

Federal Budget and Agriculture

By Jennifer Fleming, Executive Director

The Canadian Sheep Federation was pleased to see new funding for livestock producers in the Federal Government's 2006 budget. While in Calgary on May 5, 2006, Minister Strahl spoke about the federal government's budget and what it means for Canadian agriculture.

The substantial financial commitment to agriculture in the latest budget clearly indicates that the government is willing to listen and respond to the agricultural sector. Considering that agriculture was not even one of the government's priority areas, the \$1 billion in new money is an encouraging sign. Encouraging in that, the billion dollar investment goes beyond the promised \$500 million per year increase in farm support.

With the promised funds, the government is pledging to create new and innovative support for farm family incomes, more responsive income stabilization and investments into future opportunities focusing on biomass science, support for a bio-fuels strategy and generating new opportunities for agriculture through value-added products.

The budget also outlines the government's commitment to replacing the Canadian Agricultural Income Stabilization (CAIS) program with more effective programming for farm income stabilization and disaster relief. While the government investigates programs that can replace CAIS, they have retroactively adjusted the inventory valuation used in the CAIS program. These inventory valuation adjustments have been requested by the livestock sector since the first year of BSE. This is the kind of support that producers need.

The adjustment in CAIS will provide one-time funding to make the program more responsive and will put in place deeper loss coverage, cost-shared with provinces and territories. It is an immediate move towards more effective programming.

At a time when so many things are deemed spending priorities, investing in rural Canada is a very wise move for this new federal government..

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First BSE-resistant calf cloned

Chinese scientists have succeeded in cloning a cow with gene cells resistant to bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). The calf created at the Laiyang Agro-Science Institute in eastern China's Shandong province weighed 55kg, was 85cm wide and 95cm tall. The calf is part of the research project of two professors who succeeded in cloning China's first and second healthy cows in 2001, in collaboration with a Japanese university.

According to the report, the Laiyang Agro-Science Institute in Shandong said they used gene-transplant technology to introduce the genes to the calf cloned from cells of an adult cow.

The article also stated that further tests would be required on the calf, as it grows, to verify the effectiveness of the transplanted genes.

Source:
www.farmonline.com.au/news_daily.asp?ag_id=34298

On-Farm Food Safety Update

By France Lanthier, National Coordinator On-Farm Food Safety

After many months of debugging, and sorting out web-server issues, the Canadian Sheep and Lamb Food-Safe Farm Practices producer training is finally available online. There are many time saving and cost saving advantages to the online training approach:

 Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Agriculture et Agroalimentaire Canada



- Participants do not have to travel
- Online training is currently free
- Training can be accessed at any time from anywhere (almost)
- Participants can logout and return to the training at a later time, that is, the training does not have to be completed in one sitting
- Participants have the opportunity to review the documentation at their pace
- Training costs are reduced – the monthly website maintenance cost is under \$20 vs. the cost of renting a hall and travel costs for a trainer, at times exceeding \$1000

Training Workshop Available Online

<http://fsfp.cansheep.ca>

For those with no internet access or dial-up internet access, the CSF is in the process of developing a hard copy version as well as a CD-ROM version of the online training.

This is not to insinuate that in-person training sessions will not be available or are being discouraged. Quite to the contrary, the CSF is committed to providing Food-Safe Farm Practices training in the method that best suits producers interested in learning about the program. But keeping in line with our cost savings approach, in-person training sessions will now require a minimum of 15 producers to register for the session.

Note:

for the sessions already planned in: Kemptville, ON on May 18th at 7:00 pm (location TBD); and Markdale, ON, at the Grey County Agricultural Centre on May 30th at 7:00 pm; those sessions will be with the current number of registrations.

For more information contact:

France Lanthier, MSc. National Coordinator, OFFS email: france@cansheep.ca;
tel: 514-567-1608

NUTRITIONAL CONTENT OF LAMB CUTS

By Jennifer Fleming, Executive Director

Producer Participation Requested

As you are aware the Canadian Sheep Federation is in the midst of a study on nutritional data for marketing lamb which was awarded to Maxxam Analytics.

In order to meet the requirements of CFIA and Health Canada for nutritional data on Canadian lamb, the variance of the nutrients must be reviewed to ensure the final data meets their compliance. The cause of the nutrient variants has been determined as:

- Feed
- Weight at time of slaughter
- Specie
- Male/Female
- Location within Canada

This variance was determined by studies found and some data already collected for differences in animals. CFIA and Health Canada also questioned the above.

Maxxam, will require this information to ascertain how to batch the samples of the different cuts before analysis. Please see the attached Sample Submission form that will need to be filled out by you for each required cut of meat.

