

January 2004

Dear Sheep Producers,

As you are aware, a mandatory system for the identification of the Canadian national sheep flock began on January 1, 2004. The Canadian Sheep Identification Program (CSIP) was developed by the sheep industry to address consumer issues around food safety and quality assurance and to provide a traceback system for disease control in the livestock sector.

From the outset, industry leaders in charge of developing the program, set as a goal, a system that is simple, effective and affordable for lamb producers. Part of that process was selecting a tag that is affordable for producers and allows adequate opportunity to trace animals back to the farm of origin if necessary. To reduce the cost of administration fees, the plan was developed to require producers to keep on-farm records of the sale and receipt of all breeding and cull animals. This requirement replaces the need to read and retire identification numbers of slaughtered sheep and lambs from the database.

During the period of time allowed for public comment on the regulations which came into effect on January 1, 2004, there were comments made by parties unknown that the CSIP may be rendered less effective if sheep producers do not keep accurate on-farm records as required by the legislation. There is the suggestion that the CSIP should be altered to require the retirement of tag numbers for sheep and lambs that have been slaughtered. This change would significantly increase the administrative fees charged to the producer.

It is therefore extremely important that producers follow the guidelines of the program and **maintain on-farm records**. Forms have been designed to help record the entry of all breeding stock onto the farm and the exit of all cull sheep over 18 months of age that leave the farm. By doing so, producers will insure that they will not face an expensive monetary penalty from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) for failure to comply with the regulations. Also, this will insure that they and their fellow lamb producers do not have to pay heavy increases in administrative fees to read and retire identification numbers from the database.

It is anticipated that as the program evolves, there will be electronic tagging options that are affordable and that will allow for a completely traceable system without the need to maintain paper on-farm records. But, for the moment, **please do your part and maintain accurate on-farm records**.

Sincerely,

The Canadian Sheep Federation Board of Directors