



# From the

# flock

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR THE CANADIAN SHEEP INDUSTRY

## In This Issue:

- 1-2 Traceability
- 3 Foot and Mouth Disease
- 4-6 How to Read a Drug Label
- 7-8 Canadian Lamb Company
- 9-10 Scrapie Canada
- 12-13 Sheep Symposium

## The Canadian Sheep Industry Takes Another Step Towards Full Traceability

By Sean McKenzie – National Coordinator, Animal Identification and Traceability

The Canadian Sheep Federation's Board of Directors has recently agreed to recommend revoking the pink metal Ketchum Kurl Lock #3 and the pink Allflex Panel (dangle) tags from the list of officially approved ID tags for the Canadian Sheep Identification Program (CSIP). This change would take place December 31st, 2012. This means that as of this date, they will no longer be accepted as official identifiers for animals moving off the farm or origin, including movements to auctions, shows, and veterinarians.

This decision was based on many factors not the least of which was the indication from buyers and processors that they will stop buying animals not tagged with RFID tags as requirements for traceability recording and reporting come into effect. This coupled with the CSF Boards' desire to develop a more effective and economical traceability system for the Canadian sheep industry were strong motivators for their decision to move forward with RFID.

The message being received from auctions, processors and buyers is that they too are facing increased demands for traceability and as such have begun investing in RFID reading technologies. As traceability regulations become established they will be required to meet recording and reporting of animal ID and movement information as livestock passes through their facilities. RFID then becomes a necessary cost of doing business for them and creates an important link in the animal movement tracking component for livestock traceability.

RFID technology addresses the needs of processors, abattoirs, sales barns and auctions to keep accurate and timely records so that they can quickly and efficiently answer product recalls in the event of a food safety issue. Accurate record keeping will help them protect themselves, as well as the producers who supply them. It will also ensure that they are able to maintain the efficiency of their production lines without investments in labour and avoid potential human error in transcription of ID numbers which would otherwise result in incomplete or incorrect information being recorded.

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## Traceability continued

At all points of production, from the initial producer to final processing, a major concern is that a traceability system cannot slow the speed of commerce. Given this, and considering the options available, the change to an electronic animal ID system using RFID tags is the only feasible option at this time. Visual ID requires large investments in labour to read individual tags, and the errors in transcription, missed tags, and increased stress on animals only add to the costs. Secondly, the volume of information that needs to be collected for traceability is not practical to do, nor can it be done fast enough to satisfy the needs of industry using a visual ID ear tags. A third option of group lot, or mob based identification, has been investigated however, in Canada, our sheep and lamb population is not large enough to make this alternative feasible.

Necessary information to be recorded and/or reported includes animal ID, premise ID and the tracking of animal movements is for an effective traceability system. Attempting this with small lots of lambs moving to slaughter from numerous sources does not work, nor does it provide any information on co-mingling of animals from various locations.

The appetite for full scale traceability is not only a national issue, but one that has considerable momentum internationally as well. Countries across the globe are instituting measures and protocols to facilitate the traceability of livestock, poultry and food stuffs in general. To address this Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the provincial governments and national commodity groups have been working together to develop a set of standards and regulations that will facilitate the creation of a National Agriculture and Food Traceability System (NAFTS).

Traceability goes well beyond the individual farm. Implementing traceability and the move to mandatory RFID tagging is about strengthening and maintaining the viability and sustainability of the entire sheep industry in Canada.

Moving forward, the timeline is as follows:

- July 1, 2011: Ketchum Kurl lock and Allflex dangle tags will no longer be available for sale to sheep producers as Canadian Sheep Identification Program (CSIP) tags.
- Jan. 1, 2012: All animals born or tagged after this date must be tagged with approved CSIP RFID tags.
- Jan. 1, 2012: CSIP approved tags include the Allflex RF ID tag and Shearwell RF ID tags. These tags are already approved by the Federal Minister.
- After Dec. 31, 2012: The Ketchum Kurl lock and Allflex dangle tags will no longer be accepted at sales, abattoirs or by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) for shipping, transfer or sale of sheep in Canada.

