market will be exempt, thus creating an unfair competitive advantage. This is indeed unlikely as article 9 of the Meat Inspection Act States<sup>7</sup>:

#### **(1) No person shall import a meat product into Canada unless:**

- (a) at the time it was prepared for export, the country from which it originated and any country in which it was processed had meat inspection systems, those systems and the relevant establishments in those countries were approved in writing by the Minister before that time and the approvals were valid at that time;
- (b) that person provides an inspector with evidence satisfactory to the Minister that it meets the prescribed standards for imported meat products;
- (c) it meets the prescribed standards for imported meat products; and
- (d) it is packaged and labelled in the manner prescribed.

I recently attended an information session on the new International Organization of Standardization's (ISO) food safety standard. The objective of ISO 22000 is to harmonize food safety management standards throughout the food chain (Figure 1) in order to facilitate global trade and to prevent or eliminate the use of food safety standards as non-tariff trade barriers. In order to comply with ISO 22000 standards, an organization MUST follow a HACCP plan. On-farm food safety programs are generally HACCP-based and due to the nature of a farm, that is that some hazards cannot be controlled, on-farm programs may not be able

## OFFS: The international playing field can't

to fully comply with HACCP requirements. Canada and the United States have yet to decide on whether they will adopt this standard nationally, while Australia and New Zealand have expressed that they would be moving towards a national adoption of the standard. If indeed ISO:22000 is adopted in Australia and New Zealand this would mean that our biggest competitors (for our domestic market) would be striving towards the implementation of on-farm food safety programs with a stringency exceeding our own. This said, ISO 22000 is rather extensive and it remains to be seen whether smaller manufacturers and farmers can indeed implement it.

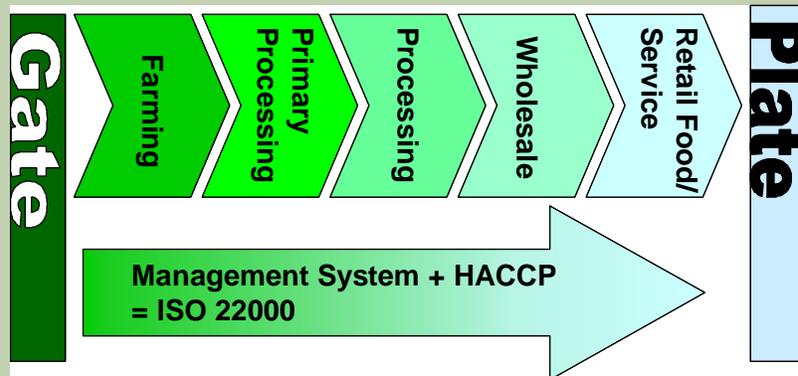


Figure 1: Steps from gate to plate

Food safety is indeed a topic of international interest and this is evidenced by the global efforts to develop quality assurance programs covering every process from gate to plate. While the majority of Canadian sheep producers already exercise due diligence when it comes to food safety, the Canadian Sheep and Lamb Food-Safe Farm Practices program offers sheep producers the tools to demonstrate their work through the development of standard operating procedures and record keeping.

The Canadian Sheep and Lamb Food-Safe Farm Practices is a voluntary program designed to address all potential food safety risks during sheep production. For more information contact the Canadian Sheep Federation 1-888-684-7739.

