

Canadian Sheep Federation: Summer 2025 Progress Report

The past two months have underscored the Canadian Sheep Federation's role as a driver of innovation, advocacy, and producer support. From advancing major federal policy changes under Bill C-5 to delivering hands-on ultrasound training and launching traceability tools designed by and for Canadian farmers, the summer has been one of action and influence. Our work has not only strengthened Canada's domestic sheep industry but also earned international recognition, with AgroLedger now celebrated as a top global innovation by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. This report captures that momentum, reflecting a sector that is small in scale yet making outsized contributions to food security, sustainability, and producer resilience.

Bill C-5: Breaking Ground on Interprovincial Meat Trade Reform

Engagement in Federal Consultation

Over the summer, one of the Canadian Sheep Federation's most time-intensive efforts was its deep engagement in the federal consultation on Bill C-5, the "One Canadian Economy" legislation.

Pragmatic Model Proposal

CSF's position advocates for a model that shifts focus away from imposing federal inspection on all facilities and toward mutual recognition of provincial systems.

Breakthrough with PCO

In August, CSF pressed these priorities directly with the Privy Council Office during formal consultations, confirming that Section 11.1(b) provides the regulatory flexibility we need.

The bill is designed to break down barriers to trade and labour mobility within Canada by enabling federal recognition of comparable provincial rules. For the sheep sector, this opens the door to a long-awaited solution to interprovincial meat trade barriers, while also offering opportunities to address workforce shortages in veterinary services.

Under our proposal, CFIA would act as an auditor and harmonizer rather than a gatekeeper, ensuring that provincially inspected product can move freely between provinces without compromising safety. This approach not only unlocks market access for small and mid-sized processors but also addresses environmental concerns, reducing unnecessary transport emissions while strengthening domestic supply chains.

Our work included a supplemental policy brief that mapped out the regulatory levers necessary to bring this vision to life. These include outcome-based standards for comparability, template agreements between provinces, national audit protocols, and standardized labelling and documentation requirements. We also drew on international models from the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and the European Union to show how other jurisdictions have created robust, diversified inspection systems without undermining export credibility.

PCO confirmed that Section 11.1(b) of Bill C-5 provides exactly the regulatory flexibility we need, allowing the government to set conditions for determining when provincial systems are comparable.

This is not an uncontested vision. Large processors have voiced concerns that increased diversity in inspection regimes could complicate export audits, and some industry players continue to advocate for a universal federal standard. CSF's counter-argument is that a single standard is neither necessary nor practical, and that outcome-based comparability, backed by federal auditing, provides the same assurances while delivering more flexibility to producers and processors.

