

By Jennifer Fleming, Executive Director

Recently the Canadian sheep industry received some good news – a welcome change to what has been a gloomy landscape for the past 20 months – with the funding announcement for the Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program (VSFCP) and the National Genotype Program. Within the next few months the Canadian Sheep Federation in collaboration with the Ontario Sheep Marketing Agency (OSMA) and the Canadian Sheep Breeders' Association (CSBA), will be making these programs available to Canadian sheep producers.

Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program

This pilot program will provide 60 sheep producers the opportunity to choose between three different approaches to managing the risk of scrapie on their individual premises. Ten goat producers will also have to opportunity to access a single pathway. Pathway 1 requires the producer to operate a virtually closed ewe flock; Pathway 2 involves genotype screening along with third eyelid biopsy and; Pathway 3 is the development of a genetically resistant flock using either RR rams or QR and RR ewes and rams. Upon acceptance into the program, all flocks participating in the VFSCP are required to submit all on-farm deads greater than 12 months of age for scrapie testing (heads, obex and lymph nodes are acceptable for testing) by provincial / private laboratories. Once a flock has reached the certified level, it will need to continue to meet the program requirements to remain Certified.

Flock inventories are the absolute cornerstone of the program. Every animal will have to be identified and all sheep entering and leaving the flock will have to be recorded. This includes animals being born, dying, purchased, sold or loaned out, (lambs, ewes, rams, embryos and semen) with all inventory records being reconciled yearly by the producer.

OSMA will be the administrator of the program right across Canada and will be responsible for the application process and statistics. A private veterinarian accredited by CFIA will be responsible for overseeing the farm operations in terms of inventories, blood sampling and conducting the first level audit, while OSMA will be responsible for the second level audit and making all producer advancement decisions.

Producers will be responsible for paying for their accredited veterinarian. Producers will also be financially responsible for any genotype testing at private laboratory required prior to application and entry into the program.

National Genotyping Project

The goal of this project is to collect genotype samples from 36,000 purebred sheep from across Canada over a 12-14 month period. Sheep producers who are selected to participate will be contacted to arrange sampling from selected purebred sheep. Sampling will take place throughout the year.

Individual sheep's genotype results will be reported back to the producer and will be entered into a database linked to the purebred sheep registration maintained by CLRC and Canadian Sheep Breeders Association (CSBA). An associated software program is currently under development by Nova Scotia Agricultural College (NSAC) to help producers predict genotype results or indicate the need for testing of offspring from a breeding of a ewe and ram of known genotype entered in the database.

Over the coming weeks the CSF, CSBA, OSMA and provincial sheep associations will be finalizing the process for selecting producers to participate in the programs and once done, the information will be circulated.

CFIA program on infected premises

In addition to the recent Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada funding announcement, the CFIA has also announced changes to their program in relation to a scrapie infected premises and suspect animals. As of December 1, 2004, the definition of *scrapie suspect* has been changed; since scrapie is not a disease that presents with a clear clinical picture, the definition has been changed to include *any animal with scrapie as a differential diagnosis*. This change in definition enables mature animals which are sick or poor doers to be classified as scrapie suspects. Any producer that has such an animal should call a CFIA veterinarian. Using the new definition, if the CFIA veterinarian deems the animal to be a scrapie suspect, they will **order** the destruction of the animal, test it and in return will receive a surveillance sample. **Producers will receive market value for all animals that are ordered destroyed.**

On an infected premise the producer can choose either total depopulation or genetic triage. There are now mandatory post-control actions (surveillance) on all farms, regardless of the choice made. The good news for producers is that they can use this surveillance to participate in the scrapie flock certification program. The CFIA provides the producer access to free accredited veterinary services and free scrapie testing for the period of mandatory surveillance.

The CFIA is **modifying its approach to the investigation of potential trace-ins (source flocks)**. **The changes eliminate the need to destroy animals** in flocks that provided breeding females to a scrapie positive flock. Instead, the CFIA will bleed animals **14** months or older, **genotype these sheep** and third eyelid biopsy QQ animals. If negative, these test results can be used by the flock owner to **enter Pathway 2** of the Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program.

On infected premises, the producers will receive market value for all animals ordered destroyed. It is ultimately the responsibility of the producer to arrange destruction and disposal of the animals, although typically the CFIA assists in this process. The producer is compensated for the costs of destruction and disposal (regardless of the method selected).

From the New Chair

By André Trépanier, Chair

Since being acclaimed Chair a mere two weeks ago in Moose Jaw, I have been busy being brought up-to-date on my new responsibilities with writing regular articles for *From the Flock* being one of them. I look forward to writing these monthly articles and view them as an opportunity to communicate with fellow sheep producers about the issues that our industry is facing. I would also like to encourage others to submit articles and/or ideas for articles to *From the Flock*. This is an excellent opportunity to open up the communication lines between the CSF, the provincial organizations and producers.

This coming year you will see the CSF continuing to work tirelessly on behalf of sheep producers to reposition in the industry in light of the border closure. We also remain committed to ensuring that our communication and lobbying efforts with the government (domestically and internationally) continues to improve. The implementation of the *Food-Safe Farm Practices* program and the continued evolution of the Canadian Sheep Identification program are also top priorities for the CSF. And last, but not least, we will also be playing an integral role in the implementation of the Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program and the National Genotyping Project (see Jennifer's article).

Before I sign off, I would just like to provide you with some information about me. I have run a sheep operation in Ste. Sabine Quebec, which is approximately one hour South-East of Montreal for the past 20 years and have 125 commercial ewes. For the past two years I have been the Vice-Chair of the Canadian Sheep Federation and the Vice-President of the Federation des producteurs d'agneaux et moutons du Québec for the past four years.