### *Next issue: On-Farm Food Safety – Cost:Benefit*

#### References

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**TABLE 1: EXAMPLES OF FOOD SAFETY PROGRAMS IN OTHER COUNTRIES.**

Country	Program	Description
<b>New Zealand/ Australia</b>	FSANZ (Food Standards Australia and New Zealand) <sup>2</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• food safety standard for production and processing of meat by November 2006</li> <li>• very ambitious plan, as they are aiming for a HACCP program rather than HACCP-based.</li> </ul>
<b>Australia</b>	Flockcare <sup>3</sup> by AUS-MEAT Ltd.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AUS-MEAT Limited is an industry owned body operating as a joint venture under the control of a Board of Directors appointed by the producer-owned Meat &amp; Livestock Australia company and the Australian Meat Processor Corporation</li> <li>• Audited HACCP-based program</li> <li>• Record keeping is similar to FSFP program</li> </ul>
<b>Australia</b>	National Vendor Declaration <sup>4</sup> (NVD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Essentially a one page waybill</li> <li>• Producer declaration covering aspects of traceability, animal health and welfare and food safety.</li> </ul>
<b>Australia</b>	Livestock Production Assurance <sup>5</sup> (LPA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed as an extension of the NVD, it allows to demonstrate what is claimed in the NVD through record keeping</li> </ul>
<b>USA</b>	Sheep Safety and Quality Assurance Program <sup>6</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HACCP-based program</li> <li>• Record keeping similar to FSFP program</li> <li>• Participation at 3 levels</li> <li>• Level 1:</li> <li>• SSQA Participant Education</li> <li>• Level 2: SSQA Certified - Development of Site Specific Plans</li> <li>• Level 3: SSQA Verified – Audited</li> </ul>

# Scrapie Surveillance Program



## HELP ERADICATE SCRAPIE FROM CANADA

**S**crapie has been present in Canada for almost 70 years. With the majority of countries around the world currently working to actively eradicate all transmissible spongiform encephalopathies, the continued presence of scrapie in Canada is preventing access to international markets including the United States. With your help, Canada can take action to eradicate scrapie.

### The National Scrapie Surveillance Program

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency and several provincial agricultural ministries have launched a surveillance program to detect scrapie in the national sheep flock and goat herd. The goal is to identify every infected animal so that proper steps can be taken to completely eradicate the disease from our country.

### The Producer's Role

*The surveillance program needs your on-farm mature deadstock.* Eradication will only be accomplished if every source of the disease is found. Representation of the entire national sheep flock and goat herd needs to be tested. Do your part: submit your dead animals and encourage your neighbour to submit theirs. Report all sheep and goat aged 12 months and older that die on your farm. As well, report mature animals exhibiting the following signs or symptoms:

- Unexplained weight loss
- Problems standing or walking
- Changes in behaviour

## CALL YOUR LOCAL CFIA OFFICE TO REPORT AN ANIMAL FOR TESTING.

### Compensation

Compensation is available for any live animals ordered destroyed by the CFIA.

### Keeping Sheep and Goats Healthy

Manage the risk of scrapie showing up on your farm by either closing your female flock and testing all mature dead animals or by breeding for genetic resistance to scrapie. General biosecurity practices associated with farm visitors and animal husbandry (needles, taggers etc.) are also recommended.

### More Information

For more information please visit [scrapiecanada.ca](http://scrapiecanada.ca) or call your local CFIA office (see the blue pages of the phone directory).

# Scrapie Project Update

*By Courtney Denard*

**A**s the New Year is upon us many take time to reflect and look back at the year that was. And in regards to the year that was for Scrapie Canada, there is certainly a lot to look back on. Since January 2005, a mere three hundred or so days ago, Scrapie Canada has officially launched two new national programs- the Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program and the National Survey of Scrapie Genetics in Canadian Purebred Sheep. Although separate programs with differing objectives, both are working towards the maintenance and eradication of one of the most dangerous diseases impacting sheep and goat producers world wide.

As for an update on the two programs there is some good news and some bad. **Let's start with the bad.** There has been a very low uptake on behalf of producers joining the National Survey project. Initially Scrapie Canada was accepting 36,000 samples into the database and to date there has only been 1,299 samples submitted. Needless to say, this is extremely lower than was expected- or hoped for- so that puts the project in danger of losing government funding. In response to the low uptake, Scrapie Canada has decreased the number of samples being accepted to 31,000. We have also taken the time to inform producers about the project through ads and articles in various agricultural publications. Scrapie Canada is hoping that by promoting the many benefits of participating in the survey, we will get more producers on the project, while it is still available.

What needs to be known at this point is basically, if we do not use it, we're going to lose it. So, if you're a purebred sheep producer and you're planning on genotype testing for scrapie resistance, take advantage of the funding while it lasts.

**Now onto the good news!** Participation numbers on the Scrapie Flock Certification Program (SFCP) are somewhat better than the national survey. To date, there have been 12 sheep producers and 6 goat producers officially enrolled on the program. There are also a number of producers who are one step away from a status of official enrollment- wrapping up the last minute details of the application process. Since the program was opened up to a first come first serve basis in December 2005, Scrapie Canada has received numerous calls from producers who are right in the middle of the application process and will be sending their information in shortly.

