

## Border to Open for Small Ruminant Breeding Stock

By Jennifer Fleming, Executive Director

### Canadian Sheep Federation Welcomes News that Canadian Border Will Open for Small Ruminant Breeding Stock

The Canadian Sheep Federation (CSF) is pleased with the news that imports of live sheep, goats and other small ruminants, which were previously banned from entering Canada, will soon be allowed to cross the border, for breeding purposes. The announcement was made on February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2007 by The Honourable Chuck Strahl, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board.

The CSF has been lobbying for the resumption of imports of sheep into Canada since the border closed in May 2003, following a case of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy in a Canadian beef animal. The vibrancy of the Canadian sheep industry is enhanced by its ability to move all classes of animals between Canada and the United States.

“This is great news for the sheep industry,” says Florence Henning, Chair of the CSF. “Since 2004 the CSF has been consulting with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency with respect to changing the import regulations. These changes were endorsed by the CSF with the understanding that they would demonstrate our commitment to trade issues being based on science.”

The ability to import genetics is essential so that Canadian sheep producers can maintain genetic diversity in their flocks. In addition, producers will now have an increased ability to improve their genetics to meet production needs and respond quickly to customer demands. The ability to maintain genetic diversity is essential to a versatile Canadian sheep industry, but, it will also help ensure that sheep producers worldwide will continue consider Canada as a source of genetics for their own breeding programs.

The CSF and other industry organizations continue to work diligently to gain access to the U.S. market for Canadian breeding stock and were disappointed that small ruminants were not included in Rule 2, which was circulated for comment in January.

The Canadian Sheep Federation is a national, non-profit organization that represents all Canadian sheep producers. The CSF mission is to further the viability, expansion and prosperity of the Canadian sheep and wool industry.

***It is hoped that import permits will be available by the end of February.***

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## BORDER OPEN FOR BREEDING STOCK CON'T

Animals imported into Canada will need to bear official identification of country of origin and be certified to be free from signs of clinical disease. All donors of germplasm will also need to be certified free from signs of clinical disease when collected and that the germplasm was collected and processed in accordance with International Embryo Transfer Society (IETS) standards.

### Animals for Immediate slaughter must:

- Be imported under an import permit
- Be less than 12 months of age
- Bear individual identification traceable to country/flock of origin

### Animals for feeding for slaughter must:

- Be licensed to a federally inspected abattoir in Canada in a sealed conveyance
- Be imported under import permit
- Bear individual identification traceable to country/flock of origin
- Be slaughtered by 12 months of age; confirmation of slaughter must be submitted to CFIA within one week of the date of slaughter

### Live animals imported for breeding purposes:

#### Males:

- Imported under an import permit
- Must bear individual official identification traceable to country/flock of origin

#### Females:

- Must be imported under an import permit
- Must bear individual official identification traceable to country/flock of origin **AND**
- Must qualify under option A, B, or C listed below

#### Option A:

Imported with certification that they originate from a country recognized by the CFIA as negligible risk for TSEs in small ruminants (of the genus *Ovis* and *Capra*)

#### Option B:

Imported with certification that they originate from establishment of negligible risk for TSE in small ruminants (of genus *Ovis* and *Capra*)

#### Option C:

An additional option for females of the genus *Ovis* and *Capra* permits the importation from a monitored establishment in another country to a monitored establishment in Canada. Establishments in Canada that are actively participating in a scrapie flock certification program may import breeding females of the genus *Ovis* and *Capra* from flocks/herds which have complied with the conditions listed in the previous option B for less than 5 years by importing animals from flocks/herds that are of equivalent or higher status in an equivalent scrapie flock certification program in the exporting country. Equivalence of a country's scrapie flock certification program with Canada's will be determined by the CFIA.

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## Border continued ....

### Live females (of the genus *Ovis* and *Capra*) for temporary stay:

Sexually intact female animals that could not meet the import requirements for breeding animals must be certified by ultrasound examination not be pregnant for the time that they will be in Canada.