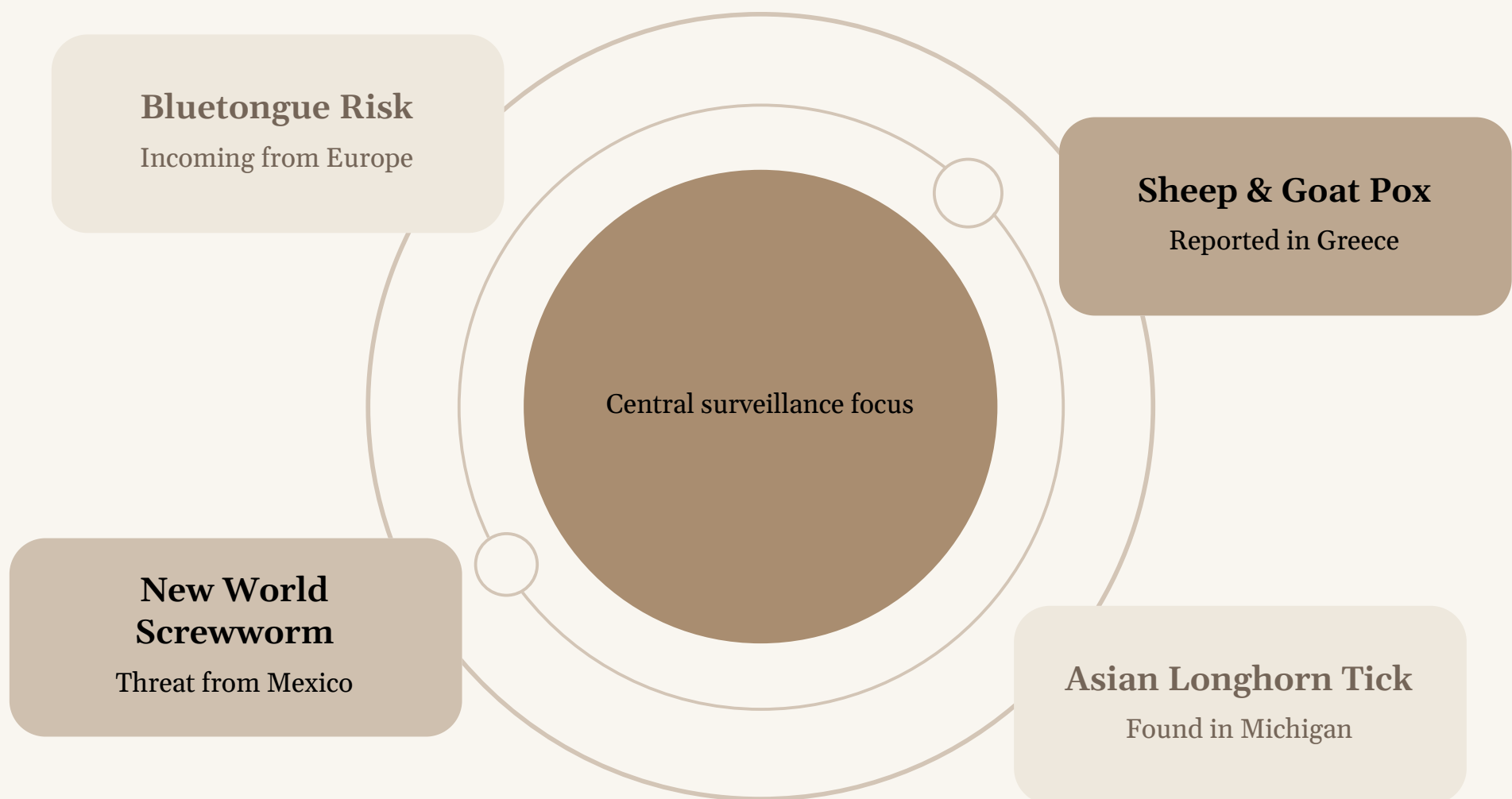
The months ahead will focus on translating this momentum into regulatory language. We are preparing a submission outlining precise conditions under Section 11.1(b), drafting feedback for the forthcoming PCO user guide, and exploring a Western provincial pilot agreement to demonstrate how these reforms could work in practice. These steps are designed to move Bill C-5 from broad legislative vision to an actionable framework that balances safety, trade fluidity, and industry sustainability.

We also used this consultation window to push for recognition of veterinarians and veterinary technicians under the labour mobility framework. By explicitly including these roles, we can address staffing shortages in rural and agricultural communities, improve access to veterinary care, and strengthen Canada's ability to respond to public health and food safety challenges.

For Canada's sheep industry, this is more than a policy exercise. It's a rare chance to modernize the rules governing domestic food systems, reduce barriers that hold back small businesses, and position our supply chain as both safe and nimble. If we succeed, it will be one of the most meaningful regulatory shifts in recent memory for livestock producers—a concrete win built on months of hard-fought advocacy and strategic positioning.

Disease Surveillance: A Summer of Close Calls and Deeper Insights

This summer's surveillance efforts painted a vivid picture of how quickly global animal health trends can shift — and why Canada's proactive stance is vital. July's Small Ruminant Network update flagged a cascade of concerns: Bluetongue virus type 3 continues its stubborn grip on Europe, prompting tight movement controls, while sheep and goat pox cases surged in Greece. New World screwworm has crept northward in Mexico, triggering a livestock trade halt with the United States, and Asian longhorn ticks are now confirmed just across the Michigan border. Canada may not yet face these threats domestically, but their proximity underscores the urgency of preparedness.



