# From The Flock

Canadian Sheep Federation

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## Canadian Sheep Identification Program

*By Jennifer Fleming, Executive Director*

At the 2006 Annual General Meeting (AGM), the CSF reviewed the Canadian Sheep Identification Program (CSIP) strategic plan in the context of animal identification, animal movement and premises identification standards that the government has indicated are the basis of a Canadian traceability model.

While provincial governments have indicated that they will take the lead on premises identification, animal identification and movement are issues that the industry has been asked to deal with. The standards that the livestock industries are being asked to meet are slightly modified versions of the standards initially determined around the Canadian Livestock Identification Agency's table.

In February 2007 the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) approached the CSF requesting that a Working Group be developed to draft an implementation plan for animal identification. Animal identification encompasses the application and activation of tags, tag retirement, and the recording and reporting of animal gender and age.

The sheep industry Working Group consists of representatives from: the CSF; the Canadian Sheep Breeders Association; the Canadian Cooperative Wool Growers; the Ontario Stockyards; the Ontario Independent Meat Packers; the Alberta and Ontario governments; the CFIA; AAFC and; the Canadian National Goat Federation who is participating as an observer.

*At the CSF's 2006 AGM, the Board indicated that while the industry will enter into discussions with the federal government, that the Ketchum pink tag will remain a tagging option as will the Allflex pink dangle tags and the Allflex RFID and dangle tag combination (yellow tags).*

Some of the standards are going to require changes to the current CSIP. For instance, currently producers are only required to tag animal prior to them leaving the farm of origin. One of the changes that will occur is that these tags will be required to be "activated" once they are in an animal's ear. For activation to occur, producers will be required to report to a database the numbers on the tags that have been applied to an animal.

## CSIP continued

There are also standards around the retirement of identification numbers. Producers will be required to report to the database the tag numbers of animals that have died, or have been exported. It is also being requested that producers record and report the age and gender of identified animals.

The Working Group is discussing the industry's agreement with, and ability to meet the standards in the context of:

- the type of tags currently approved for use
- the additional workload on the producer's end
- the additional administrative burden on the industry.

The goal of the Working Group is to strive to find a balance between what is feasible, practical, and beneficial to the industry versus the standard requirements, which are geared at facilitating the ease and timeliness with which a foreign animal disease outbreak, or a natural disaster, can be handled.

# Which tags can I use?

There are three types of tags you can use:

### Pink Steel Ketchum KurlLock #3 Tags

### Pink Allflex Dangle Tag


### Yellow Allflex RFID


With this arrangement you would use a yellow Allflex RFID with **either** a pink Ketchum tag or an Allflex dangle tag (pink or yellow). Therefore the animal needs to carry two tags