### Embryos (of genus *Ovis* and *Capra*):

Embryos would have to be collected from female donors eligible (could meet) import requirements for breeding animals and were collected in accordance with IETS standards.

### Semen (of genus *Ovis* and *Capra*):

No conditions specific to TSE will be added to the import permit.

### Meat:

Meat from animals of the genus *Ovis* or *Caprus* would be subject to the following zoosanitary conditions pertaining to TSEs:

- Meat from any age animal of the genus *Ovis* and *Capra* could be imported from countries recognized by the CFIA as negligible risk for TSEs with certification of origin.
- From countries recognized by the CFIA as controlled risk for TSEs, meat must not have been harvested from an animal which tested positive for a TSE and it must have been harvested from an animal under 12 months of age.

## CANADIAN SHEEP FEDERATION VISITS NEW ZEALAND

For ten days in January, representatives from the Canadian Sheep Federation and the Canadian Sheep Breeders' Association toured through New Zealand. This trip was part of both organizations Market Development Strategies and was designed to research and identify practices that have been developed in New Zealand that the Canadian sheep industry can utilize to improve its competitive advantage.

An aggressive schedule of meetings was set with people involved in genetics, flock management, lamb processing and marketing, as well as with those involved in legislative and industry-level activities that support and enable developments to occur in the New Zealand lamb industry.

What became clear was that the elimination of subsidies was a driver of great change in the New Zealand sheep industry. While the change was accompanied with some angst and some producer's going out of business, producers now say that they would never go back. Their focus now is on production efficiencies; most importantly ewe and pasture efficiencies, for instance, fifteen years ago their average lambing was 100 per cent; today it is approximately 125 per cent. They are also focusing on primary production sustainability and improved export performance.

The trip was a great success, not only in terms of the amount of relevant information we gathered, but also in terms of the collaboration of the group that was there. Over the course of the next year, both the CSBA and the CSF will begin working on implementing some of the ideas that were gathered in NZ, all of which will be geared at strengthening the sheep industry.

# American Sheep Industry Convention

*By Florence Henning, CSF Chair*

The Alamo, San Antonio and sheep seem to have little in common, but from January 25-27, 2007, I spent time there at the American Sheep Industry Convention.

It was great to see acquaintances and to meet producers from all over America. As usual there were ample and interesting forums to attend. The first forum I attended was "Fighting the Parasite Battle in Sheep." Speakers Thomas Craig, DVM Ph.D., and Ray Kaplan DVM Ph.D., spoke of their research and findings on various sheep parasites. Parasite drug resistance is now recognized globally as a health threat to sheep. One of the goals of Kaplan's laboratory is to develop the means to measure, understand and solve the problems presented by drug resistant parasites.

The Production Education and Research Council and Health Committee meeting was an extremely informative forum. Dr. Seth Britch, gave an update on emerging threats such as Rift Valley Fever. This is a mosquito born disease originating in Africa which kills sheep. The virulent and fast movement of West Nile Virus has shown the world the speed an invasion of such a disease can happen. Countries have to be aware of the potential of these diseases and their rapid spread.

Dr. Diane Sutton, from the USDA/APHIS gave an update on the National Scrapie Programme. There are 48 consistent states in the programme and action is being taken to remove Vermont and Main from the list. There have been 80 confirmed scrapie cases in 2007. APHIS is currently evaluating rectal biopsy for live animal testing, which will run until November 2007, and may be approved in the fiscal 2008 year. They continue to fund surveillance, ID compliance and to work with infected and exposed flocks. They were unable to fund ram genotyping, educational agreements and the initiation of goat prevalence study. They did say there is not much evidence of BSE in sheep/goats and they would consider it a non-issue.

I did have time to speak to Dr. Sutton afterwards and conveyed Canada's disappointment that small ruminants were not included in Rule II. I inquired about the likelihood of a third rule that included sheep. She indicated that this may happen but the process would be after Rule II was completed and based on that outcome. This is not likely to happen for a few years.