CFIA and Health Canada also require the samples reflect what and where lamb is consumed in Canada. We have data breaking down all of Canada to three provinces (Alberta, Ontario and Quebec) representing 95% of lamb consumed. We will need to collect samples for the two main seasons when lamb is generally raised.

Producers will be compensated through the CSF for their cuts

Therefore, collection of samples for the 5 cuts and ground meat will need to be done now and in October. Again, the required information for the samples will be sent in pre-made forms from Maxxam who will contact you to review the requirements. Coolers will be sent to you to submit the samples requested with pre-made courier forms for easy shipment back to the laboratory.

Producers are being asked to contact the CSF if they are interested in supplying the study with meat cuts. Your co-operation in this matter will help the CSF in marketing lamb in Canada.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Jennifer Fleming at 1-888-684-7739 or at admin@cansheep.ca or Ron Reddam at Maxxam Analytics at 1-800-563-6266 ext. 5746 or at ron.reddam@maxxamanalytics.com.

Omega 3 lamb on the way

Scientists are confident that lamb could soon become as important a source of Omega-3 fatty acids as oily fish.

Researchers at CSIRO Livestock Industries and the Western Australian Department of Agriculture and Food are investigating whether sheep can be bred to increase the level of essential fatty acids like Omega-3 in their meat while reducing the amount of saturated fats. CSIRO nutritionist, Dr Soressa Kitessa, and Department of Agriculture geneticist, Dr Johan Greeff, have found genetic variations in sheep that show the level of beneficial fatty acids in individual animals is hereditary.

Their research on almost 500 pedigree ram hoggets demonstrated that the meat from some sheep contained more than twice the Omega-3 levels of that found in other sheep.

The top 100 sheep in the study contained natural levels of Omega-3 that would place them close to Food Standards Australia and New Zealand's classification as "a good source" of Omega-3. Currently, the classification is applied to oily fish and other products that have Omega-3 additives.

Source: www.farmonline.com.au/news_daily.asp?ag_id=34061

Research Notes From Around the World

Sheep Can Self Medicate

Sheep are not exactly the Rhodes scholars of the animal kingdom, but research points to a degree of medical acumen among the much-ridiculed ruminants. A trial by CSIRO scientists has researchers thinking that sheep might be able to self-medicate, eating particular plants to remedy various ailments.

The project, at CSIRO Livestock Industries in Perth, aims to identify the range of plants – particularly those not used for grazing – which can help sick sheep recover.

Scientists have long been aware of the ability of sheep to meet their nutritional needs through plant selection, but the animals' apparent ability to choose natural remedies for illness is a new line of research.

CSIRO senior research scientist Dean Revell said the sheep in the trial were being exposed to different plants such as shrubs and other perennials, rather than grazing on paddocks containing a single crop and grasses.

Researchers then monitor the animals' eating patterns, determining whether sheep infected with parasites pick particular plants and whether their health improves as a result. "If we can show, as we suspect, that sheep have the ability to self-medicate and learn how to manage or exploit this capacity, it could have important ramifications for building more environmentally sustainable farming systems," Dr Revell said.

"If sheep can self-medicate, we also expect to be able to suggest changes to farm management practices which will improve animal welfare outcomes while reducing the need for artificial medication.

"It could be that sheep need certain medicinal paddocks where we take them to self-medicate ... or it could be that they need ongoing low level intakes of certain plants to keep parasites at bay." Sheep learnt best from their mums, Dr Revell said, and their knowledge of medicinal plants could be passed down through generations.

"The right plants have to be available to the animals at the right time," he said. "We suspect they need access to a range of different forage plants to learn which to choose." The research is part of a national project examining how mixed forage can lift livestock production. The study is a collaboration between CSIRO, the Co-operative Research Centre for Salinity, Meat and Livestock Australia and Australian Wool Innovation.

Scientists find proteins for tender lamb

Australian scientists are leading the way in unearthing the proteins responsible for meat tenderness in lamb.

Researchers from the Victorian Department of Primary Industries have identified around 80 structural muscle proteins that influence meat tenderness and lamb eating quality.

"Consumers around the world are increasingly demanding more tender meat," Victorian Minister for Innovation John Brumby said. "The quality of a consumer's eating experience is the single greatest factor determining whether they will buy a lamb product again. "Being able to predict meat quality is crucial for Australia's red meat industry and provides market certainty for retailers and exporters.

"These scientists are now developing technologies to detect the proteins in varied amounts between pieces of meat which determine tenderness, with the aim of boosting the eating experience of consumers and strengthening the lamb industry's competitiveness in the market."

