

By Jennifer Fleming, Executive Director

Over the course of the last few weeks Wayne Easter, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture has held Farm Income Consultation meetings across Canada. These consultations were held with farm industry representatives to discuss – and try to find solutions to - the current crisis facing Canadian agriculture with regard to farm income.

2003 marked the first year where farm expenses were higher than farm incomes on a national basis.

While many may be quick to point the finger at the BSE crisis, western drought and low grain and oil seeds prices as the cause of falling farm incomes, this trend predates all these events. The Canadian Federation of Agriculture's (CFA) presentation outlined how farm incomes continue to decline while the cost of production increases. Couple this with decreasing commodity values, producers receiving a smaller share of the consumer retail price, increased competition, stricter production standards, and farm incomes are likely to continue along this declining trend. It's no wonder that the number of young people in the industry is appallingly low.

In addition to the CFA's presentation, the Canadian Agrifood Policy Institute also gave a presentation that focused on farm incomes and factors affecting profitability. Some of interesting facts from this presentation included:

- In 1961 less than 1% of farm income came from government subsidy, today it's 14%
- The real price received by commodities has been falling since 1960; with an average decrease of about 1% per year
- Since 1960, the number of farms in Canada and the United States has been decreasing by about 1.6% per year
- Canadian agriculture is 50% dependent on export markets
- Emerging exporters of agricultural commodities (e.g., South American Countries) will continue to put downward pressure on the value of agricultural commodities
- Countries such as Russia are becoming net exporters rather than importers of food.

Although the presentation by the Canadian Agrifood Policy Institute did provide some interesting statistics, there is some concern about the fact that the income statistics used did not include capital costs allocations; an omission which may, for example, lead one to conclude that that larger farms make more money not because they are more efficient but rather because they are getting larger.

This omission underlines a point that the CSF has been trying to make about the government statistics for our industry. How can the government make sound policy decisions that would benefit the industry if they do not have accurate, up-to-date statistics? This is an issue that many of us had to grapple with as we tried to prove "hurt" to our industry as a result of the border closure.

Some suggestions that were provided at the Guelph meeting in regards to immediate things that could be done to help producers included; removing the CAIS deposit requirement and simplifying the program, speeding up BSE support programs for non-beef commodities, developing some kind of youth entry program and harmonizing Canadian programs and policies

with trading partners.

American Sheep Industry Association Convention

By André Trépanier, Chair

Last Saturday January 29th, I participated on the International Panel at the American Sheep Industry Association convention in Reno. As part of my participation on this panel, I gave a brief presentation on the Canadian sheep industry, including the programs the CSF administers. Other participating countries were Australia, New Zealand, and Mexico.

The Mexican presentation had some interesting points including the fact that during the last five years domestic meat production has increased 32%, while meat imports have decreased 28%. Also, between 2002 and 2004, live sheep imports into Mexico decreased 80%. The issue that generated the most discussion, however, was the Mexican Sheep Producers Association (AMCO) proposal to develop a North American Sheep Producers Federation.

“Taking into account the common issues which affect the Sheep Industries of North American Countries, AMCO proposes the creation of the North American Sheep Producers Federation, to have an official entity to discuss with the governments of Canada, the United States and Mexico topics such as trade, sanitary regulations, industry protection etc. The Federation will be formed by the leader associations from each country, the Canadian Sheep Federation, the American Sheep Industry Association and the Mexican Sheep Producers Association.”

The ASI Board will, during the course of the coming months, discuss their interest in the formation of a North American Sheep Producers Federation and as will the CSF.

In addition to participating on the International Panel, I also attended a meeting regarding the National Animal Identification System (NAIS). The USDA has indicated that with NAIS they aim to have the capability to identify all animals and premises that have had direct contact with a foreign animal disease or a domestic disease of concern, within 48 hours of its discovery. They hope to achieve this goal by; (1) using the National scrapie ID program as a starting point, (2) using electronic tags as a means of tracking animals, (3) strongly supporting multi-environment research in the USA and (4) staying in close contact with overseas counterparts regarding ID systems for official usage.

Currently there are identification projects in Colorado and Wyoming, with a third set to begin in Minnesota. The USDA has elected to use a phase in approach to NAIS, and while they are in the first stage, the second stage will only begin if testing suggests that a tracking system is practical and issues regarding payment are resolved. In regards to the scrapie program the switch to RFID/visual tags will be voluntarily implemented starting in July 2005 and will be mandatory as of July 2006. The target date for the mandatory reporting of movements via electronic data transfer to a national database is set for July 2008.

In regards to the border closure, the ASI brought policy 10-23:02 Trade Barriers to the Floor. This policy indicates that countries such as Canada use animal disease issues (i.e., Bluetongue and Anaplasmosis) to restrict the movement of U.S. sheep. As such, the ASI is supporting the elimination of trade barriers that are not science-based with immediate emphasis on the Canadian border and are *opposing* the reopening the Canadian border to allow Canadian sheep into the U.S. until trade barriers concerning Bluetongue and Anaplasmosis are eliminated.