In my presentation to ASI directors, I spoke of the imminent border re-opening into Canada. I was asked when the U.S. border would open to live animals from Canada. I took the opportunity to advise them to lobby all levels of their government and USDA officials to encourage this to occur, after all BSE in sheep is a non-issue and trade should be science based.

Burdell Johnson was elected as President of ASI and I look forward to meeting with Dr. Javier Lara in Mexico and Burdell at our next North American Sheep Coalition meeting in Canada.

## Opportunity to Speak out for Canadian Agriculture

By France Lanthier, National Coordinator On-Farm Food Safety

The Agricultural Policy Framework (APF) was the five-year federal-provincial-territorial agreement on agriculture that came into force in 2003. The APF set out to “lay an enduring foundation for profitability throughout the value chain” through programs falling within these 5 pillars:

Business Risk Management: To help farmers better manage the risks that come with the business of farming

Food Safety and Quality: To increase consumers' confidence in the safety and quality of Canadian agri-food products

Science and Innovation: To create new food and non-food opportunities for the sector and for Canada.

Environment: To enhance soil, water, air and biodiversity

Renewal: To ensure producers have the skills they need to capitalize on new opportunities.

Most of the program agreements under the APF come to an end in March 2008. Having acknowledged that the objectives of the APF were not completely fulfilled, and the need to continue supporting and in some cases improve the programs initiated through the APF, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada has begun the process of developing the *Next Generation of Agriculture and Agri-Food Policy*. The five original pillars will remain with the addition of a new one, *Market Development and Trade*. This new pillar will focus on marketing and branding, innovation, collaboration, investment, and access to markets.

The consultation process consists of 3 Rounds. Round 1 took place at the end of 2006 and consisted of policy discussions with selected stakeholders. Round 2 which is currently underway consists of public consultations, while Round 3 will revert to the selected stakeholders format. Briefly, NOW is the public's opportunity to speak out.

On February 9<sup>th</sup> I attended the session held in Kemptville, ON. I would estimate that at least 150 to 200 people were in attendance. The session consisted of short presentations on the topics by AAFC representatives followed by group discussions. Note takers bounced from table to table trying to capture the comments put forth. What came out loud and clear from the session was that 1) **farm income needs to increase** – simply put if there are no farms then there will be little need for agriculture policy 2) **public good programs** need to be treated as such and farmers need to be compensated for the time and investment they put into implementation 3) **available funding** needs to be easier to access and delivered faster, that is the red tape needs to get considerably shorter.

While one can hardly be blamed to be skeptical of the democratic process in this day and age, I was encouraged when reading the *Report from Round One Consultations on The Next Generation of Agriculture and Agri-Food Policy* found at [http://agr.gc.ca/pol/consult/thematic/pdf/rep\\_r1\\_e.pdf](http://agr.gc.ca/pol/consult/thematic/pdf/rep_r1_e.pdf). This document highlights the comments and recommendations made by stakeholders during Round 1 consultations, and the food-safety section actually includes some of the recommendations that were put forth by the commodity groups.

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## APF CONSULTATION CON'T

Public consultation sessions have been held across Canada during January and February (see below for upcoming sessions). For those unable to attend in person, your views can be shared through the online consultation at <http://nextgen.dialoguecircles.com>. The online consultation is open until March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2007. This is our opportunity to speak out... for what it's worth I chose to take it.

### Upcoming Next Generation of Agriculture and Agri-Food Policy public consultation locations:

Sessions are from 9:00 am to 4:30 pm

- WINNIPEG, MB, Wednesday, February 14, The Fairmont, Two Lombard Place
- BRANDON, MB, Friday, February 16, Victoria Inn, 3550 Victoria Avenue
- RIDGETOWN, ON, Thursday, February 15, Rudy H. Brown Rural Development Center, University of Guelph, Ridgetown Campus, 120 Main Street
- WOODSTOCK, ON, Friday, February 16, Oxford Auditorium, Woodstock Fairgrounds, 875 Nellis Street , P.O. Box 234
- TORONTO, ON, Monday, February 26, Doubletree International Plaza Hotel, 655 Dixon Road
- PERTH ANDOVER, NB, Wednesday, February 21, Royal Canadian Legion #36, 44 Legion Street
- MONCTON, NB, Friday, February 23, Future Inns, 40 Lady Ada Blvd
- CHARLOTTETOWN, PE, Monday, February 19, Delta Prince Edward, 18 Queen Street

