

CSF Executive Director Report: Summer 2024

This quarterly report from the Canadian Sheep Federation (CSF) covers key initiatives and progress made during Summer 2024. It includes updates on advocacy efforts, policy development, international collaboration, market access, support for new producers, traceability advancements, and important industry communications. The report highlights CSF's ongoing work to support Canadian sheep producers and strengthen the industry.



Advocacy & Policy Development

FMD Planning: Introduction to the FMD Vaccination Response Work

The development of the FMD Vaccination Response Plan is a proactive effort by the Canadian Sheep Federation (CSF) to protect our industry from the potentially devastating impact of a Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) outbreak. Recognizing the significant threat FMD poses to livestock health, market stability, and producer livelihoods, CSF has prioritized preparedness by collaborating closely with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and industry partners.

This work aims to establish clear protocols and ensure a coordinated response, providing our producers with the tools they need to safeguard their operations and maintain confidence in the sector. The following summary outlines the key components of the vaccination response strategy designed to enhance biosecurity, ensure effective vaccination, and manage associated risks in the event of an outbreak.

1

Pre-Vaccination Activities

Coordination between CFIA and CSF to establish protocols and communicate with producers.

2

Enhanced Biosecurity

Developing site-specific biosecurity plans and securing operations during vaccination.

3

Vaccine Delivery

Protocols for vaccine delivery to sites, including roles and communication between CFIA and industry representatives.

4

Administration of Vaccine

Procedures for administering the vaccine effectively to the targeted livestock.

5

Post-Vaccine Monitoring

Monitoring vaccinated animals and ensuring containment, with protocols for ongoing reporting.

6

Cleaning and Disinfection

Steps for cleaning and disinfection post-vaccination to prevent contamination.

7

Vaccine Remittance & Waste Disposal

Management of vaccine waste, including partially used vials, with CFIA and industry responsibilities clearly defined.

The plan emphasizes collaboration between CFIA and the industry to ensure effective vaccine delivery, enhanced biosecurity, and comprehensive post-vaccination monitoring and waste management.

Next Steps for the FMD Working Group

1

Refine Emergency Vaccination Process

Review and finalize the Emergency Vaccination Process Flow Diagram (PFD) and RACI matrix at the upcoming August 28, 2024 meeting. Identify any gaps or missing elements and make corrective actions for the PFD and RACI matrix.

2

SOP Reviews

Conduct a review of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for Emergency Vaccination, Surveillance, Movement Control, Depopulation and carcass disposal during a series of meetings, starting on August 28 and continuing into the fall.

3

Face-to-Face Meetings

Hold face-to-face reviews in Ottawa on October 7-8, 2024, to summarize and clarify missing elements of the Emergency Vaccination, Surveillance, and Movement Control components. Additional face-to-face meeting planned for November 25, 2024, to test processes in a tabletop exercise.

4

Ongoing Reviews

Schedule reviews for key process flow diagrams, RACI matrices, and SOPs for other response areas (e.g., Biosecurity, Cleaning, and Disinfection) from September 2024 through January 2025, culminating in a comprehensive face-to-face meeting on January 28, 2025.

These next steps are designed to ensure thorough preparation for FMD response and effective coordination among stakeholders.



Veterinary Drugs Whitepaper

Access to veterinary tools is a critical issue for Canadian sheep producers, directly impacting their ability to maintain flock health, productivity, and overall farm profitability. Over the past several months, CSF has been actively collaborating with key agricultural organizations to address this growing problem, culminating in the release of the Veterinary Drugs Whitepaper.

This whitepaper serves as an advocacy tool designed to inform and guide producers, organizations, and government decision-makers on the urgent need for improved access to veterinary drugs. It outlines the significant barriers facing Canadian producers, including high regulatory fees, limited approval pathways, and the declining availability of veterinary pharmaceuticals—all of which hinder producers' ability to keep their flocks healthy and remain competitive against international counterparts.

The whitepaper proposes a series of actionable solutions, such as aligning Canadian regulations with trusted jurisdictions, reducing approval fees, and introducing incentive models to encourage pharmaceutical companies to bring their products to the Canadian market. Implementing these changes is crucial to ensure producers have timely access to the full range of tools needed to improve flock health, productivity, and profitability.