At this time, the Kurl Lock #3 and the Allflex Panel tag will be officially removed from the list of approved tags for the CSIP.

*Funding for this initiative has been provided by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada through the Canadian Integrated Food Safety Initiative under Growing Forward.*



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## Foot and Mouth Disease: Let's Be Vigilant

July 2, 2010: The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) is reminding veterinarians across Canada to consider serious animal diseases such as foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) in their list of differential diagnoses.

The recent outbreaks of FMD in Japan and other Asian countries are strong reminders of the importance of spotting the disease early, and practising sound biosecurity when visiting farms. "Early detection of contagious diseases such as FMD goes a long way in limiting the effects of an outbreak," says Dr. Brian Evans, Chief Veterinary Officer for Canada. "As veterinarians, we play a pivotal role in monitoring animals for FMD, and raising awareness of the disease among producers."

There are no human health or food safety risks associated with FMD; however, it can have devastating animal health, economic and social impacts. FMD was last detected in Canada in 1952.

FMD is a highly contagious viral disease that affects a range of animals including cattle, swine, sheep and goats. Infected animals may exhibit signs of depression, fever, blister-like sores on the tongue and lips, in the mouth, on the teats and between the hooves, foot lesions and loss of appetite or milk production.

Veterinarians are an integral part of the ongoing surveillance for FMD. In Japan, it was a local veterinarian who first identified the signs of the disease and triggered the response to the outbreak. Veterinarians who suspect FMD in livestock should immediately contact the nearest CFIA animal health office. A complete list of animal health offices is available on the CFIA website at [www.inspection.gc.ca](http://www.inspection.gc.ca), or in the blue pages of the phone book.

On-farm biosecurity is critical to preventing outbreaks of contagious diseases like FMD. The recent FMD outbreak in South Korea began when a farmer returned home after visiting an infected farm in China. The disease was subsequently spread to five other farms by a local veterinarian.

When visiting a farm, veterinarians should be fully aware of, and respect, the farm's biosecurity practices. These include wearing farm-specific clothing, disinfecting boots, practising good hand hygiene, and cleaning and disinfecting equipment and vehicles (inside and outside) prior to entering and leaving the premises.

Veterinarians are best positioned to offer professional advice on how to improve on-farm biosecurity. Regularly monitoring animal health, establishing guidelines for farm visitors, and recording all farm visits in a visitor's log are some of the simple practices that can be put in place. Any person who has been in a country where FMD has been detected should not be granted access to a farm for 14 days. If access is absolutely required, this period may be reduced to a minimum of five days, following extensive personal disinfection.

For more information on FMD and animal biosecurity, including brochures, a poster and a biosecurity video, call the CFIA's toll-free hotline at 1-800-442-2342



# How to Read a Drug Label

By Barb Caswell, Interim National Coordinator, On-Farm Food Safety

Ideally, monitoring your flock's health status and reducing the incidence of illness and injury before they occur is a great way to increase your flock's productivity and production efficiency (as was discussed recently in the June Edition of Points of View). A food safety program that requires you to track use of animal health products assists you in tracking the health status of your flock and can be used to improve production while minimizing your risk of a food safety hazard as the result of an animal health product residue in the meat or milk.

Review of animal health records may suggest an on-going problem, such as an internal parasite infestation of your flock that may be better controlled through changes in management, rather than continuous treatment that can eventually prove completely ineffective. It also helps you to be judicious in your use of animal health products, if recurring issues can be further prevented with simple changes in operational conditions. Doing your best to avoid illness and injury that necessitates use of animal health products has a number of benefits, including:

1. No lost production as the result of illness and injury (e.g. lower average daily gains, feed intake, and feed efficiency);
2. Lower costs due to fewer animal health products purchased and used;
3. No liability and regulatory action if drugs are used incorrectly; and,
4. Only a limited number of products are approved in Canada for use in sheep.

However, there will be times when treatment is unavoidable. The necessary information to use a drug both effectively and safely will be found on the drug's label or a veterinary prescription. In the case of extra-label drug use, a veterinary prescription will provide the necessary information in addition to what is

on the label. If you are not following all of the instructions properly as given on the label, you are using a drug in an extra-label manner, even if unintentionally. All extra-label drug usage should be done under a veterinary prescription. This leads us to the importance of understanding how to properly read a drug label and understanding the information that is given.