## CANADIAN SHEEP STATISTICS RELEASED

The sheep statistics released by Statistics Canada on February 15, 2007, indicate that not a single province in Canada saw an increase in ewe flock size from January 1 2006 to January 1 2007. Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island managed to maintain their ewe flock size, while Manitoba and Quebec saw the largest decreases; 8.49 per cent and 9.15 per cent respectively. Overall the ewe flock size decreased from 588,000 to 564,400 ewes; a drop of 4.2 per cent.

This marks the third straight year that the Canadian ewe flock as decreased after reaching 622,000 in 2004. There has been some speculation that this decrease has been due to the 203 border closure and the drought in Western Canada.

There may, however, be some hope that producers are retaining more replacement ewes in an effort to increase the ewe flock size. The number of replacement ewes has increased 4.8 per cent from 86,800 to 91,000. From January 1, 2006 to January 1, 2007 only two provinces saw a decrease in the replacement ewe flock size; British Columbia and New Brunswick – 13 and 20 per cent respectively. All other provinces have seen an increase, except for Prince Edward Island and Manitoba who managed to retain the same number of replacement ewes.

## EWE FLOCK NUMBERS

Province	2007	2006	2005	2004
<b>British Columbia</b>	43,900	44,600	43,000	40,500
<b>Alberta</b>	96,000	97,400	101,500	102,600
<b>Saskatchewan</b>	51,700	53,000	65,200	61,700
<b>Manitoba</b>	31,800	34,500	39,900	41,500
<b>Ontario</b>	159,500	161,900	177,800	183,600
<b>Quebec</b>	160,600	175,300	165,600	170,000
<b>New Brunswick</b>	3,700	3,800	4,100	4,400
<b>Nova Scotia</b>	12,500	12,500	12,800	12,700
<b>PEI</b>	2,000	2,000	1,800	1,800
<b>Newfoundland</b>	2,700	3,000	3,300	3,400
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>564,400</b>	<b>588,000</b>	<b>615,000</b>	<b>622,200</b>

## REPLACEMENT EWE NUMBERS

Province	2007	2006
<b>British Columbia</b>	8,800	9,900
<b>Alberta</b>	15,300	12,500
<b>Saskatchewan</b>	13,900	13,700
<b>Manitoba</b>	4,000	4,000
<b>Ontario</b>	22,300	21,500
<b>Quebec</b>	22,100	22,000
<b>New Brunswick</b>	500	600
<b>Nova Scotia</b>	2,300	1,900
<b>PEI</b>	300	300
<b>Newfoundland</b>	500	400
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>90,000</b>	<b>86,800</b>

## COUNTRY OF ORIGIN LABELING

*By Jennifer Fleming, CSF Executive Director*

In May 2002, the United States Farm Bill created new mandatory labeling requirements for certain beef, lamb, pork, fish and shellfish, fruit and vegetables and peanut products sold at U.S. retail outlets. The requirements would have retailers providing information to the consumer as to the country of origin of the commodity.

Since the discovery of bovine spongiform encephalopathy in North America, proponents have argued that Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) is also about food safety. The stated intent of the legislation, however, is not about food safety or animal health, but instead to provide consumers with additional information on which to base their purchase decisions.

On October 11, 2003 an interim voluntary country of origin labeling program was implemented that is effective until the measure is made mandatory. A proposed final rule outlining regulations to implement mandatory COOL was published on October 30, 2003 with a 60 day comment period. The comment period was subsequently extended a further 60 days until February 27, 2004. In January of 2004, the COOL law was amended to delay implementation until September 30, 2006 for all covered commodities except fish and seafood. COOL was implemented in April 2005 for fish and seafood, and after a further delay in the implementation for other commodities, **COOL now must be implemented by September 30, 2008 for all other commodities.** However, there is currently legislation before the United States Congress to advance the implementation date to September 30, 2007, and this legislation has support from the Agricultural Committee Chairs of both the House of Representatives and the United States Senate.