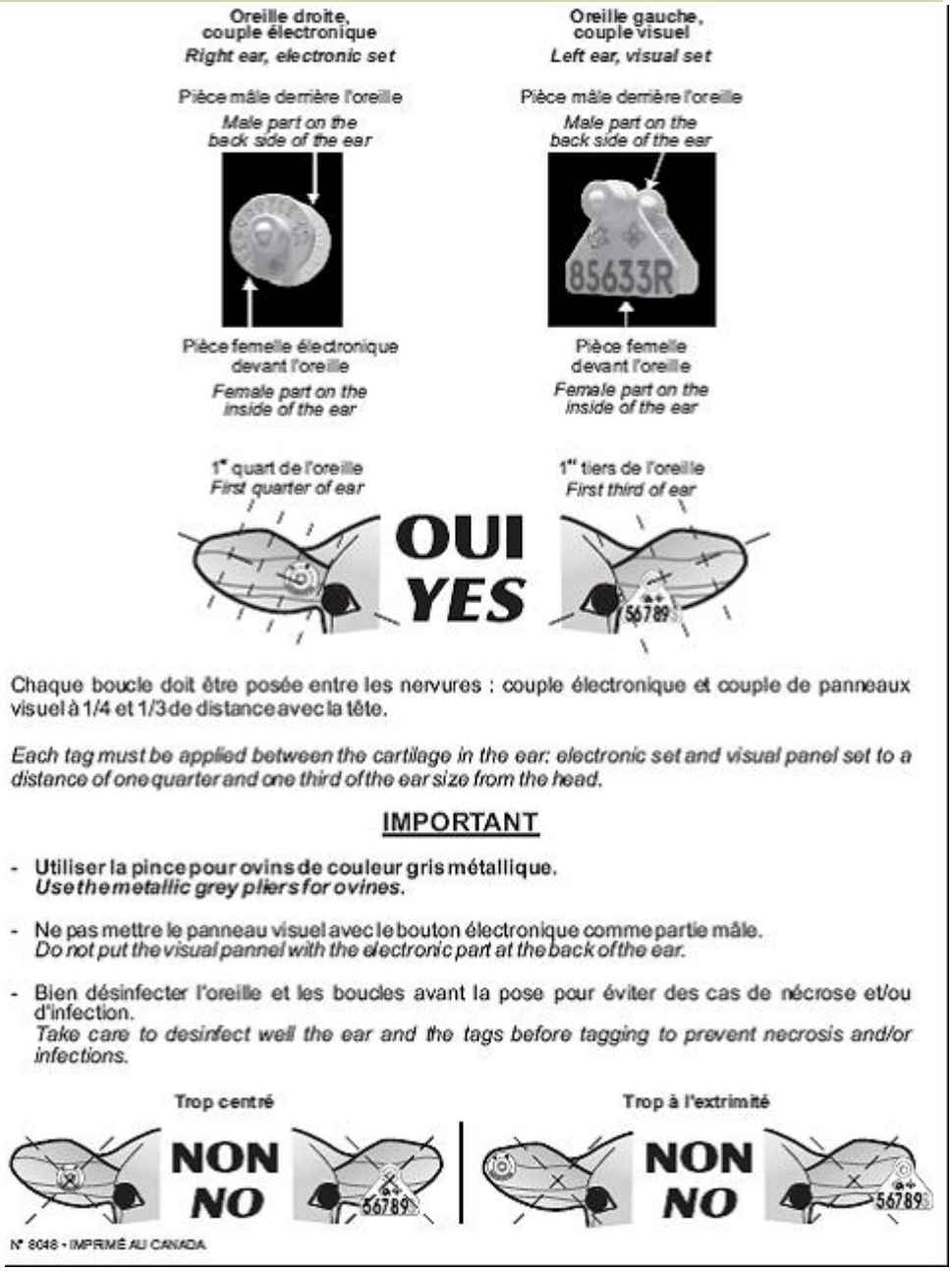
# CANADIAN SHEEP BREEDERS ASSOCIATION PRESS RELEASE

The Canadian Sheep Breeders' Association has recently received word from the federal government that an amendment to the CSBA constitution, passed by the membership in a mail-in vote earlier this year, has been approved by the Minister. The amendment reads:

*"As an alternative to the system of tattooing with flock letters, number and year letter described in Section 16, subsections 1-5, a breeder may use a double tagging system with two tags approved and bearing the official identification number under the Canadian Sheep Identification Program. Lambs must be tagged within 48 hours of birth. In the event of a lost tag, the tag must be replaced within 21 days with a duplicate tag bearing the same national ID number. The application for registration must include the national ID number, and this number will be recorded on the registration paper in place of the tattoo. The name of the animal should still include a within-flock number, followed by the designated year letter used to signify the year of birth."*

What this means is that purebred sheep registered with the CSBA can now be permanently identified either by tattooing or by using two Canadian Sheep Identification Program ear tags bearing the same number. The number on these tags will be recorded on the animal's registration certificate and are therefore permanently assigned to that animal. If the animal loses either tag, the owners must apply for and insert a replacement tag bearing the same number.

## THE RECOMMENDED METHOD TO TAG SHEEP




Purebred breeders in the province of Québec have been using the double-tag system in addition to a tattoo, ever since the use of the double-tag system was mandated by the provincial government.

The Canadian Livestock Records Corporation has already made the programming changes necessary in their office to register animals identified by the new double-tag system. Breeders can choose to register their animals online or they can download the new applications for registration from the CLRC website at www.clrc.ca.

Sets of two CSIP-approved tags bearing the same number are available through the Canadian Co-operative Wool Growers, Ltd. in packages of 20 sets (40 tags) for $69.00. The package consists of 20 yellow Allflex dangle tags and 20 yellow RFID (radio frequency identification) tags.