Properly reading and understanding a drug label is important, both to ensure safe usage of the product, but also to get the optimum benefit from the drug. Use of an animal health product is an added cost to production, so in the event you need to treat your sheep, it is important to get the biggest bang for your buck. When we talk about using a drug as directed on the label, keep in mind there may be additional details of importance on the product insert – the leaflet that should accompany all animal health products. While some companies include leaflets with each individual product, others may actually provide a pack of leaflets with a shipment of the product. Either way, if you purchase a product that does not include a product insert, be sure to ask your supplier for a copy. This insert should be reviewed and kept for future reference before using any animal health products.

The Food and Drugs Act dictates what must be on a product label to ensure safe use and storage of the product. Each item on the label is important and serves a purpose. In the June From the Flock, I discussed the approval process for drugs in Canada, so you may recall I introduced a DIN or Drug Identification Number. This number is assigned by Health Canada when a drug has been reviewed for its safety, effectiveness, potency and purity, and subsequently approved for use in Canada. There are few specific cases under which a licensed veterinarian can bring in and prescribe drugs that have not been approved for use in Canada.



## Drug Labels continued

Therefore, it is likely every product used on your farm should have this number.

Drugs are classified as either prescription or non-prescription. If the drug you are using requires a prescription, you will see a PR on the label. Be aware, however, that a drug not identified with PR does not necessarily mean the drug is available for over-the-counter purchase. Below the product's brand name you will typically find the active ingredient and its concentration or strength. It is this ingredient that is responsible for producing the desired effect as described on the label (e.g. "...indicated for treatment of livestock bacterial infection associated with pneumonia."). The front panel of the label includes a detailed description, including whether the drug is an antibacterial, a vaccine or a wound dressing.

The drug's formulation follows directly after the active ingredient and gives us the first indication of how to administer the product. The formulation indicates whether it's an injectable product, a powder or a topical preparation. As we continue down the label, you will find the dosage information. Calculating dosages properly is vital to ensuring safe and effective use of the product. Improper dosages can not only be a food safety issue, but over- or under-dosing your animal can also be an animal health issue. Some preliminary work done at the Ontario Veterinary College suggests that the ineffective treatment of internal parasites may be due to improper use of animal health products in many cases, rather than suspected antimicrobial resistance (Menzies, 2010). Under-dosing leads to ineffective use of the product, while over-dosing could be harmful to the animal, increase your cost of production, and may result in residues in the meat or milk.

When calculating a dosage, you need to be aware of the following:

- Animal weight;
- Size of dose;
- How and where you'll administer the drug;
- How often you'll administer the dose; and,
- How long the treatment will last.

While you may not have answers to all of these questions, they need to be considered as they may influence the dosage to be given and the length of your withdrawal time.

You may also find any warnings directly on the label. For example, all drugs used in livestock will show Veterinary Use Only. Warnings will also include any necessary withdrawal times for meat and milk. Again, these are extremely important in preventing residues. Given withdrawal times apply only to use of the product as instructed on the label. Changing any of the instructions (e.g. dosage, species, storage, etc.) could alter the withdrawal time in an unpredictable way. The best way to ensure withdrawal times are met is to use clear record-keeping to track administering animal health products and safe dates to ship animals or milk. Warnings may also stipulate not to use the product in lactating animals.

The side panel of the drug label contains specific information for how to use the drug and proper storage, such as "store below 25 degrees C". There may also be cautionary statements, such as "Keep out of reach of children". Remember to also keep animal health products out of the reach of your sheep. Drugs not stored in a secure location could put your animals at risk and lead to an inability to judge proper withdrawal times. The label is also likely to contain a lot number assigned by the manufacturer and an expiry date. Drugs should not be used past their expiry date, as this change could also influence the withdrawal time given on the product's label.