The rule would cover ground and muscle cuts of beef, lamb and pork, farm-raised and wild fish and shellfish, peanuts, and “perishable agricultural commodities” as defined by the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act (PACA). Products are exempt if they are ingredients of processed foods, as generally defined by USDA. For example, USDA has proposed that cooked roast beef be labeled but not bacon, and that canned roasted and salted peanuts be labeled but not mixed nuts. PACA-regulated retailers (those selling at least \$230,000 a year in fruits and vegetables) would be required to inform consumers of these products’ origin “by means of a label, stamp, mark, placard, or other clear and visible sign on the covered commodity or on the package, display, holding unit, or bin containing the commodity at the final point of sale to consumer”.

While there has been strong support for COOL in the United States, there are many groups that do not support it as there is no possibility of recouping the heavy costs of implementing the complex requirements. For products produced in our integrated North American marketplace, the label must indicate country of origin by production points e.g., lamb born and raised in Canada but slaughter, processed and packed in the US.

### Effects on Canada – US Trade

The mandatory COOL legislation will restrict trade, especially for the red meat sector. US processors, distributors and retailers have indicated that they will reduce the number of sources of covered commodities in an effort to reduce their implementation costs for segregating, tracking and keeping records. Industry, the Government of Canada and the provinces have been lobbying US politicians and industry stakeholders to have the law repealed.

### Effects on Canadian Sheep Industry

In our industry, two main positions have been expressed. Most producers fear that COOL will severely harm the sheep industry. Conversely, others believe that COOL may create an opportunity for Canada to expand its processing capacity to provide meat to the US market because the tracking costs in the US for imported meat could be substantially less than what is proposed even for domestic animals slaughtered in the US under this law.

If you would like more information please visit: [www.ams.usda.gov/cool/](http://www.ams.usda.gov/cool/)

# LEVERAGING THE VALUE OF BRAND BUILDING AND COLLABORATION

By Jennifer Fleming and Tracy Lamb

As part of the Canadian Sheep Federation's (CSF) Market Development Strategy, the CSF brought together key individuals from each member province's organization for a Branding Workshop in Toronto.

This initial workshop focused on discussions related to leveraging the value of brand building and collaboration of stakeholders throughout the Canadian sheep industry. We worked on establishing a common understanding of how to build a brand and how, as an industry we have been and are planning to address various needs related to marketing, production and distribution challenges. This type of communication and collaboration between provinces will be critical to our success in the future, as, together, we continue to explore opportunities to enhance the industry and our ability to further develop the market and our ability to meet more of the demand that currently exists for a consistent, high quality product.

## UNDERSTANDING BRANDING

It has been widely acknowledged that building a brand for Canadian lamb at this point may be premature, given the lack of consistency of our product, which undermines our ability to identify a viable point of differentiation that can be applied across the country. We can, however do a lot to build our capacity and capability as an industry to produce products that will enable us to effectively brand in the future. There is a need at this point in our evolution, to develop a more effective and efficient process and framework that offers support and information to the provincial producer associations who are investing a substantial amount of time and energy into helping producers enhance their production and marketing of lamb.

The workshop provided participants an opportunity to review and discuss topics such as: Why brand? What a brand is and is not; How to build a brand; who is responsible for building the brand; implications of making a brand promise, the relationship between different brands within the same industry; and an overview of the Canadian Agriculture and Food brand promise and how it relates to our industry.