I would like to thank Randy Eros for his hard work as Chair over the past two years and appreciate him staying on the Executive as Past-Chair. In addition, I welcome our new Board members: Florence Henning (Alberta), Vince Stutzki (Ontario), Margaret MacDonald (P.E.I) and, Mundon Reid (Newfoundland).

On-Farm Food Safety Update

By Ryan Van Loon, National On-Farm Food Safety Coordinator

A lot has happened since the last food safety update. Since October I have been busy bringing the first stage of implementation to producers via information sessions. I am fortunate to have had the opportunity to speak at most of the provincial AGM's providing maximum exposure to the program and allowing producers the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the process before committing to a producer training workshop. I have also enjoyed many good lamb meals and exceptional hospitality along the way!

We have also run three producer training workshops to date and are quickly filling up the January, February and March with further workshops. Trainer training workshops are also being scheduled to ensure that the program can sustain producer training workshops into the future.

At the CSF annual general meeting we welcomed Don Wilson, one of the consultants that is involved in the consultative process concerning On-farm Food Safety Program delivery methodologies. In particular, through a previous process of investigation and subsequent elimination involving national farm leaders, the concept of “Certifarm” was presented and discussed. The presentation included the benefits that a national certification body could bring to the sheep industry. Certifarm would be a non-profit national entity overseeing the audit process and administration of resources therein. Partnership of our program with Certifarm would enable the CSF and provincial delivery agents of the program to efficiently allocate its resources to further program development and training. It is important to note that the CSF and provincial organizations would maintain control over their program, including the training of commodity specific auditors and the requirements that are to be audited on farm.

Our Food Safe Farm Practices Logo was also unveiled at the AGM, which will come to signify or identify our program to consumers and industry members. We have an opportunity to use this logo in a variety of ways including banners and newsletters.

As well, an example of our web-based producer training program was presented and we look forward to launching this facet of our program, along with a mail-out version, in the New Year alongside the producer training workshops.

Finally, I am pleased to announce that access to producer funding for training, on farm coaching and purchase of specialized equipment has been greatly improved. Upon recommendation by the CSF, and further supported by the COFFS Working Group, Agriculture and Agrifood Canada has changed the stipulation of \$10,000 minimum gross farm income to \$2,500. This should allow equal opportunity for all sheep producers to the access funding in the future. The CSF alongside Ag Canada is in the initial phase of developing an application that will give us access to these funds.

National Identification – CFIA Enforcement

By Monica Séguin, Administrative Assistant

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) is responsible for the enforcement of the Canadian Sheep Identification Program (CSIP), in accordance with its responsibilities under the Health of Animals Act and Regulations.

The CFIA has been monitoring and enforcing compliance to this program over the last 11 months at abattoirs and sales barns. Overall tagging compliance has been good however, it appears that some individuals are still not aware of the requirements.

Since the summer, the CFIA has begun auditing producers' on-farm records. Each year, 1% of farms within each province will be audited by a CFIA inspector.

Sheep producers are required by law to comply with the following:

- To apply the approved tags (Ketchum Kurl-lock #3 or the Allflex visual dangle tag) to all sheep and lambs before they leave your farm.

-To keep records of all sheep or lambs entering your flock for breeding purposes.

-To keep records of all sheep 18 months or older leaving your farm, other than those sold directly to a federally or provincially inspected abattoir. This includes animals leaving the premises temporarily (i.e. exhibitions, veterinarian clinics, community pastures).

The regulations also state:

- If a tag is subsequently lost, you must immediately apply a new approved CSIP ear tag and record the identification number with as much information about the origin of the animal as is known.

- It is illegal to remove or tamper with tags from any live animal for any reason.

-Previously used tags should not be used to tag a different animal.

If producers would like to reduce the overall cost of labour due to the need to applying multiple tags, the new Allflex dangle tag may be applied at birth and used for all purposes.

If you require further information or would like to receive a copy of the Record of Movement Form please visit our website at www.cansheep.ca or call us at 1-888-684-7739.

Special thanks to...

The Canadian Sheep Federation would like to take this opportunity to thank the Saskatchewan Sheep Development Board for organizing the wonderful lamb banquet and travel for our guests. You did an amazing job and the food was spectacular. Thank you again!

Sheep Shearing Courses

Canadian's call on New Zealand training expertise Tectra's Bruce Walker is off to Canada to show local shearers why New Zealand is recognised as the world's leading shearing nation.

Bruce will be delivering an advanced shearing course to experienced Canadian shearers. The course has been specially designed by Tectra and aims to provide attendees with the chance to gain skills in areas they have not previously had access to.

Earlier this year the Canadian Co-operative Wool Growers Limited recognised there was a need for quality shearer training in Canada and went looking for a world-class wool harvesting training organisation that could deliver. Tectra was top of the list.

Gavin Rowland, Tectra's Manager Wool Harvesting Training, says that Tectra's international

reputation as a top-class wool harvesting training provider reflects well on all those involved in New Zealand's shearing industry.

"This is a great opportunity to display Tectra's excellent training strategies internationally and to work with Canadian industry leaders and exchange concepts and development ideas," he says.

The training is a joint initiative funded by the Wool Growers Co-operative and the Agricultural and Food Council of Canada, with the objective of improving shearing standards in Canada.

The Advanced Sheep Shearing course to be held in Southern Alberta, December 6 - 10, 2004.

Source: <http://www.tectra.co.nz>