## Food Safety continued

Using an animal health product in any way other than what is instructed on the label, such as using the product at a different dosage, for a different duration or number of treatments, for a species not listed on the label, under a different withdrawal time, administered by a different route, or any other deviation, constitutes extra-label drug use. While the sheep industry has struggled with a limited arsenal of products approved in Canada, using drugs only as instructed on the label is the only way to be sure a drug is safe and effective, unless following a veterinary prescription. Animal health products are an essential tool and a significant investment for livestock production. Always take the time to review label information before you purchase an animal health product, before using the product and for proper storage. This will help ensure you are using the right product to address the issue, in the safest and most effective manner. If for any reason you find the instructions unclear, always seek the advice of your veterinarian.

### Reference:

P. Menzies, personal communication, April 28, 2010.

*Funding for this initiative has been provided by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada through the Canadian Integrated Food Safety Initiative under Growing Forward.*



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## Canadian Lamb Company

In June 2010, the Saskatchewan Sheep Development Board (SSDB) announced the formation of the Canadian Lamb Company Initiative. The objective of this new initiative is to test the feasibility of a producer owned and producer controlled company, the Canadian Lamb Company (CLC) that would maximize the market opportunity for Canadian lamb products. The CLC would provide existing producers with both the financial and market incentives needed to profitably expand production and also encourage the entry of new Canadian lamb producers into the market. A major objective of the CLC will be to develop a range of competitive value added lamb products for the retail and food service markets in Canada.

Under the current industry structure in Canada, lamb producers in most provinces receive only a fraction of the money that could be earned if a good portion of their lamb production was value added. The development of a producer owned and controlled brand could allow producers to capture more of the available margin dollars and provide the resources to

Numerous studies of the Canadian lamb industry have all reached similar conclusions. Namely, that consumption of lamb products in Canada is growing at 5% per year and will continue to grow due to the changing demographic blend of the Canadian population. However, while consumption is increasing the domestic production of lambs in Canada is steadily declining. The result is that the main beneficiaries of the growth in demand for lamb products in the Canadian market are the lamb producers and lamb products marketing organizations in New Zealand and Australia.

Without an increase in the domestic production and marketing of domestic lambs, the Canadian lamb industry is in danger of becoming marginalized.

Importers of New Zealand and Australian lamb products are on target to increase their market share from the current level of 60% of the market to over 80% of the Canadian retail and food service markets in the next 3-5 years.

If the lamb industry in Canada becomes marginalized then there is a real likelihood that the infrastructure needed to support the industry will begin to erode. It will become even more difficult to find processors that are prepared to invest in facilities to process lamb. Young veterinarians will not be interested in a declining agriculture sector; and support industries will not invest in setting up offices or support structures for a small and declining market.

In the retail food sector it is extremely difficult to capture retail consumers and retail stores once they have switched to another source of supply. If the Canadian lamb industry cannot supply the market then other countries such as Paraguay will be more than pleased to ship to Canadian retailers. The lamb industry in Canada could conceivably be relegated to farm gate and Farmer's Market and secondary retail channels of distribution. While these markets are good outlets for many producers they do not generate the volumes needed for a vibrant industry.

Consumer studies clearly indicate that Canadians prefer Canadian lamb over imports and have a preference for local versus imported lamb products. However this preference can be changed over time if the imports become the normal purchase for lamb consumers in Canada. General Motors and Ford are examples of two companies who are now struggling to recapture market share from imports. It was their market to lose – and they did.



## Canadian Lamb Company

There is currently no national plan or commercial structure in place to stop the acquisition of the Canadian market by imports nor to increase the Canadian producer's share of the total domestic market for lamb products.

Other industries in Canada have faced similar challenges and have succeeded in increasing production, market share and revenue for their producers. The organic dairy industry is an example where the premium paid to producers was a clear incentive to purchase additional quota, expand production and establish operation standards. The pulse industry in Canada is another example where domestic production in many crops not only holds the lion's share of the domestic market but controls a large percentage of the global market.

The CLC is intended to support and complement the current Sheep and Lamb organizations that are in place across Canada. The CLC would become the producer owned and controlled company that arranges for the purchasing, processing, value adding and distribution of the company owners lamb production. In effect, the CLC would represent the commercial interests of the producers who are the owners of the company.