What needs to be known for this program is that in total there is room for 60 sheep producers and 10 goat. As previously mentioned, the project is now on a first come, first serve basis and is open to any sheep or goat producer in Canada. Although 43 spots- 5 goats and 38 sheep- remain open, there is no saying how fast they're going to fill up, especially in light of the recent interest producers have been showing. So, as is the case for the national survey, if you are interested in joining the SFCP it would be a good idea to do it sooner rather than later.

As we are making our way- already- into of the New Year, make sure you take the time to find out what these programs have to offer to your flock or herd.

For more information please contact Courtney Denard at Scrapie Canada by calling 519-836-0043 or by e-mailing [admin@scrapiecanada.ca](mailto:admin@scrapiecanada.ca).

*Funding for both programs has been provided by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Advancing Agriculture and Agri-Food Program.*

## New Zealand Reviews Food Safety

*The food-safety authority conducts the first major review of food-safety laws in three decades.*

The biggest review in 30 years of all legislation and regulations around food sold in New Zealand is entering its final consultation stage. And the latest situation over measures to control food safety has been laid out by the New Zealand Food Safety Authority in a position paper on the Domestic Food Review.

"Anybody involved the production, distribution or sale of food in New Zealand is likely to be affected by proposed changes to the way food is regulated," said NZFSA executive director Andrew McKenzie. "This is the most important of the documents for people to have input into as from here we will make recommendations to government on changes. The position paper and supporting information cover all of the areas we have already consulted on, include ideas and feedback received, cover some new areas and include extra detail on things like sanctions for non-compliance, examples of what small businesses might need to do, and how food safety education for fundraisers could be developed."

Among those most likely to be affected by the proposals are small food businesses that do not currently have food control plans, risk management programs, or similar plans.

"We are looking at two main levels of food-safety management," McKenzie said. "The core level, in which most cafes, corner dairies, and so on will fall, will be covered by food control plans. There are two types of food control plans: off-the-peg templates provided at no cost will suit most small businesses and require little more than filling in the required information before registration and verification; and custom-made plans. These are similar to what many businesses already operate under, and the intention is to make the move from these to food control plans as seamless as possible.

"The other level is food handler guidance, which will be educational information for small one-off events such as fundraisers," he added. "In addition to these proposed requirements, the position paper outlines how approval and verification will be approached, and covers new options for both rewarding compliance and sanctioning non-compliance.

"Of even greater importance is the need to reduce New Zealand's high incidence of food-borne illness. The proposals we are suggesting are designed to achieve clear outcomes and have sound science-based reasons behind them," he continued.

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

### NEW MARKET OPPORTUNITIES OPEN UP FOR SOUTHWEST ENGLAND AND WALES SHEEP FARMERS.

St. Merryn Foods in the United Kingdom offered a lifeline to sheep producers who used to supply Lloyd Maunder's lamb processing plant, which stopped production this month.

St. Merryn, part of the Grampian Country Food Group and a leading U.K. red meat processor with plants in Cornwall and Wales is calling for southwest England and south Wales lamb producers, who previously supplied the Lloyd Maunder lamb business to contact their "Premier Lamb" business in Cornwall or their south Wales Merthyr Tydfil plant.

The "Premier Lamb" business, based in southwest England, is part of the St. Merryn Food Group, which is one of the most successful meat companies operating in the United Kingdom, processing in excess of 1,000,000 lambs per annum. St. Merryn produces a complete range of packaged meat to food manufacturers and foodservice operators, as well as a leading U.K. multiple retailer, being the principal meat supplier to Tesco, one of the U.K.'s largest supermarket groups.

With this in mind, St. Merryn's lamb business continues to grow from strength to strength and they are looking for more British and Welsh new season and organic lamb for their increasing supply to Tesco for their "Finest" and "Organic" product lines.

John Dracup, St. Merryn's livestock director, wants to assure the southwest and south Wales lamb producers that there is a market for their product and urges them to contact the St. Merryn or "Premier Lamb" office at their earliest opportunity.

"We have long recognized the quality of lambs that are available in the southwest and Wales," Dracup said. "We are confident that we can guarantee to these farmers a dedicated and consistent market for their produce," he added.

