

CSF Operational Update – March 2025

The Canadian Sheep Federation (CSF) continues to engage in a wide range of strategic initiatives aimed at strengthening the sheep industry, ensuring producer interests are well-represented in policy discussions, and advancing key programs that support economic and animal health resilience. This month's update reflects the breadth of CSF's efforts, covering veterinary drug access, trade advocacy, disease surveillance, animal health preparedness, traceability, and sustainability initiatives. The organization remains deeply engaged in regulatory negotiations, international partnerships, and industry-led programs, ensuring that the Canadian sheep industry remains competitive and well-positioned to navigate emerging challenges. As always, CSF's work is grounded in a commitment to supporting producers, advocating for practical policies, and fostering collaboration across government, industry, and research partners.

CP by Corlena Patterson

Access to Veterinary Drugs: Overview of Industry Engagement & Regulatory Efforts

The Canadian Sheep Federation (CSF) continues to actively engage with regulators and industry partners to improve access to veterinary drugs for sheep producers. Over the past month, significant discussions have taken place on refining regulatory proposals, addressing approval delays, and highlighting the economic consequences of inaction.

One of the main focuses this month has been the ongoing refinement of the Veterinary Drugs Directorate's (VDD) three-pronged approach to improving drug access. CSF and its partners have also made some progress in advocating for Precision Regulations and the recognition of foreign drug approvals. These initiatives aim to make it easier for Canadian sheep producers to access essential medications, particularly those already approved in trusted international markets.

At the same time, CSF has worked to provide regulators with real-world examples of how drug shortages impact animal health and productivity. By ensuring that government officials understand the economic and industry-wide consequences of these regulatory barriers, CSF is helping to push for meaningful policy changes.

Key Developments from the Veterinary Drugs Directorate (VDD)

1

Progress on the List of Needed Veterinary Drugs

One of the tools introduced by VDD earlier this year was a List of Needed Veterinary Drugs, designed to highlight medications that are critical to the livestock sector but difficult to access in Canada. This list is meant to help pharmaceutical companies identify market opportunities while also informing government decision-making.

Since the list was first proposed, CSF and other industry groups have worked to refine it, ensuring that it prioritizes the most urgently needed drugs. In particular, efforts have focused on including medications for parasite control, reproductive health, and disease prevention in sheep.

Regulators have asked for more detailed justifications for each drug's inclusion on the list, and CSF has gathered data from producers and veterinarians to provide the necessary evidence. Encouragingly, some pharmaceutical companies have expressed interest in bringing listed products to market—but further regulatory adjustments are needed before that can happen.

2

Interim Priority Review Policy & Terms & Conditions Policy

Another development from VDD's strategy is the introduction of a Priority Review Policy and a Terms & Conditions Policy, both designed to accelerate drug approvals.

The Priority Review Policy allows for faster approval of veterinary drugs that address serious diseases, unmet medical needs, or provide significant improvements over existing treatments. While this is a promising step, CSF has raised concerns about whether this policy will be effectively applied to small-market livestock like sheep. There is a risk that larger industries may see the greatest benefit while smaller sectors struggle to gain recognition.

The Terms & Conditions Policy creates a conditional approval system where veterinary drugs can be made available sooner based on promising early-stage data, while additional information is collected after market entry. This is already being tested with pilot cases in other livestock sectors. CSF is actively advocating for sheep-specific drugs to be included in these early pilots, ensuring that the industry benefits from this new policy as soon as possible.

Industry Working Group Meetings & CSF Advocacy

Advancing Precision Regulations for Veterinary Drugs

One of the industry's next steps will be advocating for Precision Regulations, a regulatory mechanism that would allow multiple veterinary drugs to be approved at once to address shortages.

While regulators have acknowledged the need for a more flexible approval process, they have requested additional industry data to support these changes. To meet this request, CSF is working with industry partners to compile real-world case studies that illustrate the impact of drug shortages on animal health, farm productivity, and veterinary costs.

The goal is to provide regulators with a clear, evidence-based argument for why Precision Regulations are necessary and how they can be effectively implemented without compromising safety or oversight.

Strengthening the Case for Foreign Approvals

For years, Canadian livestock producers have faced delays in accessing veterinary drugs that are already approved and widely used in other countries. While the US, EU, and Australia have more efficient approval processes, Canada often lags behind, leaving producers without critical tools to manage herd health.

Rather than seeking broad regulatory harmonization—which has faced pushback from government—CSF and other industry groups are now advocating for targeted recognition of specific products that have already been approved in trusted jurisdictions.