The first phase of the Canadian Lamb Company Initiative is to determine if the concept of a new business and operations model for the domestic lamb industry will be supported by producers, processors, provincial organizations, retailers, food service providers, feed lot operators, brokers, and other key stakeholders in the sector. Also included in the first phase will be the development of a business and operation plan for the new organization and an assessment of the financial viability of the concept.

The second phase of the initiative will focus on the establishment of a Canadian Lamb Value Chain. The new Value Chain will be national in scope and will be inclusive of key industry stakeholders such as lamb producers, meat processors, food processors, retailers, industry organizations, trade organizations, food service operations, meat product distributors, brokers, food developers, packaging companies, and government organizations in various provinces.

As of July 2010, the Canadian Lamb Company Initiative has received support from producers and key industry stakeholders in 5 provinces.

Funding for this project is provided by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada through the Canadian Agricultural Adaptation Program (CAAP). In Saskatchewan, CAAP is delivered by the Agriculture Council of Saskatchewan.

Terry Ackerman, of Guelph Ontario, has been appointed by the SSDB as the Business Development Manager for this initiative.

For further information on this initiative contact:

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# Changes to Import Protocol for Female Sheep and Goats Implemented

By Courtney Denard, National Scrapie Coordinator

Canada's import protocol around female sheep/goats has changed. Now, intact female sheep/goats from the U.S. are to be imported to a Canadian farm that has been enrolled on the Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program (VSFCP) for at least 12 consecutive months, with at least one annual inventory completed.

The U.S. exporting producer also must have been enrolled in the U.S. Scrapie Flock Certification Program for at least 12 consecutive months, with at least one annual inventory completed. Further, the U.S. producer must be enrolled on the Export Monitored level of the program or the Complete Monitored level of the program (and has been conducting brain testing on all mortalities over 18 months of age for at least 12 months). This last point is not a new requirement- it was implemented in 2007. Canadian producers with no sheep and goats currently on the property are exempt from the 12 month waiting period as there would be no animals on the farm to inventory. These producers would contact Scrapie Canada and ask for Temporary Enrollment on the program to import.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) announced these changes in early 2009 as part of the industry's move towards scrapie eradication. In order to achieve total eradication, Canada must tighten up its import protocols to reduce the risk of bringing scrapie into the country. This process will be gradual, but import requirements will continue to ramp up over the next few years. For example, the next set of changes will take place in January 2011 when Canadian producers will be required to be enrolled on the VSFCP for 24 consecutive months prior to importation, along with the completion of a first annual inventory. The same requirement will be placed upon U.S. producers.

The ramping up process is important for a number of reasons. The CFIA explained that prior enrolment in the country's flock certification program is a key bio-security and risk mitigation component, especially as risk tolerance for scrapie is decreasing.

Ramping up is also important for Canada to achieve scrapie eradication and receive the status of "scrapie free" from the World Organization for Animal Health, more commonly referred to as the OIE. One way of accomplishing this is by establishing import conditions that are in keeping with the policies laid out by the OIE.

Current and potential trading partners such as the US, Mexico and South America take into account whether Canada follows OIE regulations when considering trade agreements with us. In the past, when Canada has spoken with South America about trade, they have questioned whether or not our country is OIE compliant. The U.S. has made it very clear that they are following OIE criteria when it comes to scrapie.

The U.S. has publicly stated that they are working towards eradication and want to be recognized as "scrapie free" in accordance with OIE standards by 2017. They have told Canada that if a trading relationship between the two countries is to continue, Canada must follow a similar path towards scrapie eradication. No changes have been made to the import protocol associated with male sheep/ goats.

The CFIA requirements for live animal/ small ruminant imports are available at:  
<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/anim/heasan/pol/pole.shtml#anima>



## Import Protocol continued

The CFIA requirements for small ruminants imported from the U.S. for breeding, domestic or captive purposes are available at:

<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/animah/asan/pol/ie-2007-5e.shtml>

The industry continues to work with the CFIA on all small ruminant importation issues. Any new and relevant information on the issue will be released directly from Scrapie Canada. For more information, please contact Scrapie Canada at 1-866-534-1302 or by e-mail at [admin@scrapiecanada.ca](mailto:admin@scrapiecanada.ca).