To order please contact the Canadian Co-operative Wool Growers Ltd. Producers in or west of the province of Manitoba should contact the CCWG branch in Lethbridge, Alberta at 1-800-567-3693. Producers in or east of the province of Ontario should contact the CCWG in either Carleton Place, Ontario at 1-800-488-2714 or Cookstown, Ontario at 1-866-458-4800.

# CANADIAN SHEEP AND LAMB FOOD SAFE FARM PRACTICES UPDATE

*By France Lanthier, OFFS Coordinator*

## Producer Training

- We had been experiencing difficulties with the online training where users would get an error message when trying to register. This has been resolved. If you experience any difficulties with the online training please report this to: france@cansheep.ca . The online training is available at http://fsfp.cansheep.ca .

- Letters of interest have been sent to producers in AB and ON. A mailout is planned for SK with the next issue of Sheep Shape. The CSF will try, to the best of its ability, to accurately assess producer interest in the on-farm food safety program in order to plan training.

- Funding for producer training sessions is now through the Canadian Food Safety and Quality On Farm Implementation (OFI) program. We were expecting a funding agreement in early March however Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada has informed us that there would be delays. OFI is also the funding through which producers who have attended a food safety training session can apply for funding for equipment to help them implement the program.

- Producer certificates for attending Food Safety workshops are being prepared. These will be mailed out. We are waiting for the OFI agreement to be ready so that we can send producers the list of equipment that is eligible for funding. The certificates will be sent to all producers who have attended training since 2004.

## Program Management System

- The CSF is developing a management system/manual for its food safety program. This manual will outline how producers can register on the program, how audits with unfold, and the responsibilities of all the players involved (CSF, provincial delivery agents, and producers).

- The issue of auditor and organizational liability has come up. There are concerns that the CSF and provincial organizations may be exposing themselves to liabilities by providing On-Farm Food Safety services. This is currently being looked into. It is important to remember that the Canadian Sheep and Lamb Food-Safe Farm Practices program is a good production practices program. This program promotes the production of a safe product, but ultimately cannot guarantee it. An on-farm audit would examine the production processes and NOT the product. This must be clearly understood.

# IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT THE GENOTYPING PROGRAM

Effectively immediately, the Genotyping project **has been extended**. The last date to submit samples is now March 31, 2008.

The program has room for 4,000 samples.

Any producer who did draw samples between December 1, 2006 and March 15th 2007
**can receive reimbursement for their samples**.

In order to do so please mail your invoices to:
Canadian Sheep Federation, 130 Malcolm Road, Guelph ON N1K 1B1

# RECORD KEEPING AROUND LAMBING

If the old saying about the month of March holds true: In like a lion, out like a lamb, we should be heading for a nice Spring as for most of Canada. March has come roaring in with snow, winds, and cold. If one ponders this old saying a little, it is clear that the lamb is used to create the imagery of peacefulness, calm, sunny skies and budding flowers.

If one ponders this saying further it can be assumed that whoever penned those lines either did not come from a long line of sheep farmers, or they never stuck around for lambing. Indeed, as Spring approaches many have started or will shortly begin one of the busiest time of the year: Lambing. Which can anything but sunny skies and calm evenings!

Lambing is a time where the ewe and newborn lamb may be more vulnerable so it is important to be prepared to treat them if need be. Of course in terms of On-Farm Food Safety, animal treatment = record keeping. Below are a few tips and suggestions on how to incorporate On-Farm Food Safety record keeping into your lambing routine without making as difficult as lambing hind quarters first and head tucked backwards.

## ANIMAL HEALTH PRODUCT INVENTORY

⇒ ***Record 4A in the producer manual***

Before things start getting hectic with 2 am flock checks, have a look at what you have in stock and the expiry dates on the products. Keeping this information in a notebook or on an inventory sheet will save time. The following information should be useful to quickly run through your inventory and help you make a purchase list (if needed):

1.Name of Product
2.Expiry date: if expired replace it. Expired products may not be efficacious and result in disease recurrence or contribute to the development of resistance in the flock.
3.Amount purchased/Amount left
4.Storage location: will save you from having to rummage around for it
5.Purchase location: will help plan the purchase run – especially if your sending someone else