At home, bovine tuberculosis re-emerged in Manitoba with a novel strain, raising questions about pathogen evolution. A Chinese study added another wrinkle, revealing sheep as amplifying hosts for Japanese encephalitis virus — a potential game-changer for global surveillance strategies. The network also sounded alarms about parasite resistance, particularly *Haemonchus contortus* moving further north than expected, and the lack of effective vaccines for pneumonia-causing pathogens in sheep. Discussions are already underway to explore vaccine innovation and regulatory pathways to accelerate access to critical tools.

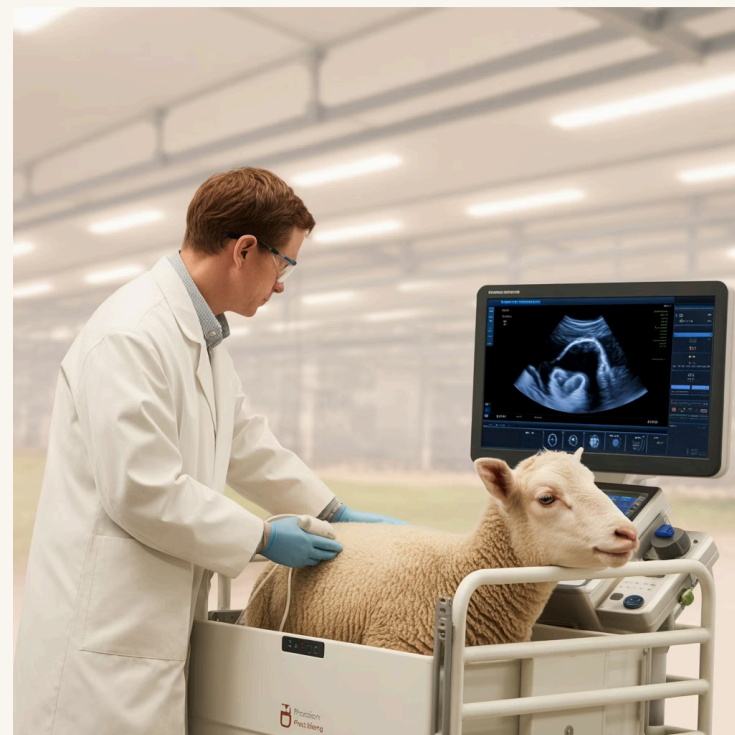
Meanwhile, the Wildlife-Domestic Animal Interface group doubled down on early-warning strategies. Saskatchewan shared how delays in sample submissions — sometimes stretching three to four weeks — blunt the impact of wildlife surveillance as an early signal for highly pathogenic avian influenza. Researchers are piloting models that map wild bird detections against poultry facilities to predict risk zones, while conversations are opening to involve wildlife rehabilitators in surveillance efforts, recognizing their frontline role in spotting emerging threats. The launch of the Wild Pigs Canada website later this summer will bring unprecedented transparency to wild pig populations and control efforts, a critical step in protecting livestock from diseases like African swine fever.

Taken together, these discussions show an animal health ecosystem under pressure — but also highly collaborative. Canada's surveillance networks are not just reacting; they're innovating, with new modeling, field testing, and engagement strategies to stay ahead of the curve.

Ultrasound Training: Scaling Sheep Reproductive Management Skills

Planning for this fall's ultrasound training courses has been a masterclass in logistics and collaboration, with the Canadian Sheep Federation working closely with Ontario Sheep Farmers (OSF) and the Saskatchewan Sheep Development Board (SSDB) to deliver hands-on training in two provinces. The courses are designed to fill a critical gap in the Canadian sheep sector: the ability to accurately scan for pregnancy status and litter size, an essential skill for high-input systems that rely on precision feeding and management.

Internationally recognized trainers Duncan and David Kennedy, who led Canada's first ultrasound training course in 2022, will return to deliver two beginner programs and a refresher course. The training emphasizes practice over theory, with nearly 85% of the sessions dedicated to hands-on scanning. Students will learn to identify empty ewes and distinguish between singles, twins, triplets, and even higher-order multiples, bringing techniques from some of the world's most advanced sheep industries directly to Canadian producers.