As a result of these efforts, Health Canada has agreed to review a shortlist of priority drugs that could benefit from a streamlined approval process. To support this initiative, CSF is working with industry partners on a comparative analysis of approval timelines in Canada versus international markets, which will further highlight the need for regulatory changes.

Addressing Regulatory Delays & Economic Impact

Regulatory delays remain a major barrier to veterinary drug access, with producers facing long wait times for new approvals. One issue that has been raised repeatedly is the use of the "pause-the-clock" mechanism in drug reviews.

This policy allows regulators to temporarily halt the approval process when they require additional information from pharmaceutical companies. However, industry stakeholders have noted that this practice artificially extends approval timelines, making the system less efficient.

Another issue under discussion is the three-year renewal policy for feed additives and veterinary health products. This rule requires companies to reapply for approval every three years, even for well-established products. For small-market sectors like sheep, this creates an additional financial burden, making it less attractive for companies to keep certain products available in Canada.

Beyond the regulatory delays themselves, CSF has continued to emphasize the economic risks of inaction. Without improvements to Canada's veterinary drug approval system, the country risks:

- Losing access to essential health tools, particularly for niche livestock sectors.
- Seeing pharmaceutical companies move manufacturing and research investments to the US or other countries where approval processes are faster and more predictable.
- Increasing costs for producers, as limited drug availability leads to higher prices and fewer treatment options.

Strategic Actions & Next Steps for Veterinary Drug Access

- 1** Finalize its industry submission on the List of Needed Veterinary Drugs, providing detailed justifications for high-priority medications.
- 2** Advocate for sheep-specific drugs to be included in pilot programs under the Terms & Conditions Policy.
- 3** Advance discussions on Precision Regulations, using case studies to demonstrate the need for regulatory flexibility.
- 4** Expand advocacy efforts with policymakers, particularly by emphasizing the economic impact of regulatory delays and pushing for additional CFIA and Health Canada resources.
- 5** Complete the comparative analysis of approval timelines to further strengthen the case for recognizing foreign drug approvals.

The ability to access veterinary drugs in a timely and cost-effective manner remains essential for the sustainability of the Canadian sheep industry. If successful, CSF's ongoing advocacy efforts will:

- Expand treatment options for sheep producers, improving herd health and welfare.
- Reduce regulatory costs, making it easier to maintain essential medications in the Canadian market.
- Ensure Canadian livestock producers remain competitive, with access to the same tools available in other major agricultural markets.
- Strengthen relationships between industry and regulators, fostering collaboration on future policy developments.

CSF remains committed to improving veterinary drug access and ensuring that the needs of sheep producers are properly represented in regulatory discussions. While progress has been made, there is still much work to be done. The organization will continue to engage with industry stakeholders, regulators, and policymakers to push for meaningful and lasting changes.

U.S. Trade Advocacy Work: Overview of Advocacy Efforts

The Canadian Sheep Federation (CSF) has been at the forefront of industry advocacy in response to the U.S. tariffs on Canadian goods, including agricultural products, which were originally proposed to take effect on February 4, 2025. These tariffs, part of the U.S. government's "America First" trade agenda, represent a significant disruption to Canada's export-driven agricultural sector, including the sheep industry. Since the tariffs were first planned, CSF has intensified its engagement with government officials, industry partners, and trade negotiators to mitigate the impact on sheep producers and ensure their concerns remain central to Canada's ongoing response strategy.

Over the past month, CSF has actively participated in discussions with federal decision-makers, reinforcing the need for an agricultural exemption from the tariffs and emphasizing the disproportionate harm they impose on small and medium-sized livestock producers. The organization has also been coordinating closely with other agricultural sectors to align industry-wide trade advocacy efforts. By working alongside key government ministries, CSF has provided data-driven insights to demonstrate how these tariffs could lead to higher consumer food prices in the U.S., further straining already fragile supply chains and hurting businesses on both sides of the border.

Key Developments & Policy Updates in U.S. Trade Relations

Since the possible U.S. tariffs were first introduced, the Canadian government has moved forward with its planned response, poised to implement reciprocal 25% tariffs on \$30 billion worth of U.S. imports while preparing additional countermeasures that could impact another \$125 billion in American goods. The goal of these countermeasures is to apply political and economic pressure on the U.S. government while minimizing domestic economic harm to Canadian businesses and consumers.

While early diplomatic efforts to have the U.S. reconsider these tariffs have been met with resistance, American business groups, particularly in the food and retail sectors, have begun to voice opposition. Many U.S. companies that rely on Canadian agricultural imports have raised concerns that these tariffs will increase costs for American consumers, further drive food inflation, and disrupt well-established cross-border supply chains.