## ANIMAL HEALTH PRODUCT TREATMENT RECORD

⇒ ***Record 1 in the producer manual***

If you are processing all your pregnant ewes and newborn lambs in the same fashion, then a written standard operating procedure (SOP) could be used in combination with your production records. You are likely already keeping notes on when your ewes become pregnant, their success rate and mothering abilities, to assess the ones who will be culled and the number of replacement ewes you will need. For example, your pregnant ewe processing protocol could be:

**Pregnant Ewe Protocol (PE)**

*One Month Before Lambing*

- Give Vitamin E/Selenium injection – Dystosel 1ml/45kg, SQ
- Check for tag/crutch
- Vaccinate for enterotoxemia, blackleg – 2ml Vision® 8 with Spur®*, SQ
- Vaccinate for tetanus – 0.5 ml Super-Tet® with Havlogen®*, IM

# RECORD KEEPING AROUND LAMBING … CONTINUED

## Example record keeping: Lambing record

| Ewe ID# | Ram ID # | Birth Date | Lamb ID # | Sex | Birth Wt. | 50 day Wt. | 100 day Wt. | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 310000000 | 311102575 | | | | | | | **03-27-07**: P E 1,2<br>**03-29-07**: P E 3,4 |

In bold we see 03-27-07 : PE 1,2 which refers to Pregnant Ewe Protocol steps 1 and 2. From this we know that ewe 310000000 was given a subcutaneous injection of Dystosel for Selenium/Vitamin E deficiency on March 27th, 2007 and that the dosage was 1ml/45kg.

We also know that on March 29th, this ewe received a 2ml Vision® 8 with Spur®* injection subcutaneously and 0.5 ml intra muscular injection of Super-Tet® with Havlogen®*. From the information captured in the field (lambing record), it is then easy to consolidate the more detailed records required for the program by referring to the product label (to obtain: product DIN number, storage conditions, expiry date) or your receipts (to obtain: date of purchase).

The protocol and record keeping form showed above are only examples. ***Your record keeping method and style may differ and that is ok***. The example above hopefully illustrates that record keeping need not be cumbersome and slow you down when you are busy.

Here are a few tips to incorporate OFFS record keeping into your current system:

1.Preparation. If you are processing/treating a number of animals in the same way write out a protocol. When you are in the field this will allow you to simply refer to the protocol on not have to write out every product, dose, injection method, etc.

2. Keep it simple. If your "in the field" record keeping system is too complicated it will either slow you down or more likely it just won't get done. Make sure you collect enough information (date, product used, animal ID) so that when you're in the office you can easily consolidate your more extensive records, but don't make it too complicated or extensive. That is, it's not necessary to collect the DIN # right away as you're dipping navels; it's on the bottle you can fill it out later.

**Use what you already have:** Lots of the information requested on the program forms can already be found on your farm. Examples include: product inserts or labels, bill of sale or receipts, and veterinary prescriptions. An animal health product treatment record can be as simple as stapling a product insert, the vet prescription (if a prescription product or if used off-label), and a purchase receipt, to a sheet that indicates which date and which animal the product was used on.

The bottom line is that your program needs to work for you. For more information on the Canadian Sheep and Lamb Food Safe Farm Practices program visit http://fsfp.cansheep.ca or call 1-888-684-7739. Happy lambing!

# LABOUR COSTS KEY TO SHEEP SUCCESS

The main lambing season is now little more than a fortnight away for many of Scotland's sheep producers. The national breeding flock now numbers just over 3.5 million ewes, which is the lowest level for very many years, and it may decline still further. One of the principal reasons for fewer sheep being kept is the lack of suitable labour. In the 1950s, it was common for a full-time shepherd to be in charge of little more than 500 ewes. Nowadays, it is totally uneconomic to employ a shepherd unless he is tending at least 1,000 ewes.
However, one of the major problems is actually finding a shepherd, with the number in Scotland down to under 1,000. Lambing is a labour-intensive season, with ewes requiring supervision on a 24-hour basis on many farms. Ewes frequently need assistance when giving birth.

A new mind-set is essential, according to Dr Steven Johnson, the senior beef and sheep technologist with the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute at Hillsborough in Northern Ireland. Speaking at the annual meeting of the Suffolk Sheep Society, Johnson outlined his vision of the future. He said: "With the removal of subsidies, the main driver for profitable sheep production is to reduce costs, and in particular, labour costs. Carcase quality is no longer the dominant driver it once was."