CSF remains committed to this important work to secure the tools producers desperately need. Effective and accessible veterinary solutions are vital for enhancing animal welfare, supporting farm sustainability, and ensuring the long-term viability of the sheep industry. We encourage readers to use the whitepaper to advocate for change with their local governments and policymakers. It is a valuable resource to help push for the improvements our industry urgently requires, ensuring that producers have access to the products they need to succeed.



AMU/AMR Working Group Decisions

The Canadian Sheep Federation (CSF) recognizes the critical importance of addressing antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in the livestock sector. In response, CSF became actively involved with Canada's AMU/AMR Leadership Group, which has been instrumental in guiding efforts to combat AMR through a cohesive, national approach. The growing urgency of this issue was further highlighted by the recent United Nations political declaration on AMR, which called for increased efforts to mitigate its impacts.

The Leadership Group's workshop in November 2023 laid the foundation for advancing responsible antimicrobial use (AMU) and mitigating AMR across animal health sectors. Key outcomes of the workshop included the establishment of a 'network of networks' to foster collaboration across stakeholders, a leadership structure to oversee AMU/AMR initiatives, and a 5-year forward plan focused on reducing AMU, supporting sustainable antimicrobial access, and tailoring actions to the needs of specific sectors.

Building on this strategic groundwork, CSF has approved the formation of a sheep industry-specific AMU/AMR committee. This committee will develop sector-specific strategies for responsible AMU, contribute to broader AMR mitigation efforts, and ensure that producers have access to the necessary products to improve flock health, productivity, and profitability.

We invite anyone interested in contributing to the CSF AMU/AMR Committee to contact us and be a part of this important initiative.



International Collaboration & Market Development

CODEX Alimentarius Commission

The Canadian Sheep Federation (CSF) has been actively engaged in international efforts to improve access to veterinary drugs for the Canadian sheep industry. Our work with the CODEX Alimentarius Commission and the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) focuses on ensuring priority veterinary drugs are included for evaluation, thereby securing Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) that align with international standards.

Inclusion of Priority Veterinary Drugs

CSF has strategically advocated for the inclusion of essential drugs commonly used in the Canadian sheep industry on the JECFA priority list. These drugs are crucial for managing respiratory diseases, parasites, and other health challenges, yet they often require Extra-Label Drug Use (ELDU) due to the lack of approved alternatives.

Extrapolation and Harmonization of MRLs

To support consistent food safety standards and facilitate international trade, CSF is pushing for the extrapolation of MRLs from other species to sheep where applicable and advocating for Health Canada to adopt updated CODEX MRLs. Harmonizing MRLs would reduce non-tariff barriers, provide clearer guidance for producers, and support the competitiveness of Canadian sheep products in global markets.

Engagement with Regulatory Bodies

CSF has been actively coordinating with Health Canada and international partners to streamline drug approval processes and pursue mutual recognition of MRLs. These efforts aim to reduce reliance on ELDU and ensure timely access to essential veterinary products, enhancing animal health and supporting producers' needs.

Through these initiatives, CSF is committed to reshaping the landscape for veterinary drug access, ensuring that sheep producers have the tools they need to maintain flock health, comply with regulations, and remain competitive in international markets. These collaborative efforts represent a proactive step in aligning national regulations with global standards, ultimately enhancing the sustainability and viability of the Canadian sheep industry.



U.S. Market Access & Opportunities

The Canadian Sheep Federation (CSF) has developed strategic recommendations for upcoming consultations on the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) Agriculture Chapter, particularly addressing the implications for Canada's sheep industry.

Remove Voluntary Product-of-USA Labeling

Advocate for the removal of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's voluntary "Product of USA" (vPUSA) labeling rule, introduced in March 2024. This rule could effectively become mandatory due to retailer pressure, requiring segregation of Canadian and U.S. sheep products and resulting in inefficiencies, increased costs, and potential discrimination against Canadian products.

Strengthen Advocacy Against Non-Tariff Barriers

Urge the Canadian government to leverage CUSMA's dispute resolution mechanisms to address persistent non-tariff barriers like COOL and vPUSA. Promote regulatory harmonization between Canada and the U.S. to ensure fair market access.

Promote Bilateral Collaboration on Veterinary Product Approvals

Pursue Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) and bilateral approvals to streamline the approval process for veterinary products, reduce costs, and ensure timely access to essential products for sheep producers in both countries.

Maintain Flexibility in Domestic Support Programs

Emphasize the importance of retaining the ability to introduce future support mechanisms that align with CUSMA guidelines while providing needed assistance to producers.