100%

Beginner Course Capacity

Fully booked with waiting list in place

85%

Hands-on Practice

Majority of training focused on practical scanning

2

Provincial Locations

Courses running in Ontario and Saskatchewan

Demand has exceeded expectations, with the Ontario beginner course fully booked and a waiting list in place, while Saskatchewan is attracting strong interest from veterinarians and veterinary technicians. The refresher course, meanwhile, offers returning participants a chance to sharpen technique and pursue certification. Host farms have carefully timed their breeding cycles to ensure sheep are available at multiple stages of pregnancy, offering students a rare opportunity to practice on a variety of real-world scenarios.

Behind the scenes, organizers have tackled an intricate puzzle of securing specialized equipment, including OviScan machines and custom scanning crates. The courses require moving equipment between provinces in tight timeframes, with overnight shipping playing a key role. Trainers and industry partners have also reached out to manufacturers, not only to source gear but to explore opportunities for building a stronger training infrastructure in Canada — a move that could make this initiative a permanent fixture in producer education.

The setup itself is a testament to teamwork. Scanning stations are being designed to allow trainers to guide students' hands and adjust technique in real-time, with multiple sheep in rotation and observers learning alongside active participants. Supplies like gloves, gels, marking sprays, and 12-volt power systems are being coordinated down to the last detail, ensuring seamless delivery in both locations.

This year's training effort represents more than skill development: it signals a step toward a national capacity-building model. By equipping producers and veterinary professionals with advanced reproductive management techniques, the industry is investing in higher productivity, better animal welfare outcomes, and ultimately, greater profitability for Canadian sheep operations.

Traceability Made Simple: AgroLedger Training Resources Are Live

This summer marked a major leap forward for Canada's livestock traceability ecosystem. After months of development and field testing, the Canadian Sheep Federation's AgroLedger platform is now fully supported with producer-facing training materials, including a detailed user manual and a new video series to make adoption seamless.

AgroLedger was built to simplify compliance with Canada's upcoming national traceability regulations, which will take effect in late 2025 or early 2026. The software offers a secure, blockchain-based reporting system for livestock movement and identification events, designed to help producers stay ahead of regulatory changes without adding unnecessary complexity to their daily operations.



Comprehensive User Manual

The newly published AgroLedger User Manual provides step-by-step guidance—from creating a farm profile and managing holdings to reporting livestock movements and medical treatments. Its design reflects CSF's producer-first approach, with visuals and practical examples to make onboarding straightforward.



Video Tutorial Series

To complement the manual, CSF launched a dedicated YouTube channel with video tutorials walking users through every function of the platform. Producers can explore these resources anytime at [**cansheep.ca/csip-and-agroledger**](https://cansheep.ca/csip-and-agroledger) or directly via the [**Canadian Sheep Federation YouTube channel**](#).

Together, these resources make AgroLedger one of the most comprehensive, user-friendly traceability systems in Canada, reflecting CSF's commitment to supporting farmers through regulatory modernization.

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AgroLedger: Canadian Sheep Farmers Leading Global Innovation

This summer, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) named AgroLedger one of the top 10 global innovations in its "Recognition of Good Practices and Innovations in Sustainable Livestock Transformation, One Health, Animal Health and Reference Centres" initiative. This recognition puts a spotlight on a remarkable achievement: a technology built by Canadian sheep farmers, for Canadian sheep farmers, now being recognized as one of the most advanced traceability systems in the world.