New capability in this area - known as proteomics technologies - could result in the development of commercial screening tools to be used by Australia's red meat industry aimed at producing more succulent meat.

The project has been jointly funded by the Victorian Government and Meat and Livestock Australia, with the first phase of the research due to be completed in the middle of next year.

Source: www.farmonline.com.au/news_daily.asp?ag_id=33913

Blow for mulesing alternative

The wool industry has been delivered a blow by the rejection of mulesing injectable agent, collagenase, by the Australian Quarantine Inspection Service (AQIS).

Finding a surgical mulesing has a 2010 deadline and alternative methods are being explored by Australian Wool Innovation (AWI). One of AWI's key mulesing research projects involved injecting collagenase in the breech area of the sheep. The agent would then cause a scab to form in the affected area, and when this fell off, the skin underneath would be permanently scarred and not grow wool. But AQIS has put a stop to the project because of bio-security fears and the risk of mad cow disease (BSE) material in the agent's contents.

Collagenase comes from a protein that is primarily sourced from BSE-infected countries. There is no guarantee that the agent does not contain bovine material; therefore AQIS cannot support it. AWI project manager, Scott Williams, says it is understandable that the inspection service did not like further imports of the agent.

Collagenase has been used at South Australian agricultural college Roseworthy for research, but Mr Williams says the sheep used throughout the tests were destroyed shortly after.

Source: By Mary Goode, *Farm Weekly*, WA, April 27 issue.

Record March quarter lamb production

Australian lamb production during the first quarter of 2006 was the highest on record, totalling 97,200 tonnes carcass weight. Meat and Livestock Australia reports that the figure from the Australian Bureau of Statistics is some 6pc above the previous record set in 2005 of 91,500t. The 4.71 million lambs slaughtered nationally was 8pc higher than in the same period in 2005 and the highest level since 1972.

The greatest gains in first quarter lamb production were obtained in Victoria and Western Australia, assisted in part by growth in flock numbers and a continued shift to prime lamb production. In Victoria, production was 12pc higher than the same period last year, at 39,000t.

This is the second highest level on record – only 1pc below the record set in the first quarter of 2001. Slaughter numbers in Victoria were up 13pc, to 1.9 million head (indicating a slight decline in average carcass weights).

In WA, lamb production rose 19pc to a record 13,900t, with slaughter also at record levels – up 17pc, to 676,000 head (indicating a slight increase in average carcass weights). Despite these large increases in production, prices for lambs meeting domestic and export specifications remained high.

Export lamb prices in the March quarter were 11pc up on the previous year, supermarket lambs were up 5pc and trade lambs were equal to the previous year, reflecting the strong demand for Australian lamb.

Source: Meat and Livestock Australia

Selling Organic Lambs for 300\$

For Southern Queensland prime lamb producers, Ian (pictured) and Sarah Moss, on the Darling Downs, organic lambs are worth up to \$300 each in gross returns at the local farmers market.

And if that sounds incredible, then consider that a conventionally-produced lamb, bought in cuts at your local supermarket, probably won't give you much change out of the same sum.

That fact, along with organic certification, are the key selling points for the Moss couple's fledgling lamb business, which, after only a few months, is already proving so successful that supply of lambs is becoming a bit of a challenge.

Part of their sales pitch is to provide customers with a comparison sheet which shows the full cost of buying the main seven cuts from themselves, a major supermarket and an organic butcher.

The Mosses offer the cuts for a combined \$317, compared to \$273 for the same cuts from a conventional lamb sold through a major supermarket chain - or a hefty \$535 for the same products from an organic butcher.

The trick, says Mr Moss - a former North West NSW farm merchandise supplier and cotton consultant - is to cut out the middle man.

They've done that by managing slaughter, packaging and marketing themselves, a big expenditure in time and effort that nevertheless is yielding them up to 50 orders for boxed lamb deliveries a fortnight - and a profit.

Their stall at the Toowoomba Police Citizens Youth Club Market serves mainly as a marketing exercise; after fielding the questions and telling their story, most of the orders come later.

Source: By Matthew Cawood, Extract from report in *The Land*, NSW, April 20

WA bluetongue zone reduced

Restrictions on parts of WA considered hotbeds for the bluetongue virus have been relaxed, creating a window of opportunity for producers in the Pilbara and Gascoyne to send their cattle directly to bluetongue sensitive markets. Two years have passed since evidence last suggested bluetongue was present on two properties in the north of the state.

That is enough time to reassess the guidelines, according to the National Arbovirus Monitoring Program (NAMP), which complies with the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) guidelines.