These recommendations aim to protect and enhance the competitiveness of the Canadian sheep industry in the North American market by addressing regulatory barriers, promoting fair access, and ensuring the continued viability of integrated supply chains.

Code of Practice Update

The Canadian Sheep Federation (CSF) has partnered with the National Farm Animal Care Council (NFACC) to lead the update of the Code of Practice for the care and handling of sheep, a vital initiative that aims to reflect modern standards of animal welfare while balancing practicality for producers. The process for updating the Code is expected to be completed by August 2027 and follows a structured, transparent approach to ensure that the perspectives of all stakeholders are represented.

Process & Timelines:

- **Scientific Review & Drafting:** A Scientific Committee is tasked with reviewing priority welfare issues and summarizing the latest research to inform the drafting of the updated Code. This process will span approximately one year.
- **Public Consultation:** The draft Code will be released for a public comment period, currently scheduled for May to August 2026. During this time, feedback will be collected and reviewed to ensure that the Code meets societal expectations and practical realities.
- **Finalization & Release:** The Code Development Committee will then review all public input, make necessary revisions, and finalize the Code for release in August 2027.

Code Development Committee Composition & Role:

The Code Development Committee consists of representatives from diverse stakeholder groups, including producers, veterinarians, researchers, animal welfare organizations, and government. These members have been carefully selected to ensure that all relevant perspectives are considered during the development process. Committee members are empowered to represent their respective constituents, engage in negotiations, and contribute to building consensus on key welfare issues. Their collective goal is to ensure that the updated Code is practical for producers, scientifically informed, and aligned with societal expectations for animal welfare.

Guiding Principles:

- **Requirements and Recommendations:** The updated Code will include both mandatory requirements (minimum standards) and recommended practices (best practices for enhancing welfare).
- **Consensus Building:** The process is designed to achieve consensus among committee members, with decisions made to address the diverse interests of all parties involved.
- **Transparency and Credibility:** The Scientific Committee's findings will be publicly available, and a detailed report will be issued on how public feedback has been addressed, ensuring transparency.

This update is an essential component of CSF's ongoing commitment to promoting best practices in sheep welfare, supporting producers, and ensuring the sustainability of the industry. Stakeholders can expect a collaborative process that balances scientific evidence, producer input, and societal expectations, ultimately resulting in a Code that benefits both animals and producers alike.



Support for the Next Generation of Producers

Global Sheep Producers Forum Next Generation Initiative

The Next Generation LambEx Exchange provided a unique opportunity for participants to experience the Australian sheep industry's best practices firsthand. Over three days, young producers visited farms, facilities, and attended the LambEx conference, gaining insights into genetics, sustainability, and innovative production methods. Key highlights included:

- **Kangaroo Island Visit:** Participants explored the eucalyptus refining process at Emu Ridge and visited Ella Matta Pastoral, learning about advancements in genetics, sustainability, and pasture-based production.
- **Large-Scale Operations & Genetics:** The second day focused on large-scale farming at Thornby Feedlot and advanced genetic recording at Inverbrackie Border Leicester Stud, showcasing highly efficient lamb production methods and breeding techniques.
- **Historical and Industry Integration:** Visits to Collinsville Stud Merinos and Anlaby Station provided insights into the historical development of the Merino breed, while a tour of Michell Wool offered a behind-the-scenes look at Australia's oldest wool processing facility.
- **LambEx Conference:** Participants attended sessions on health industry trends, emerging technologies, and economic analysis. The conference emphasized supporting new and young producers and concluded with a gala supper for networking.

This exchange offered valuable exposure to global practices, enabling participants to bring back new ideas to their operations in Canada. Importantly, the Global Sheep Producers Forum is considering hosting another Next Generation Exchange event in 2026, in a country yet to be determined, to continue fostering international collaboration and learning opportunities for young producers. For more information and photos of this year's exchange, visit the CSF's Facebook page.

The Canadian Sheep Federation's role in facilitating this exchange was instrumental in broadening the horizons of our young producers, demonstrating our ongoing commitment to supporting the next generation of industry leaders.



Traceability Initiatives

AgroLedger Update

AgroLedger now exceeds federal regulatory requirements for traceability, and recent advancements have made it one of the most intuitive and user-friendly systems available to producers. Built with the practical needs of the livestock industry at its core, AgroLedger offers a modern approach to data management and compliance, setting a new benchmark for what traceability systems can achieve.