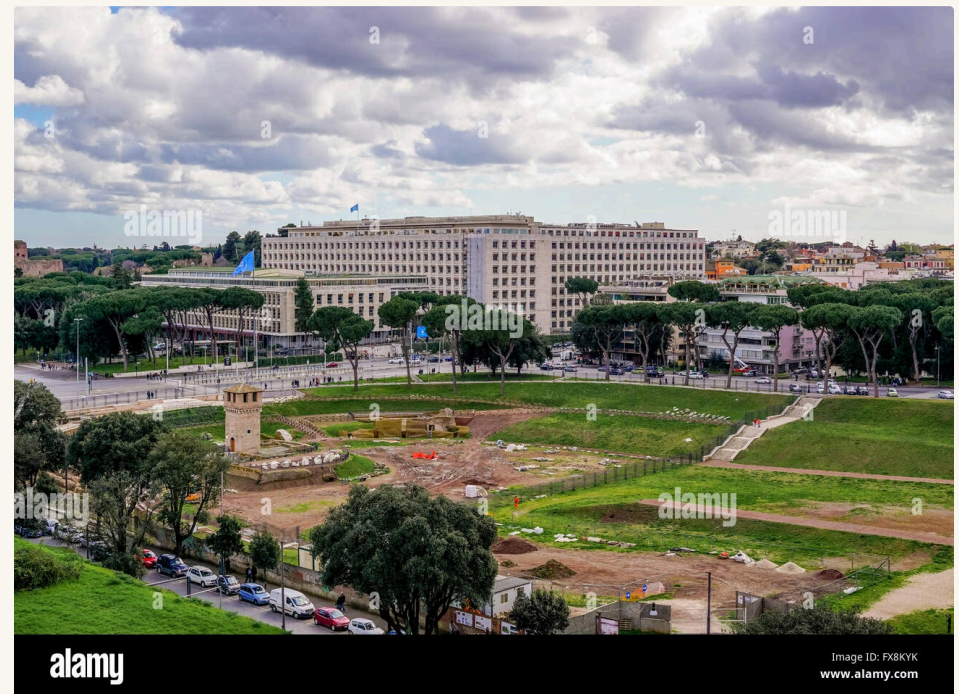
AgroLedger isn't a tech company import or an off-the-shelf solution. It was conceived and built right here in Canada by producers and industry partners who understood the real-world challenges of disease management, regulatory compliance, and data integration. FAO's selection signals that this grassroots innovation is setting a global standard for how livestock health and traceability can work—secure, efficient, and designed to serve farmers first.

One in five animals worldwide is lost to preventable disease. AgroLedger, born from the ingenuity of Canadian farmers, demonstrates how producer-led solutions can reverse these losses, safeguard global food security, and open market opportunities.

The Pitch Talks will showcase the system's ability to track livestock movements, map disease risk in real time, and integrate biometric ID and OCR tools to make reporting seamless.

In our submission, we highlighted a sobering fact: one in five animals worldwide is lost to preventable disease. AgroLedger, born from the ingenuity of Canadian farmers, demonstrates how producer-led solutions can reverse these losses, safeguard global food security, and open market opportunities. This recognition is not just for CSF; it is a tribute to Canada's sheep industry, proving that a relatively small sector can pioneer technology that reshapes livestock management globally.

AgroLedger is proof that innovation doesn't only come from Silicon Valley or multinational corporations—it can be built in farm offices, sheep barns, and producer boardrooms, and still change the trajectory of global agriculture.



The recognition includes an invitation for CSF to present AgroLedger at the FAO 2025 Global Conference on Sustainable Livestock Transformation, taking place September 29 to October 1 at FAO Headquarters in Rome.

Looking Forward: Converting Groundwork to Impact

As we head into the fall, the CSF is focused on converting this summer's groundwork into measurable impact. Consultations on Bill C-5 will move toward regulatory drafting, our training programs will continue to build capacity on farms, and AgroLedger will take centre stage on the global stage at the FAO conference in Rome. These efforts demonstrate a clear message: Canadian sheep producers are not just keeping pace with change—they are shaping it. By combining grassroots innovation, policy expertise, and a relentless commitment to producer success, we are building a resilient, future-ready industry that can meet the challenges of a rapidly evolving agricultural landscape.

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The Canadian Sheep Federation continues to demonstrate that a relatively small agricultural sector can make outsized contributions to food security, sustainability, and producer resilience through strategic advocacy, targeted capacity building, and producer-led innovation. Our work this summer has laid the foundation for transformative change in the months and years ahead.