For the Canadian sheep industry, the economic consequences of these tariffs could soon become apparent. Recent trade data predicts a possible decline of up to 20% in cross-border lamb shipments, as higher prices make Canadian products less competitive in the U.S. market. This is particularly concerning for small and mid-sized sheep operations that already operate on thin margins. Beyond direct exports, these tariffs are expected to have a ripple effect across the entire sheep supply chain, impacting feed suppliers, processors, and rural economies that depend on stable trade relationships with the U.S.

CSF's Role in Trade Advocacy

Active Government Engagement

Recognizing the magnitude of the situation, CSF has maintained active communication with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC), Global Affairs Canada (GAC), and trade policymakers, reinforcing the need for immediate action. In follow-up discussions with government officials after CSF's January 10 briefing with the Minister of Agriculture, the organization reiterated the importance of securing an agricultural exemption from these tariffs and ensuring that affected producers receive targeted financial support.

Industry Coalition Building

Beyond direct government engagement, CSF has also worked through industry coalitions to increase pressure on U.S. decision-makers. During the February ATNCG (Agricultural Trade Negotiations Consultative Group) meeting, CSF highlighted the critical role of agriculture in the Canada-U.S. trade relationship, emphasizing that tariffs on livestock products will only exacerbate supply chain disruptions and raise costs for American consumers. The organization has also continued to push for a coordinated strategy that engages key U.S. stakeholders, including retailers, food industry leaders, and agricultural associations that have a vested interest in reversing these trade measures.

Looking ahead, CSF will continue to advocate for an agricultural exemption from the U.S. tariffs, reinforcing the message that these trade barriers harm both Canadian producers and American consumers. The organization will also be monitoring Canada's evolving countermeasure strategy, ensuring that any additional retaliatory tariffs do not inadvertently harm the sheep sector.

At the same time, CSF advocates for the diversification of export markets and reduced reliance on U.S. trade, a long-term strategy that will help insulate the Canadian sheep industry from future disruptions. As part of this effort, the organization is exploring opportunities to strengthen regulatory cooperation between Canada and other trading partners, positioning Canadian lamb as a sustainable and reliable protein source in the global market.

The coming weeks will be crucial in determining how the Canada-U.S. trade dispute evolves. CSF remains fully committed to protecting market access for Canadian sheep producers, ensuring that they are not left behind in broader trade negotiations. By maintaining strong engagement with government officials, industry partners, and international stakeholders, CSF will continue working toward a resolution that secures fair and stable trade practices for the industry.

Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) Activities: Overview of FMD Preparedness & CSF's Role

The Canadian Sheep Federation (CSF) continues to play a key role in national Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) preparedness, ensuring that the sheep industry is well-positioned to respond effectively in the event of an outbreak. Over the past month, CSF has been actively engaged in refining the Integrated Emergency Response Plan (IERP), participating in working group meetings, and addressing critical gaps in Canada's approach to FMD containment and response.

The FMD preparedness efforts remain focused on improving coordination between industry, federal agencies, and provincial partners, particularly in relation to vaccination strategies, movement control policies, and traceability measures. CSF has advocated for a more structured and outcome-driven approach to working group meetings, ensuring that discussions lead to practical solutions rather than repeated debates over unresolved issues.

Key Developments & Working Group Updates for FMD Preparedness

Progress on the Integrated Emergency Response Plan (IERP)

The Integrated Emergency Response Plan (IERP) remains a work in progress, with significant concerns raised about its structure and usability.

At the February 13 CFIA FMD working group meeting, government officials and industry representatives expressed frustration with the current draft, citing that it was too lengthy, overly complex, and not practical for quick decision-making during an outbreak.

To address these concerns, efforts are now being redirected to streamlining the IERP into a more functional, action-oriented document. A separate

Gaps Document is also being developed in parallel, outlining the most critical weaknesses in Canada's FMD preparedness and offering practical solutions for closing these gaps.

CSF has been particularly vocal about the need for clearer roles and responsibilities for producers, industry stakeholders, and government regulators within the IERP. The goal is to ensure that sheep producers know exactly what is expected of them during an outbreak, reducing confusion and delays in response efforts.

Movement Control & Biosecurity Measures

One of the most pressing challenges identified is the lack of a clear movement control strategy in the early stages of an FMD outbreak. Industry is seeking more detailed guidance on:

How movement restrictions will be enforced before Primary Control Zones (PCZs) are declared.