On-Farm Food Safety Update

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

The Canadian Sheep and Lamb Food Safe Farm Practices Program is approaching the next phase of scheduled producer training workshops. There has been an increasing awareness and interest by producers since the initial phase of information sessions. The following is a list of the workshops that are scheduled for the next two months (so far):

Jan 27 QUITrainer training	Feb 5 SK	Saskatoon producer training 7	Yorkton producer training 8	Moose
Jaw producer training 9 AB		Fairview producer training 10	Camrose Producer training closed workshop for dairy	
sheep/ Hutterite colonies 11		Edmonton producer training 12	Olds producer training 18 BC	Prince
George producer training 19		Kamloops producer training 20	Nanaimo (Duncan) producer training 21	
Abbotsford producer training 25 PEI		Charlottetown Producer training/trainer training 26 NB	Moncton Producer training/	
trainer training Mar 1 ON		Guelph Univ. Producer training showcase for the Ruminant Field Service Sheep and Goat Clients &		
interested veterinarians 11 NL		trainer training 22 ON	Producer training-Specialized Dairy Sheep workshop (central /west)	29
-31		Possible Workshop for Eastern Ontario Dairy Sheep Producers (east)		

The current plan is to offer trainer training workshops in addition to the dates provided, and a training workshop for the western provinces is in the initial stages of development. As well, the Ontario Sheep Marketing Agency and the CSF will be delivering joint CSF producer training/ Ontario flock health program workshops in the near future. The details and dates have not yet been finalized.

I recently visited Ndeye Marie Diallo (Fédération des producteurs d'agneaux et moutons du Québec) to discuss how training workshops are going to be delivered in Quebec. She will be the initial and primary trainer for workshops in the future. Ndeye also organized a farm visit for us to visit Hugh Sutherland. Hugh owns and operates a large dairy sheep operation (700+ ewes). This experience was very beneficial as it provided me with a 'hands on' experience of how a dairy sheep operation is run. Hugh was in the middle of lambing and I watched a lamb born on his TV from the warmth of the kitchen stove while we discussed his operation. Thank you to Ndeye for organizing this visit.

The Risk to Sheep from Dog Tapeworms

Dr. Paula Menzies, Ruminant Health Management Group, Dep't Population Medicine
Ontario Veterinary College, University of Guelph.

Almost all sheep producers own at least one dog. It may be a herding dog, used to bring the flock in from the pasture or move them through a chute. Or it may be a guard dog that lives with, and protects the flock against predators. Or it may be a pet that normally lives with the family. But without proper precautions, any of these dogs can be a source of parasitic disease that can rob your sheep enterprise of all its profits.

Dogs can be a host to a large variety of intestinal parasites that can cause ill-thrift and diarrhoea. But tapeworms, which do not generally cause signs of disease in the dog, can also infect sheep causing their carcass to be condemned at slaughter.

To understand how this happens, we need to understand the life cycle of the dog tapeworm. Adult tapeworms reside in the small intestine of the dog and use a scolex to grasp onto the wall. The tapeworms reproduce by shedding segments of their body each one of which contains thousands of eggs. These segments are not only found in the dog's stool but can be seen "crawling" on its coat before finally dropping off. They look like a strange white, flat worm. When dried, these segments look like a grain of rice. The eggs are spilled out of the segment and can survive in the environment for up to a year - waiting for an opportunity to infect its next host - the sheep.

If these segments contaminate the pasture or forages that sheep are eating, the eggs will hatch in the sheep's gut and the tiny larvae will burrow through the wall of the intestine to travel to its "target" tissue, where it turns into a small bladder-like structure called a cyst. Each one of these cysts contains an embryonic head of a new tapeworm called a scolex. If a dog or coyote gets an opportunity to eat the tissues that contain these cysts, this embryonic scolex will turn into an adult tapeworm in the dog's intestine and the cycle will continue.

Here in Ontario, there are two main types of tapeworm to worry about and they have different target organs in the sheep.

1. *Taenia hydatigena* is the name of the most common tapeworm in the dog and *Cysticercus tenuicollis* is the name of the intermediate "cyst" stage in the sheep, also called the bladder worm of sheep. This parasite prefers migrating through the liver and then developing into cysts within the liver tissue. After several weeks, the cysts may die. At slaughter, the liver may show long, wiggly migration tracts caused by a recent infection, moderately large cysts containing a viable scolex, or small round scars from an old infection. Or if re-infection is ongoing – the liver may contain all three. Regardless of which stage is found, the liver is condemned as unfit for human consumption.