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

## UNITED KINGDOM: 5.5 MILLION DOLLAR GOVERNMENT BOOST FOR BEEF

The English Beef and Lamb Executive (Eblex) has greeted the end of the OTM export ban on animals over 30-months-old with a GBP5.5m (US\$9.8m) campaign funded by the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs.

The three-year campaign will be launched this March. It will include a GBP2.5m advertising campaign, with television beef and lamb adverts and press adverts in women's magazines and Sunday supplements. GBP1m will be spent on providing retailers, butchers and food outlets with promotional offers in the UK. A programme of events designed to encourage consumption overseas and increase export opportunities will receive GBP1.7m, while GBP300,000 will be dedicated to supporting producers through educational seminars.

Head of marketing for Eblex, Andrew Garvey, said: "With the ending of OTM we have the opportunity to further increase awareness of the Quality Standard Mark – the industry's brand – sell Quality Standard beef mince on to the market and let people make positive choices about what they buy. The ending of the export ban will also offer a big boost to our export opportunities to countries which love more mature beef cuts."

Source: just-food.com

## Sheep Market Prospects Improve for 2006 Season

The exceptional increase in domestic sheep meat supplies that contributed to the downward pressure on lamb and cull ewe prices over the past year look set to be reversed in 2006, providing the prospect of better new season returns for English sheep producers.



This is the encouraging outlook from the English Beef & Lamb Executive (EBLEX) in its latest annual market forecast. It is however stressed that the extent to which prices respond will be determined by carcass quality, competition from chilled imports, export opportunities and the state of the skin market..

Good lambing percentages and lamb survival rates together with lower ewe lamb retentions for breeding led to a 4% year-on-year increase in total lamb slaughtering in 2005 to over 13.5 million. At the same time, ewe and ram slaughtering at just over 2 million were 10% up on the previous year. As a result overall sheep meat production was nearly 4% higher than 2004 at an estimated 317,000 tonnes.

The higher culling rates and lower ewe lamb retentions of 2005 is expected to leave a national flock going into the 2006 season some 200,000 down on last year at around 16.1 million ewes. There is also the likelihood of a slightly lower lambing rate, based on initial scanning reports from across the country. This leads to clean sheep slaughterings for 2006 forecast to be back down to a level of just over 13 million.

Although a further modest contraction in the national breeding flock to 16 million by the end of 2006 is anticipated, lower culling rates are expected which could bring cull ewe and ram slaughterings back down to 2004 levels. Total UK sheep meat production in the coming season is, consequently, likely to be down by around 5% to just over 300,000 tonnes – or around the level of 2003.

Coupled with the increases of 2% in domestic lamb consumption and over 2% in export volumes recorded in 2005, this bodes well for a better balance between supply and demand over the coming season.

While the overall market essentials are set fair, producers are advised not to expect early new season lamb prices, in particular, akin to 2003 levels. The growth in chilled lamb imports that has resulted in a significantly flatter monthly pricing curve over the past two seasons – with both the level and duration of peak prices markedly lower than traditionally received – is expected to continue.

At the same time, the skin market which can have a major influence on overall market prices remains depressed and is considered unlikely to show much in the way of sustained recovery.

Under these circumstances, EBLEX urges English producers to focus their main 2006 season efforts on maximizing returns by marketing a steady supply of finished lambs off pasture at the specific carcass qualities and weights required by the main market outlets – and, most importantly, at the least possible cost. Detailed production guidance is available in the Lamb Action for Profit resource at [www.eblex.org.uk](http://www.eblex.org.uk)

Source: [www.stackyard.com/news/2006/02/EBLEX/03\\_sheep\\_market.html](http://www.stackyard.com/news/2006/02/EBLEX/03_sheep_market.html)

## U.K. IMPORTS DROP AS PRODUCTION SOARS

**B**eef and lamb processors increase productivity 18 percent, presenting stiff competition to imported product.

Imports of both beef and lamb into the United Kingdom showed a marked drop last year as domestic production showed a sharp increase-up to 18 percent in the case of beef.

Figures released by the English Beef and Lamb Executive show that during 2005 production of UK beef was up from 709,000 metric tons in the same period in 2004 to 744,000 metric tons while lamb and mutton production in the same months rose four percent - from 306,000 metric tons in 2004 to 317,000 metric tons last year.