What biosecurity protocols will be required at different risk levels.

Whether voluntary depopulation will be financially compensated.

At the February 5 and 19 working group meetings, discussions centered on categorizing biosecurity levels (green, orange, red) and defining what each level entails for different commodity groups. CSF has supported the concept of a tiered biosecurity approach that provides clear, practical steps for sheep producers at each risk level.

1

2

Concerns Over Ineffective Working Group Meetings

Frustration has been mounting within the FMD working groups due to inefficiencies in meetings and a lack of clear decision-making processes. Discussions have frequently gone in circles, with little tangible progress made on resolving key issues such as movement control policies, vaccine deployment strategies, and data-sharing agreements.

In response, CSF has been pushing for the creation of smaller, more focused working groups to tackle specific issues instead of attempting to address everything in broad, unfocused discussions. There is now momentum behind restructuring the approach, with Animal Health Canada being urged to take a more active leadership role in coordinating FMD preparedness efforts.

3

FMD Vaccine Bank & Procurement Efforts

A major development this month was CFIA's issuance of a Request for Proposals (RFP) for FMD vaccine procurement, a crucial step in establishing a Canadian vaccine bank. This marks significant progress toward securing a stockpile of emergency vaccines that can be rapidly deployed in the event of an outbreak.

However, concerns remain over:

- How quickly vaccines can be deployed in a real-world scenario.
- Who will bear the cost of vaccine administration.
- How vaccinated animals will be tracked for trade purposes.

CSF has been actively engaged in these discussions, ensuring that the sheep industry's unique needs are factored into vaccine planning efforts.

Strategic Implications for CSF & Next Steps

CSF is continuing to push for more extensive industry involvement in key decision-making processes. Producers and industry professionals need to be more directly engaged in preparedness planning, ensuring that policies reflect on-the-ground realities rather than theoretical frameworks.

As gaps in the IERP are addressed, CSF is working to:

- Develop producer-specific preparedness guides that translate national plans into clear, farm-level actions.
- Support the implementation of tiered biosecurity protocols, ensuring producers understand what actions to take at different risk levels.
- Facilitate regional training exercises to help producers practically prepare for an outbreak scenario.

CSF will continue advocating for policy changes that provide:

- Financial compensation for producers affected by movement restrictions, vaccination orders and depopulation mandates.
- Greater access to traceability data to support real-time disease tracking.
- Clearer vaccination protocols that define roles, responsibilities, and cost-sharing arrangements.

FMD preparedness remains a top priority for CSF, particularly as challenges with working group efficiency, movement control, and vaccine deployment persist. Significant progress has been made in refining Canada's response plan, but major gaps still need to be addressed before the industry can be confident in its ability to respond to an outbreak.

Chronic Wasting Disease Herd Certification Program (CWD HCP) Transition: Overview

The transition of the Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Herd Certification Program (HCP) from the Canadian Sheep Federation (CSF) to NSF International LLC continues to move forward, though logistical and administrative challenges remain. While the transition was initially expected to be complete by December 31, 2024, delays caused by unforeseen regulatory and procedural hurdles have required CSF to extend its administrative role to April 1, 2025. Recent efforts have focused on finalizing producer data transfers, resolving status assessment inconsistencies, and ensuring NSF's full operational readiness before the handoff.

Over the past month, significant progress has been made in clarifying the responsibilities of the new administrator. NSF has advanced its training efforts and has begun implementing its digital file management system, which is expected to streamline program administration in the long term. However, the requirement for producer permissions to transfer data and ongoing questions about status suspension and re-enrollment policies have created additional work for CSF in the interim.

Key Developments & Transition Challenges for CWD HCP

1

Data Transfer Permissions

One of the primary obstacles in finalizing the transition has been ensuring that all producers consent to having their information transferred from CSF to NSF. Without explicit permission, files cannot be legally moved, creating the risk of certification lapses for non-responsive producers. To address this, CSF will launch a direct email campaign urging producers to confirm their consent, making it clear that failure to respond could delay their ability to continue participating in the program. A similar approach was used by the Alberta Government when it transitioned its administrative responsibilities, and CSF has been working to ensure that messaging is clear and legally compliant.

2

Status Assessment Procedures

Alongside the data transfer process, CSF has been assisting NSF in status assessment procedures, particularly in determining how to handle cases of producer suspension and reinstatement. Some producer files require immediate processing due to upcoming certification anniversaries, and CSF has continued to oversee these cases to ensure producers do not face penalties due to administrative delays. CFIA has granted temporary exemptions from service standards, allowing CSF to hold most files without processing them, but there are three producer files that must be fully reviewed before the transition deadline.