One of the learnings from the workshop was that a logo is not a brand. In order for a brand to be successful it must achieve and sustain differentiation within its target markets; which means having a unique offering, effective positioning and effective and consistent delivery of that offering that's in line with the positioning. And, that in order to build a brand, you must first define it, *then* become it, *then* promote it. Or, in other words, 1) define what your product is, how it's different from the competition and what you're going to promise to the consumer, 2) do what it takes to ensure that you can provide that product and deliver on that promise **CONSISTENTLY**, and then 3) ensure that your target audience knows what your promise is and perceives value in it. Think Tim Horton's. It may not be the best coffee available, but regardless of where you buy it, it will always taste and look the same – you can count on it. Consistency will continue to be one of the most important challenges for us to address in our industry moving forward.

## BRANDING CONTINUED ....

Regardless of what ‘promise’ we’re making, our ability to deliver on that every time is what customer trust and loyalty is based on. Keeping in mind, that as an industry, we can profile and deliver a number of different products – each with their own promises – but we have to define that up front, establish customer expectations of what they’re going to get, and then give it to them – they need to know what they’re buying, and have confidence that that’s what they’re going to get – every time.

## SHARING RESOURCES

The workshop day also included an opportunity for each provincial representative to share with the group various initiatives they have been involved with and various tools and materials that they have developed in the past – both from a marketing perspective, as well as research and production initiatives. There were discussions about what has worked well, and lessons learned from initiatives that experienced challenges along the way. We had an opportunity to not only see and hear about what’s been done to date, but also explore opportunities to share resources across provinces, and identify opportunities to pool resources for future initiatives.

In order to support the ongoing sharing between provinces, CSF is currently developing a ‘resource bank’ framework to enable provinces to easily access listings of what does currently exist, and how to access them, rather than duplicating efforts and expenditures in the future. This resource bank is one example of how the CSF is committed to supporting collaboration and resource sharing to ultimately benefit our entire industry.

## DEVELOPMENT OF PROMOTIONAL & EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS FOR CANADIAN-PRODUCED LAMB

*By Hugh Maynard — Qu'anglo Communications & Consulting*

**T**he Canadian Sheep Federation has embarked upon an ambitious initiative to increase consumption and market share for Canadian-produced lamb. A major focus of this project activity, assisted financially by Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada, is to develop food service and retail merchandising tools that support a strong Canadian lamb identity and target areas of profitability and competitiveness that will facilitate the sale of Canadian-produced lamb.

Through research and focus groups with industry stakeholders, merchandising requirements for food service & retail operators have been determined. These revealed an enthusiastic preference for Canadian lamb – “it tastes great” - tempered only by the inconsistencies of supply and quality. Food service and retail operators said they require support to merchandise to consumers and want to have more contact and exchange with other segments of the industry, especially producers and their organizations. They suggested the provision of recipe cards highlighting under-used cuts and easy-to-prepare meals, along with other promotional materials highlighting product information on nutrition, traceability and origin.

## PROMOTIONAL & EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS CONTINUED ...

Responding to the needs of food service and retail sectors, lamb cut charts are being produced, along with technical bulletins and other materials that support the efficient and quality preparation of lamb meat cuts. A significant component of these materials will be a video that will cover all aspects of lamb meat preparation from a whole carcass, and combined with still photos and text as an important instructional tool for butcher and culinary schools.

Feedback from industry stakeholders indicate that Canadian lamb did not yet have a 'brand' but that it would be an important first step to distinguish between domestic and imported product. This 'Canadian' identification will be initiated through a multi-use logo to be used on product and merchandising materials in a complementary fashion to current programs, and to fill gaps where no identification of Canadian product exists.

In this context there is an important role for local (direct from farm sales) and regional branding which will also contribute towards improvements in consistency of product, development of niche markets and establishment of local value chains.

A raised profile for Canadian lamb will also be reinforced through key merchandising messages that emphasize the qualities of Canadian lamb: fresh, tastes good, healthy eating (nutritious and small portions), an affordable choice (an everyday choice, a family meal), easy-to-prepare and versatile – underlining the international cuisine that gives lamb further appeal.

These materials will be made available to the industry through a CSF website to be made available in the spring of 2007 so that all those involved in lamb marketing efforts will have access to a variety of promotional tools. The educational materials will ensure that the training programs for chefs and butchers will have resources that support the efficient and quality preparation of lamb products which will further enhance their appeal at all points in the merchandising chain.