Much of the increase in beef production is laid at the door of producers maximizing carcass weights while production in Ireland was down and supplies in the rest of Europe were also running at a lower level.

During last year, sheep production at home recovered from the drought affected performance of 2004 making an extra 500,000 prime lambs available for the market.

"After October last year, the figures will also have been affected by restrictions placed on the import of Brazilian beef by the European Union and, with the change in the Over-30-Month regulations this year, we will see further home-produced beef available for the market at the expense of imported meat," said Duncan Sinclair, EBLEX economics manager.

**Source:** [www.meatnews.com](http://www.meatnews.com)

## SHEEP GENETICS AUSTRALIA DATABASE NOW BIGGEST IN WORLD

**S**heep Genetics Australia (SGA) has experienced a rapid take-up since it was launched late last year, with some 40,000 animals added to the database. The total number of animals in the terminal, maternal and Merino databases is now over 2.5 million, making it the largest database of its kind anywhere in the world.

As well, more than 100 ram breeders have registered as new members or have renewed their membership with SGA since the October 2005 launch. SGA is the new national genetic evaluation service for the Australian sheep industry. It has been developed jointly by Australian Wool Innovation Limited (AWI) and Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA), together with industry.

By using Australian Sheep Breeding Values (ASBVs), SGA enables ram breeders and commercial sheep producers to compare animals from different flocks within a breed or breed group on genetic merit. LAMBPLAN is the service for the maternal and terminal breeds and MERINOSELECT the service for Merinos.

SGA claims it allows sheep producers to make informed genetic selection decisions through a web based search of the records held in the database. Producers can tailor their breeding programs to suit their target markets and production systems.

Chair of the Sheep Genetics Australia Advisory Committee, and former president of the National Farmers Federation, Ian Donges, said SGA offered the opportunity for significant genetic improvement in the industry. "Already over the last 19 years, producers have benefited from a significant increase in the number of animals being recorded," he said.

Since 1995, the number of animals tested annually for faecal egg count (FEC) has increased by 600pc. Merino ram breeders recording FEC have achieved a 13pc decrease in average FEC breeding values, indicating improved resistance to worms. In the terminal breeds, the average breeding values for post weaning weight have increased by 6.5 kilograms.

With 2.5 million sheep now in the database the potential for genetic improvement in areas such as inherent resistance to worms and growth rates is even greater, he says.

In response to interest expressed by producers across Australia, SGA will be hosting information sessions during February. Sessions will cover principles of genetic evaluation, how to select for commercially valuable traits and the online use of the new database.

## VIEWERS SWITCH ON TO WELSH LAMB

*WALES: A new advertising campaign for Welsh Lamb proves a success in getting consumers to eat more lamb.*

A television advertising campaign for Welsh Lamb has helped to successfully increase Welsh Lamb's share of fresh meat and brought new buyers into the brand, according to research carried out on behalf of Hybu Cig Cymru (HCC)/Meat Promotion Wales.

Nearly half the viewers, who saw HCC's television advertisement, which was run in the fall of 2005, said they were more likely to buy Welsh Lamb as a result of the campaign. The television exposure raised awareness of Welsh Lamb as a brand with many of those consumers either being new buyers or existing buyers increasing their purchase.

Buyer numbers increased by more than five percent during the advertising period in the regions where the advertising had occurred and penetration rose by 16 percent among those that received the most advertising exposure, as opposed to a decline of 4.3 percent in the non-advertised regions, demonstrating a clear sales effect among this group.

"The research shows that the advertisement content has been well received," said Stewart Pope, marketing manager for HCC. "Welsh Lamb was considered an appealing product by the families watching and encouraged higher spending by those going shopping. This is the second year running that we have shown the Welsh Lamb television advertisement in England and Wales and this latest research shows a healthy return and the positive response witnessed is above our original expectations."

Following the television campaign, 94 percent of consumers asked said that they would be happy for all their family to eat Welsh Lamb, 88 percent thought that the advertisement reassured them of the quality of the lamb and 74 percent stated that they were more likely to buy branded Welsh Lamb. The Welsh Lamb advertisement carried the strap line "Passion on a Plate" and featured a lamb lover settling down to a tasty joint accompanied by a recitation of a poem about the dish.