This summer, our interns focused on key enhancements to ensure that AgroLedger incorporates the latest technologies, making it a standout solution for producers:

1

Ease of Use & User Experience

AgroLedger features step-based forms that guide users intuitively through processes, reducing user fatigue and enhancing data accuracy.

2

Streamlined Data Management

Centralized platform with searchable dropdowns, dynamic report filtering, and dashboards for premises, operations, and vehicles.

3

Digital Data Transfer

Leverages digital data transfer between transaction-linked users, reducing redundancy and errors.

4

Advanced Traceability & Emergency Response

Built-in tracing functionality for detailed first and second-order contact tracing during animal health emergencies.

5

Integration with Farm & Business Systems

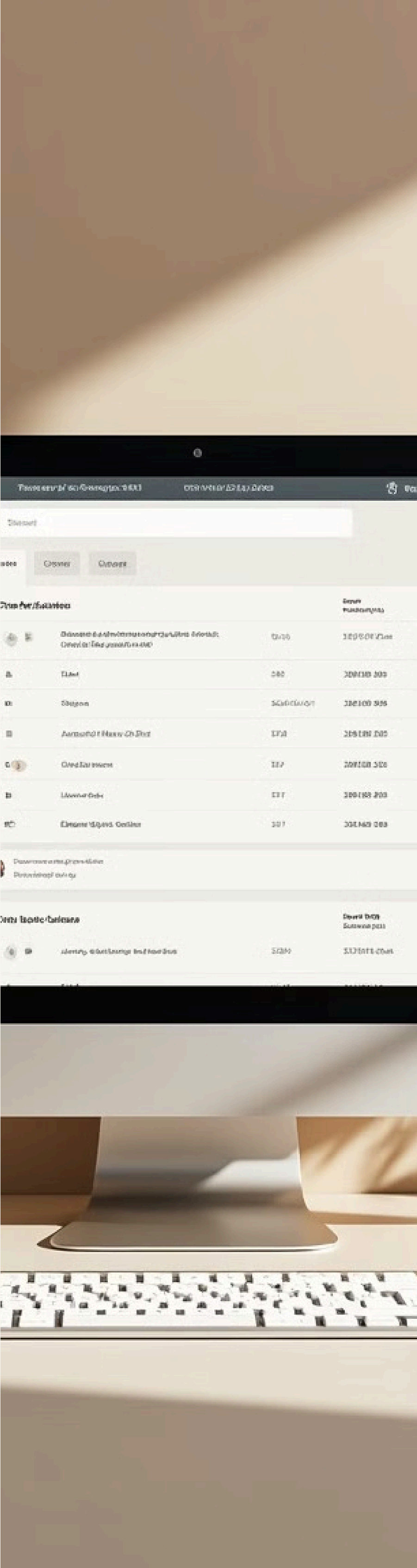
Integrates with farm and business-level software systems for automated reporting and seamless data flow.

6

Value Addition via Digital Twin

Option to attach production data to an animal's digital twin, ensuring valuable information moves through the supply chain.

AgroLedger has been developed to set a new standard in traceability technology, focusing on simplicity, compliance, and forward-thinking features. Our goal is to support producers in meeting and exceeding regulatory requirements while simultaneously enhancing productivity and protecting the future of the industry. Built for the demands of today and the challenges of tomorrow, AgroLedger is setting a new bar for traceability systems in livestock production.



Communication & Outreach

Social Media Campaigns:

- Several posts were made to reintroduce CSF's work to producers, with a focus on assurance programs, animal health initiatives, and sustainability. This series of posts is part of a larger effort to reveal CSF's strategic plan in the fall.
- Emphasis was placed on sharing positive stories of producer success and CSF's role in supporting those achievements without engaging in negative discourse or countering disinformation.
- Visit the CSF Facebook page to view and share these stories.



OSF Legal Challenge:

The recent Tribunal decision in the appeal brought by Roger Albers against Ontario Sheep Farmers (OSF) represents a landmark ruling that has resolved a long-standing issue regarding the collection of licence fees on out-of-province sheep. The Canadian Sheep Federation (CSF) participated in this hearing, working on behalf of producers nationwide to ensure a fair and level playing field.

Key Outcome:

The Tribunal ruled in favor of the appellant on the critical issue of non-resident producers being unlawfully charged licence fees when selling sheep in Ontario. The Tribunal issued the following directives:

Section 87: "Within 60 days of the date of this Order, OSF shall amend Section 6 of its General Regulations dated July 24, 2023, and effective October 1, 2023, by adding thereto the following Subsection 6(c): 'No licence fee shall be charged to a non-resident producer, either directly or indirectly. Licence fees are payable by Ontario producers only.'"