NAMP WA coordinator Richard Norris said the bluetongue zone had been significantly reduced, making more producers eligible to send cattle directly to bluetongue sensitive markets. Those markets include China, Korea, Mexico, Israel and Saudi Arabia.

Mr Norris said Saudi Arabia would be the most likely market in which to increase their cattle imports. Last year Australia exported 17,523 head of cattle to Saudi Arabia. According to NAMP guidelines, the bluetongue zone extends 100km from the site of infection - 50km from the site is considered the infected zone and a further 50km acts as a surveillance zone.

Before allowing imports (of cattle, sheep and goats), sensitive markets like Saudi follow OIE guidelines that require that cattle from the bluetongue zone be kept in a free area 60 days before export.

Source: By Beth Johnston, *Farm Weekly*, WA, May 4.

Welsh Search for the Perfect Lamb

WALES: Survey looks at the ways to increase the value of lamb along the supply chain.

Lambs supplied to an abattoir in perfect condition can reduce supply-chain costs resulting in a premium being paid to the farmer, according to an innovative trial at an Anglesey-headquartered slaughter plant. Supported by Hybu Cig Cymru/Meat Promotion Wales, a lamb value-chain analysis was conducted between a major supermarket, their lamb suppliers Welsh Country Foods and LambLink suppliers, which are the slaughter plant's supplier association.

Value-chain analysis aims to help red meat businesses identify and reduce any unnecessary, non-value adding links throughout the supply chain. The analysis, facilitated by Cardiff University and undertaken by the Food Chain Center in association with the Red Meat Industry Forum, concluded that, first, dirty lambs increased slaughter costs by £210,000 per annum because they had to be kept in the lairage and cleaned on site, disrupting the plant's operations.

Second, over-fat lambs resulted in an additional seven people being employed to re-work 425 metric tons of waste fat at a cost of £126,000 per year. Third, it was found that only 27 percent of the original live weight of the lamb ended up as a meat product on the supermarket shelf. After bones and specified risk material are disposed of, the remaining meat products must be traded through other routes to market with a mind to maximizing carcass balance.

As a result, the analysis defined a new standard for the "perfect lamb," which is:

Perfect Lamb = Percent grading x Percent weight x Percent clean

This new performance measure is intended to better connect the LambLink suppliers with their marketplace. Welsh Country Foods' LambLink suppliers averaged 64 percent against the new measure for a "perfect lamb." This compared to a national average of 41 percent. This research showed that the perfect lamb is quite a rare commodity, but when it is supplied, it takes a huge cost out of the value chain and results in paying the farmer the premium.

Trevor Hanger, site director for Welsh Country Foods, said: "The trial highlighted some immediate issues that we had to address, but the challenge now is to work with our LambLink suppliers to ensure that they supply the perfect lamb every time. This will result in everybody potentially earning more money and the consumer can pay lower prices."

Prys Morgan, HCC industry development, added: "The industry must look at ways of improving efficiency throughout the whole meat supply chain. This trial emphasizes that cooperation is a key element and to be a success, benefits must be distributed to all involved.

Source: www.meatnews.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=Article&artNum=11476



130 Malcolm Road
Guelph, Ontario N1K 1B1

Tel: (519) 824-6018

Toll Free: 1800-684-7739

Fax: (519) 824-9233

E-mail: cansheep@cansheep.ca

Website: www.cansheep.ca

Wool prices expected to pick up

A new report says wool prices are about to climb again, despite seven weeks of losses. The eastern market indicator is 46 cents per kilogram below the seasonal high recorded in March.

The latest business survey from marketing body Woolmark says the fall was inevitable, with not enough demand to support high prices. But with stronger orders coming through from China, western Europe and East Asia, Woolmark economist Kerry Stott says prices will pick up through the June quarter. "It's the best it's been in almost five years," he said.

"The really good thing is that it's more widespread geographically than in the past and not only that, it seems to be more widespread right through from combing through to weaving. "And I think if people look at what's happening to our prices in US dollars, and see that our prices are still going up in US dollars, they'd be pleasantly surprised."

The eastern market indicator closed at 708 cents a kilo clean on Friday. Woolmark's prediction is being backed by some analysts. Elders Queensland wool manager Maurie McNeill expects a decent recovery based on price indications out of China. "We can probably see 20 per cent retracement of the losses that we've seen in this market over the last four or five weeks, particularly in the finer end of the market," he said. "I'd say that seventeens through to say the 21.5 can probably expect the greater part of the recovery and we may not see a recovery for the broader microns until closer to June."

Source: www.abc.net.au/rural/news/content/2006/s1633068.html