**Source:** [www.meatnews.com](http://www.meatnews.com)

## LAMB TRADE PROMOTION LAUNCHED IN ITALY

*Welsh Lamb teams up with an Italian rugby team to encourage more consumption of Welsh lamb.*

As part of its export drive in Italy, Welsh Lamb has teamed up with the Italian national rugby team as an official supplier for the next two years. As well as supplying meat to the team, the agreement will also allow Welsh Lamb logos to appear on all official communications, a DVD of the successful Lamb television advertisements will be shown on the big screens at all home games and Hybu Cig Cymru / Meat Promotion Wales will also have access to the players for specific public relations opportunities.

Italy is a key market for Welsh Lamb, and HCC hopes that the market can be further developed for Welsh Beef following the lifting of the export ban. HCC said that the Italians favor the European Protected Geographical Indication status that both Welsh Lamb and Welsh Beef carry. The group said the Italians recognize the high quality of meat produced in Wales and PGI gives assurance to consumers that only lamb and beef born and reared in Wales are marketed as Welsh.

Stewart Pope, marketing manager for HCC said: "HCC is eager to develop the Italian market for both PGI Welsh Lamb and Welsh Beef. As rugby is a growing sport in Italy, linking Welsh Lamb and Welsh Beef to the national team can only be an advantage to us in raising the profile of both PGI products in the country."

Dr. Mauro Antonelli, FIR marketing director added: "We are very happy to be associated with HCC, a Welsh organisation, and we welcome them among the supporters of Italian rugby. We believe that this is an important sign that Italian rugby is growing in importance throughout the rugby-playing world." **Source:** [www.meatnews.com](http://www.meatnews.com)

## LIVESTOCK INVENTORY UP IN THE U.S.: CATTLE, SHEEP AND GOATS

U.S. farmers report an increase in the number of cattle, sheep and goats as of Jan. 1, according to the *Cattle* inventory report and *Sheep and Goats* inventory report released today by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service. Inventory of all cattle and calves in the United States totaled 97.1 million head, up 2 percent from 95.4 million a year ago. This increase represents the second straight year of herd expansion after nearly a decade of declining cattle inventories.

The all cows inventory reached the highest level since 2001, totaling 42.3 million head – 1 percent above last year's total of 41.9 million. Of the total cow inventory, beef cows accounted for 33.3 million and milk cows 9.06 million.

A similar increase was reported for the total U.S. sheep and lamb inventory. At 6.23 million head, the all sheep and lamb count was up 2 percent from 2005. All sheep and lamb inventory increased for the second consecutive year, marking the first year-to-year increase since 1987-1988.

The all goat inventory in the United States, reported to be 2.83 million head, rose 4 percent from 2.72 million in 2005. Inventory of meat goats and all other goats experienced the largest percentage of growth, increasing 5 percent from last year, to 2.26 million head.

**Source:** [communitydispatch.com/artman/publish/article\\_3615.shtml](http://communitydispatch.com/artman/publish/article_3615.shtml)

## E.U. Proposes Welfare Labels

*The European Commission wants a special label to inform consumers about the humane treatment of livestock.*

**T**he European Commission proposed a special "animal welfare" label for meat and fish products. The proposed food label is part of a five-year E.U. plan to promote humane livestock handling.

The label plan would put more responsibilities on meat buyers to ensure they are getting their supplies from approved sources and to help consumers make informed choices, proponents argue.

"The protection and welfare of animals is crucial, not least for ethical and moral reasons but also to ensure animal health and the quality of food," Markos Kyprianou, the E.U. commissioner for health and consumer protection, commented. "An E.U. label for animal welfare would allow for the better promotion of products which have been produced in line with animal welfare requirements, and a differentiation between those obtained with basic mandatory animal welfare standards and those with higher standards." argue.

Kyprianou added: "It would also compensate to some extent for the competitive pressures faced by EU producers in the increasingly globalized agricultural market, where animal welfare obligations are extremely divergent."

An Internet survey by the Commission last year found that 43 percent of the Europeans consider animal welfare when buying meat. About 75 percent of those surveyed believe they can influence the animal welfare through what they choose to purchase. However, the survey also revealed that Europeans have difficulty defining "animal welfare friendly production systems." Therefore, the Commission proposed the labeling system.

**Source:** [www.meatnews.com](http://www.meatnews.com)



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