Isaac Crilly, a large-scale commercial producer who is chairman of the Northern Ireland region of the national Sheep Association, agreed with that opinion wholeheartedly. He said: "We need to produce large numbers of lambs with minimum labour input. Ease of management is absolutely essential on my farm where sheep are the only enterprise."

Crilly's farm was one of four selected by the Hillsborough institute to evaluate the merits of selection for "easycare" traits in both the sire and the dam. Experiences of last year's lambing left Crilly in no doubt of the enormous potential for using "easycare" rams.

He commented: "Among the rams the research team sent was a 50 per cent New Zealand Suffolk. For traditionalists, this ram had no quality, but results from last year's lamb crop totally changed my mind. There was a markedly lower labour input at lambing time with over 80 per cent of the lambs born without any assistance. This halved the intervention compared to traditional terminal sires. The lambs from this ram did grow exceptionally well on an all-grass system and all met the target specification."

Crilly is an accomplished sheep farmer who regularly produces 560 kilos liveweight of lamb per hectare with the ewes achieving a gross margin of £25 per head. However, both Crilly and Johnson conceded that progeny of New Zealand Suffolks were less likely to fall into the top-rated E and U grades. This means that the actual output of each ewe was reduced by 90p, but they argued that this modest loss in value was far outweighed by the reduction in labour.

David Corston is an independent consultant who worked with the Meat and Livestock Commission for many years. He pointed out that the market is changing. "Almost 85 per cent of lamb is now purchased through supermarkets. The product is put on poly-trays and the consumer wants a piece of lamb at a certain price. The optimum market requirement to meet this trade is a carcase weighing 19 kilos grading at R3L."
Recent market research revealed that the modern requirement is for lambs with longer and leaner loins while the shape of the gigot is of far less importance. There has been considerable controversy in the Suffolk society over the past two years. Many of the traditionalists regard the New Zealand strain of the breed as little more than a mongrel.

But the fact remains that the Suffolk has lost considerable ground in the commercial market to rival breeds. For too long the top pedigree breeders gave far too much importance to big heads and heavy bones, the very characteristics which lead to difficulties at lambing time.

Robyn Hulme, the commercial director of the Suffolk society, said: "The comments of the speakers clearly vindicate the policy of the breed council in emphasising that future commercial requirements will be dominated by ease of management with low-level labour systems. The new free recording schemes now available to members will enable them to measure commercial traits."

**Source:** business.scotsman.com/agriculture.cfm?id=359712007

## E-SHEEP TECHNOLOGY GAINS GROUND

E-sheep® is a term that has been registered by the Sheep CRC to describe individual animal management in the Australian sheep industry. E-sheep® involves using knowledge about the individual sheep within a flock to make decisions about their management and marketing that results in improved across-flock performance and profit.

Monitoring, measuring and managing individuals is difficult when done manually, though it is not impossible. Electronic systems using tags, readers, recording software and measurement devices are more useful and less costly than in the past and improvements will continue to be made.

These tools truly allow individual animal management to be applied in a commercial or stud flock. They allow more things to be measured, more accurately and with far less effort than manual systems.

CANADIAN SHEEP FEDERATION / FEDERATION CANADIENNE DU MOUTON

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## AGRICULTURE SHOULD BE MORE INTENSIVE

To minimise the effects that animal production has on the environment, intensive livestock farming should be even more intensive, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

This remarkable conclusion was drawn in the recent publication report by FAO named "Livestocks long shadow". FAO based this conclusion on the expected growth in the global meat production between now and 2050. At the moment, livestock industries use 30% of global land acreage. In 2050, this will be 70%.

If the meat consumption doubles, the production per hectare should be increased or the acreage should be increased, which means less trees being cut down. However, if the production of animal feed or food can be increases on the same amount of land, other parts can be saved, according to the report.

The FAO also pleats for less meat consumption, because the global meat production contributes to 18% of the greenhouse emissions, which is more than traffic and transportation cause. To prevent further damage to the environment, the emissions per kilogram meat or litre milk should be reduced with 50%, says the FAO.