### **SCRAPIE CANADA UPDATE**

*By Courtney Denard, Scrapie Project Coordinator*

2006 was an action-packed year for both the Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program (VSFCP) and the National Genotyping Project. Taking a look back on the year that was Scrapie Canada stated its case from one end of the country to the other.

To start the year off, Scrapie Canada branded itself with an official trademark logo, which would eventually coordinate with the new and improved website that was launched in August. If you haven't taken the time to check it out yet, make sure that you do ([www.scrapiecanada.ca](http://www.scrapiecanada.ca)).

Presentations were made throughout the year on both initiatives at various conventions and meetings across the country. In January, Scrapie Canada attended the Agriculture Information Days in Barrie, Ontario, presenting program information to participating and interested sheep producers. Information sessions were also held in Spencerville and Sebringville, Ontario in February and March respectively.

June was a busy month for Scrapie Canada. Heading to the Nova Scotia Sheep Classic in the earlier part of the month, Jonathan Wort presented information on the scrapie projects to approximately 300 Classic attendees. Scrapie Canada returned to eastern Canada later in June, traveling to St. John's, Newfoundland to

## **SCRAPIE CANADA UPDATE continued ...**

attend the Canadian Sheep Federation's Semi-Annual General Meeting. Industry representatives, sheep farmers and members of the provincial government heard a new presentation on Scrapie Canada, highlighting the benefits of joining the two national programs.

In May, a major change to the National Genotyping Project was announced to Canadian purebred sheep producers. The genotyping survey was now accepting samples from unregistered offspring of two registered purebred parents. This change was made in response to a number of individuals', both industry representatives and farmers, request to allow unregistered offspring on the program.

Scrapie Canada also attended Canada's Outdoor Farm Show in Woodstock, Ontario in the second week of September. Tens of thousands of farmers visit this show each year to seek out the latest in farming information and technology. Scrapie Canada shared a booth with other major sheep representatives such as the OMAFRA sheep team and the Ontario Katahdin Sheep Association.

At the end of October, another scrapie presentation was made to delegates at the Ontario Sheep Marketing Agency's Annual General Meeting. Once again, attendees were encouraged to participate in both scrapie projects and were reminded of how important these programs are now and when the US border re-opens.

As 2006 was coming to an end, Scrapie Canada took the opportunity to visit another part of Canada, this time heading west in December to present at the Saskatchewan Sheep Development Board's Annual General Meeting. Weathering the - 44° temperature, Scrapie Project Coordinator Courtney Denard met with Saskatchewan sheep producers to discuss the merits of each scrapie program.

Although changes were made to the National Genotyping Survey in 2006, the number of samples submitted by purebred producers did not meet the original projection of 36,000 samples. In response to this, Scrapie Canada has submitted an application for extension to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, which requests that the project be extended until March of 2008. To date, the National Genotyping Survey has collected 4,525 samples- a far cry from the original goal. Please keep an eye on the Scrapie Canada website for updates on this extension (see the "What's New?" link). As soon as a decision is rendered, this information will be made available to all interested sheep producers.

### **SCRAPIE FLOCK CERTIFICATION PROGRAM**

In regards to the National Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program, to date there are 33 enrolled producers on the program (up from 18 in March 2006). Of these 33, 24 spots are filled by sheep producers. In total, the VSFCP has 60 spots available so there are still 36 open positions on the program.

As we work our way into 2007, take a moment to consider the value of these scrapie programs and reflect upon how these initiatives could benefit and/or improve your farm. It is realistic to say, and Scrapie Canada has been advised by the Canadian Government, that once the US border does open, no sheep will be getting across it unless it is a part of a national scrapie program.

If you would like to enroll in the VSFCP or have any comments or questions, please contact Scrapie Project Coordinator, Courtney Denard, at 519-836-0043 or by e-mail at [admin@scrapiecanada.ca](mailto:admin@scrapiecanada.ca).