## Raising livestock on island has its challenges

SATURNA ISLAND, B.C. — Getting to Campbell Farm on Saturna Island involves an hour-long ferry ride from Vancouver Island followed by a slow drive on a single lane road. Once there, however, the view from the 500 acre farm nestled between mountains and the Pacific Ocean make the trek worthwhile.

This is where Jacques (pronounced Jackie) Campbell raises cattle and sheep on cleared pasture land. Campbell returned to the farm in 1980 after studying agriculture at Dawson Creek, B.C., and working elsewhere for 10 years. She was one of four children raised by Jim and Lorraine Campbell.

Campbell Farm was established in 1945 and had no road leading to it until 1997, when a new subdivision was proposed nearby. The family had previously travelled on horseback and by boat. However, the new road, high speed wireless internet and changing food safety rules in British Columbia have brought inevitable change in recent years.

One of the biggest changes involved the market animals produced annually by her 88 ewes and 14 Hereford cows. New government regulations that require them to now be slaughtered in a licensed facility prompted Campbell to build her own plant.

“We would have had to go into an entirely different line of business,” she said. “We wouldn’t be able to ship into Victoria or do all those other things.... It has been good for us.” Her father initially resisted the idea but eventually relented and helped her build the facility. Working with provincial inspectors, Campbell learned about food safety, hazard analysis critical control points and how to meet the new standards to process livestock produced by her and her neighbours. She found that the project made economic sense.

Saturna Island is the southernmost of B.C.’s Gulf Islands, and it takes a full day to truck animals by ferry to deliver them to auction or slaughter on Vancouver Island. “Whatever a truck is worth, it was pretty well tied up for three days on that job,” Campbell’s father said. The freight bill wiped out their profit.

“The big thing about having your own slaughterhouse is you know the price you are going to get. No one even asks us the price. They just say, ‘I want a lamb,’” Campbell said. Added her father: “We have no direct competition and we know they like it and they are willing to pay something for it that we think is reasonable recovery.”

Campbell also joined a local market called 31 Square-Saturna Eats to promote and share local food among the 31 sq. kilometre island’s 350 residents. The slaughterhouse is a small red building built in 2008 with an A license, which means it can slaughter, cut and wrap all livestock to specific provincial standards.



## Island continued

There is a holding pen, kill floor, cutting and wrapping area and enough cooler space to hang 20 lambs. All surfaces are washable and correct drainage was installed. Washrooms and office space for inspectors were also required.

She slaughters on Fridays from the end of June until December and then cuts and wraps with a helper the following Wednesday.

She also has a special permit to transport and receive cattle that are older than 30 months, although she prefers handling animals around 18 months of age. Two dump sites away from the farm site can receive slaughter waste: one for specified risk materials and another for general offal. She has also volunteered as one of two B.C. sheep producers to participate in a national radio frequency sheep traceability project.

She is working with Stefan Kaiser of the Canadian Sheep Federation to identify all her animals with yellow electronic ear tags and enter all herd information into a computer system. It identifies individuals and offers a herd management component.

Campbell, who is a diligent record keeper with plenty of information on paper, believes the electronic information will be helpful. A hand held mobile device called a Psion reader allows her to touch the small screen to enter information while in the pasture or the barns and later download it to a laptop.

The Psion reader was developed in England and needs Canadian adjustments, but Kaiser said it was chosen because it offers a wide variety of functions.

The sheep federation is looking at a cost benefit analysis and will report to the federal government in a year if the project works or needs refinement. "We need to discover if this works for farmers," Kaiser said.

Twenty-five Canadian farms are participating, including feedlots, breeding units and lamb production. Campbell said the program can help her make management decisions, record health treatments and calculate earnings. She can also enter information on slaughter animals to calculate weights, meat grades and costs. "A main element of the traceability program is the food safety aspect," Kaiser said.

For Campbell, it tells her more about her commercial ewes quickly and easily. "It's about trying to get the program that is meaningful. To me it is nice to know if that ewe always has triplets or providing enough milk for them." She can also add cattle information into the same program. She said the system could eventually be a labour saver, which is important because help is hard to find.