Section 88: "Within 60 days of the date of this Order, OSF shall issue a directive to every person, including a broker/dealer, an auction market, or a processor who receives sheep or wool to immediately stop deducting the licence fees from the sale proceeds payable to non-resident producers."

These directives ensure that non-resident producers are no longer subjected to unfair deductions, and that only Ontario producers are responsible for licence fees. This outcome is a significant step forward for sheep producers across Canada, bringing clarity and fairness to the market.

Creating a Level Playing Field:

Prior to this decision, many producers moving sheep into Ontario were required to pay check-off fees in their own provinces, only to face an additional licence fee upon entry into Ontario—resulting in a double fee burden. Conversely, Ontario producers selling sheep and lambs into other provinces were not subject to such fees the receiving provinces. This created an inequitable system that disproportionately affected non-Ontario producers. The Tribunal's decision rectifies this imbalance, establishing a level playing field for all producers regardless of their province of origin.

Clarification on Other Issues:

Some of the additional issues raised by the appellant were dismissed as the appellant did not have standing to bring these matters forward. Importantly, the Tribunal did not validate OSF's practices on these points.

Evidence from Sections 29-34:

Sections 29 to 34 of the Tribunal decision demonstrate that OSF had been aware for some time that it did not have authority to collect licence fees from out-of-province producers. The Tribunal cited correspondence between the Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission (OFPMC) and OSF dating back to 2014, in which OFPMC clearly stated that OSF's actions exceeded their regulatory authority. Despite this, OSF continued to collect licence fees, prompting the need for a formal resolution through this appeal.

Potential Broader Impact:

This decision could set a significant precedent for other sectors facing inter-provincial trade challenges. By affirming that a provincial body cannot exceed its regulatory authority by imposing fees on out-of-province producers, this ruling reinforces the principles of fair trade within Canada and could be used as a reference point by other industries seeking to address similar regulatory overreaches.



This decision marks a significant change for the Canadian sheep industry, addressing a long-standing issue regarding the inappropriate collection of licence fees from non-resident producers. The Canadian Sheep Federation's involvement was aimed at ensuring a fair and equitable environment for all sheep producers. It is a clear example of our commitment to advocating for the interests of producers nationwide, protecting the integrity of the industry, and supporting the principles of fair inter-provincial trade.

Canadian Sheep Federation Strategic Plan Update

The Canadian Sheep Federation (CSF) has been working diligently throughout 2024 to develop a new Strategic Plan, which will be unveiled at this year's Annual General Meeting. This plan represents a transformative step forward for the industry, aimed at unifying and strengthening the sheep sector in Canada.

The Strategic Plan is built on valuable feedback from producers and members across the country. The extensive input gathered has helped shape a plan that truly reflects the needs and aspirations of those involved in the Canadian sheep industry.

The new Strategic Plan focuses on ensuring a sustainable future for producers, strengthening national leadership, and building a resilient industry. It has been designed to support producers, address the challenges we face, and seize the opportunities ahead.

CSF is excited to share more about this plan at the Annual General Meeting. It marks the beginning of an exciting chapter for CSF and the Canadian sheep industry—a chapter defined by collaboration, growth, and a unified voice for all producers.



Conclusion

This summer has been a productive and transformative period for the Canadian Sheep Federation, marked by meaningful progress across multiple fronts. From proactive planning for Foot-and-Mouth Disease, enhancing producer access to veterinary tools, and forming an AMU/AMR committee to address antimicrobial resistance, to strengthening international collaboration and supporting market access—our efforts have focused on safeguarding producer interests and ensuring a sustainable future for our industry.

We have also made substantial advancements in traceability through AgroLedger, providing producers with cutting-edge tools to simplify compliance and streamline operations. The Code of Practice update is well underway, reflecting our commitment to promoting best practices in animal welfare, while the Next Generation Exchange has broadened perspectives and fostered innovation among young producers.

Our involvement in the OSF legal challenge has led to a landmark ruling, establishing a fair playing field for producers across the country. All these initiatives demonstrate CSF's dedication to addressing the challenges faced by Canadian sheep producers while building a strong, resilient industry equipped for the future. As we move into the fall, we remain committed to advocating for our producers, supporting regulatory changes, and promoting innovation for a more competitive sheep industry.