## KIWI INGENUITY

By Martin Gooch, The George Morris Centre

**M**y first visit to New Zealand was in early 1986. Agriculture was in turmoil. Income subsidies, which formerly provided 40 percent of sheep farmers' income, had been eradicated and producers were clearly realizing that their future rested on capturing value from the market. Mixed feelings of apprehension and excitement were commonplace. The latter, at least in part, due to the commercial opportunities that deregulation was expected to offer.

Step forward 21 years and the transformation is enormous. Deregulation has indeed delivered opportunities, immense opportunities. The producers we met during the CSF-led visit are confident and informed. They need to be. With deregulation and added opportunity come responsibility and accountability. Heightened expectations have been placed upon everyone involved in the sheep industry, including industry associations and stakeholders in general.

Always looking to keep a step ahead, everyone along the chain is adopting the newest (proven) management tools and techniques. Producers are definitely more market focused than previously. So are processors, researchers, universities, government departments, and key decision makers.

Producer levies are not just used to address production-based issues. They are also invested in efforts such as improving techniques used by processors to increase the value of lamb supplied to targeted markets. And supporting market research and promotional strategies from both a generic (NZ Lamb) and individual processor perspective. They clearly acknowledge that the chain must work together to succeed. Through Meat and Wool New Zealand, processors work with producers and their representatives to develop and implement marketing strategies.

One industry association exists for beef, sheep and deer. There are different departments for production, marketing and R&D, rather than different organizations. The synergies and opportunities that result are extensive, not least due to the caliber of personnel and technical resources they can afford to employ. There is no *'let's push what we already produce'*. The association's focus is placed entirely on creating market pull by understanding what customers want and producing accordingly. They then share that information with industry through a number of dissemination techniques to encourage adaptation to market demands, which invariably leads to greater value-creating opportunities for producers.

The head offices of the producer and processor associations are even located in the same building, one immediately above the other, and they work closely together. An example being the co-development activities and investment that they afford to joint domestic promotion strategies for lamb and beef.

The result of an industry working together to satisfy market demands means that the entire agricultural sector is also less 'political' than 23 years ago. Proactive and constructive approaches are the norm. Not defensive tactics designed to win at another's expense. Far more effective and valuable use is therefore made of available resources, financial and otherwise.

## KIWI INGENUITY continued ...

A great example of this is the extent to which sector industries collaborate on issues ranging from production through to marketing. Lessons learnt by one industry are eagerly shared with others. Regardless of their industry, producers largely consider themselves to be in the same boat ... not different boats heading in separate directions that have little real relevance to each other. To further enhance its commercial strength, agriculture works ardently with associations and institutions representing links situated between themselves and the end market.

So what are the keys to this success? Simply put: knowledge and need! Knowledge in changing production practices, ongoing research, and market demands. Need from not having a safety net. Together they lead to a business environment where operations, such as varieties grown, production practices, grading, packaging, and supply arrangements, including traceability, are determined by markets, not legislation.

Information generation and dissemination are essential for providing producers with the tools necessary to succeed commercially. One method developed to share research results and market information with producers in a practical easily-digestible form and, in turn maintain a continual link between agriculture, agri-food and scientists/researchers, came from a government initiative implemented around the time of deregulation.

Originally called “Farm Improvement Clubs” and now known as “Discussion Groups” (or in the case of a similar, though separate initiative, “Monitor Farms”), groups of producers meet regularly to assess each others’ farming operations and develop new capabilities. Discussions often centre on improving prosperity by capturing added value or reducing costs. Little is held back in terms of discussing financial information, farm plans, production choices, etc. Learning and growing with your peers is a powerful motivator. It also enhances producers’ pride and gives them greater assurance that they control their own destiny.

And on the issue of retaining competitiveness compared to their low-cost nemesis, China? New Zealand is not shirking a challenging situation here either. In fact, they are negotiating a free-trade agreement between the two countries. China offers a new market for high quality products. Low-cost commodities are not for everyone, and New Zealand knows it.



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