She has often acquired help from international exchange students through the World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms, which allows young volunteers to work on a farm in exchange for room and board and international agricultural experience. These students have helped at lambing, worked on farm maintenance and left her more time to manage pastures and improvements to the land.

The ranch borders the Pacific Ocean, and the Campbells recently agreed to sell three kilometres of ocean front property to Parks Canada. The cattle did not need an ocean front view and the Campbells did not want the area developed with large homes that would ruin the natural area.

A small stretch of beach was retained and there is still plenty of space to graze animals among the cedars and Douglas firs.

Source: <http://www.producer.com/Print.aspx?aid=23722>



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## Direct Marketing of Local Lamb Dominates Sheep Symposium Discussions

Marketing and selling lamb directly to commercial customers and consumers is seen as the most viable strategy for Newfoundland and Labrador sheep producers. At a Symposium in Springdale last week, sheep farmers and representatives of the independent retail, restaurant and culinary trades saw immediate benefits in forging closer relations with one another. One of the key conclusions was that a Network of sellers and buyers of local lamb and lamb based meats could work together to better understand, and meet, one another's needs.

For the first time in Newfoundland and Labrador, sheep farmers from across the province met with several buyers of lamb products to explore opportunities for greater direct marketing and increased sales of local lamb. The Symposium highlighted that the demand for local lamb in this province is rising and volumes are far greater than our sheep producers can currently provide.

At the Emerald Zone Sheep Symposium, 2010 sheep producers heard directly from the buyers about their interest in fresh and fresh-frozen local lamb. The buyers outlined the types of product they want and how they wish to procure lamb meats from local suppliers. In turn, sheep producers described the products they offer for sale, their production methods and the need to establish strong seller-buyer links.

Concepts like "Buying Local" and "Slow Food" are critical elements underlying sheep producers' strategies. Therefore, participants were treated to an "All Newfoundland Dinner" on Thursday evening.

It featured fresh lamb from a Springdale farmer with all other foods, beverages and ingredients grown or produced in the Emerald Zone or close by. The "100 Mile Dinner" was prepared by the chef and staff of the Riverwood Inn.

The two-day Symposium was organised by the Emerald Zone Corporation (the Regional Economic Development Board for Zone 11), in association with Connections Research (Bauline) and Jim Winter (Portugal Cove-St. Philip's). It was themed "Selling What You've Got to Those Who Want It". Jason Roberts, Chair of the Emerald Zone Corporation opened the Symposium. "I know that even when you have a good product, if you cannot sell it, you won't be in business long. This Symposium brings together the sellers and buyers of local lamb so that each can get to better understand the needs of the other."

Invited guest presenters from western Canada and the US related their experiences in the direct marketing of farm meat products. Tamara Taylor of Ravenwood Ranch and Farm Fresh Meats from Caroline, Alberta, described how the Taylors had built a successful family-based livestock operation using direct marketing and sales techniques.

Meghan Sheridan, Executive Director of the Vermont Fresh Network, outlined how this membership-driven, not-for-profit organisation had, over only 15 years, helped to develop 1,500+ direct partnerships between farm enterprises and restaurants / chefs throughout Vermont.



## Direct Marketing of Local Lamb continued

Presentations were given by local sheep and other livestock farmers, organisations involved with food security, and representatives of independent retailers, restaurants and chefs.

The Keynote Address was presented by Brian Goldsworthy of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada who emphasised how global trends indicate that future food production and consumption will inevitably become more localised.

Representatives of the buying community saw the Symposium as the first step to what can be a viable and sustainable sheep industry in this province. Jeff Wells, Food Operations Manager for the Coleman Group of Companies based in Corner Brook said "we are very encouraged by the progress made at this Symposium. The direction fits very well with our strategy to support local farmers and local Newfoundland produced products."

Emerald Zone Corporation Chair, Jason Roberts, concluded that the event was a tremendous success. "Not only did we hear about the direct marketing of lamb in other places from which we can all learn, but we also heard from several sheep farmers of direct sales success stories in Newfoundland and Labrador. There was a significant spirit of business co-operation generated by Symposium participants."

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