2. The next tapeworm is fortunately less common. *Taenia ovis* in the dog, it is called *Cysticercus ovis* in the sheep, sometimes also called the sheep measles worm. Its preferred tissues are the muscles of the body, including heart, diaphragm and skeletal muscle. At slaughter, small white cysts can be seen through the muscle. This finding will result in condemnation of the entire carcass. *C. ovis* is common in countries like New Zealand and Australia, where there are programs to try to reduce the incidence of infection. Here in Canada – most cases of *C. ovis* infection appear to occur in western lambs – although Ontario has seen cases in locally raised lambs as well.

So how common are these infections? In Ontario, a recent audit of condemnations found that 5% of lamb livers are condemned because of evidence of tapeworm cysts. In other parts of Canada, there have been cases where up to 30 lambs from one farm have been condemned because of *C. ovis* cysts in the muscle. This is an economically important disease to the sheep industry.

While these two tapeworms are not infectious to humans (unlike the cattle tapeworm), there is a dog tape in Ontario *Echinococcus granulosus*, which can harm people. It more commonly has a wolf-moose cycle in northern Ontario – but can also cycle through the dog and sheep. It is the cyst form that infects humans. Fortunately control of *T. hydatigena* and *T. ovis*, will also control echinococcus infection in dogs.

What should be done? Once the lamb is infected, there is no treatment so it is very important that all farm dogs be routinely treated for tapeworms every 3 months, and as frequently as every month if cysts have been found in sheep. A special de-worming medicine is required to kill the adult tapes, and can only be purchased from a licensed veterinarian. The wormers sold in pet

stores or feed stores will not kill tapeworms. At the same time, make sure that all dead stock is buried at least 2 ft deep or is appropriately composted so that no scavenging can occur by dogs or wild canids such as coyotes, wolves or foxes. If the tapeworms infect the wild canid population there is little chance of eliminating it. Unfortunately the cyst stage of the infection can also occur in deer. Once the wild canid - deer cycle is established in your geographic region, control in pastured sheep becomes very, very difficult. If you have any questions at all whether your dogs are infected, contact your local veterinarian right away.

In summary to prevent infection of your sheep with dog tapeworms:

1. Do not feed any of your dogs (working, guard or pet) any part of a dead sheep.
2. Do not dispose of dead sheep where a coyote or fox or wolf might have access to it.
3. Talk to your flock veterinarian about how to best treat your dogs for tapeworms. Any new dogs coming to your farm must be treated and held in isolation for at least 3 days before using with the sheep.
4. Try to prevent your dog from defecating where it might contaminate sheep feed, pastures or water sources.
5. Make yourself aware of causes of condemnation of lambs that are sent for slaughter.

Welcoming ASWC's new General Manager

The CSF would like to welcome Grant Massie as the Alberta Sheep and Wool Commission's new General Manager. Grant, who has a business degree in Business Management from the University of Lethbridge, worked in various aspects of the retail meat industry from packing plants, retail stores, corporate marketing, merchandising and pricing before accepting this position. In addition, he has been the Meeting Chairman for the Sait Meat Cutters Advisory Committee and has received the Competent Toastmaster designation.

"I am currently working very hard to get settled in this position and becoming familiar with all of the Alberta market projects that are on the go. I look forward to my next opportunity to meet with all of those involved. I can be reached by e-mail at manager@absheep.com or by phone at (403) 948 – 8534 to discuss any of your projects"

UTAH SHEEP PRODUCER ELECTED ASI PRESIDENT

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DENVER, Colo. – Paul Frischknecht, a Manti, Utah, sheep producer was elected president of the American Sheep Industry Association (ASI) at the ASI/National Lamb Feeders Association convention in Reno, Nev., on Jan. 29, 2005.

Frischknecht and his wife, Marla, run Frischknecht Livestock, which is comprised of approximately 6,000 Rambouillet/Columbia cross-bred ewes, cattle and irrigated farm land. Prior to being elected president, Frischknecht served as the association's vice president and secretary/

treasurer; as chair of its Predator Management and Public Lands Committees; and as vice chair of ASI's Resource Management Council.

Frischknecht, a practicing attorney, currently serves on the Utah Sheep Board, as president of the Manti LaSal National Forest Wool Growers Association and as director of the Utah Wool Marketing Association.

He is a former president of both the Utah Wool Growers Association and the Washington, D.C.-based Public Lands Council. Frischknecht has served on the National Animal Damage Control Advisory Committee, the Utah Governor's Agriculture Advisory Board, the Snow College Institutional Council, the Utah Board of Big Game, the Utah State Lands Grazing Advisory Council and Board and the Bureau of Land Management Richfield, Utah, District Grazing Advisory Board.

"My new position is one I do not take lightly. I am honored and dedicated to serve the sheep industry. Indicators show a bright future for our industry, not without challenges but with which we can deal," comments Frischknecht.

Other officers elected to the ASI Executive Board at the convention were Burdell Johnson of Tuttle, N.D., to the office of vice president and Glen Fisher of Sonora, Texas, to the office of secretary/treasurer.

ASI is a national organization supported by 42 state sheep associations, benefiting the interests of nearly 67,000 sheep producers.