3

Digital File Management System

In preparation for taking over full program administration, NSF has been refining its file management system, which is expected to provide better long-term oversight of producer records. A digital platform has been created to house program files, with standardized templates for producer correspondence, status assessment decisions, and compliance notifications. However, CFIA regulations still mandate that certain documents be maintained in paper format, which has slowed the move toward a fully digital system. Additionally, further training has been required to ensure NSF personnel are fully familiar with biosecurity assessment forms and herd inventory reconciliation, as these remain some of the most complex aspects of the program's administration.

Strategic Implications & Next Steps for CWD HCP Transition

With April 1, 2025, set as the formal handover date, CSF is now focused on wrapping up its role in the program and ensuring a smooth transition. In the coming weeks, the priority will be processing the outstanding producer files that require immediate attention, while monitoring producer responses to data-sharing requests to prevent any certification lapses. Final training sessions for NSF staff are scheduled to reinforce status assessment procedures, ensuring consistency in decision-making once CSF fully steps back.

Beyond administrative tasks, CSF is also working closely with CFIA and NSF to finalize the long-term approach to digital record-keeping. While a fully electronic system is the ultimate goal, CFIA's current paper-based requirements remain a barrier to modernization. Efforts are underway to explore potential regulatory changes that would allow for a more efficient system in the future.

As CSF prepares to exit the program, it is ensuring that all necessary documentation, decision-making guidelines, and producer communication materials are provided to NSF. A summary of unresolved producer issues will be shared to assist in a seamless transition, and CSF will remain available in a limited advisory capacity to support NSF as needed in the initial post-handoff period.

The transition of the CWD Herd Certification Program has been more complex than initially hoped, but key steps have been taken to ensure continuity for producers. Producer communication, data-sharing agreements, and administrative onboarding have been central focus areas in recent weeks, and the transition remains on track for April 1. In the final weeks before the handover, CSF will continue working to finalize outstanding administrative tasks while ensuring producers receive clear guidance on their next steps. With NSF assuming full program responsibility, CSF's role will conclude, marking the end of its administration of the program and the beginning of a new phase under NSF's oversight.

Disease Surveillance Efforts: Overview

Disease surveillance is a critical component of protecting animal health and ensuring the sustainability of the livestock industry. Surveillance helps detect emerging threats, track disease trends, and support proactive management strategies that mitigate risks to production, trade, and public health. The Canadian Sheep Federation (CSF) actively participates in disease surveillance initiatives through its representation on the Canadian Animal Health Surveillance System (CAHSS) Small Ruminant Network and the Vector-Borne Disease Network. These networks provide a platform for information-sharing, coordinated response planning, and policy development.

As new disease threats emerge, CSF continues to advocate for improved surveillance tools, greater data transparency, and enhanced preparedness efforts. The organization is currently monitoring key issues such as Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in livestock, the expansion of vector-borne diseases, and the growing concern over Cache Valley virus in sheep flocks across Canada.

HPAI Surveillance & Response in Livestock

While Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) has historically been a major concern for poultry producers, recent developments indicate a growing risk to other livestock species, including dairy cattle. The latest reports from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and U.S. surveillance programs highlight the emergence of a new strain, D1.1, which is actively spreading among wild birds. Unlike the previously dominant B313 strain, which primarily spread from cow to cow, D1.1 appears to be capable of direct bird-to-cow transmission.

This shift in transmission patterns significantly increases the risk of introduction into Canadian dairy herds. Surveillance efforts in Canada have ramped up, with milk sampling programs continuing nationwide to detect early signs of infection. CSF is monitoring the situation closely, recognizing that cross-species spillover could have broader implications for sheep and other livestock.

Recent discussions within CAHSS emphasized the importance of continued surveillance, expanded testing capabilities, and the need for real-time data-sharing among provinces. The U.S. experience has demonstrated that rapidly evolving HPAI strains pose a complex challenge for disease control, making proactive monitoring and risk assessment essential.

Vector-Borne Disease Monitoring & Emerging Threats

CSF remains engaged in discussions about vector-borne disease risks affecting the sheep industry, particularly through its participation in the CAHSS Vector-Borne Disease Network. This initiative tracks the movement and prevalence of diseases transmitted by mosquitoes, ticks, and biting midges, including conditions that could impact sheep health.

Recent meetings have highlighted ongoing efforts to improve vector surveillance in Canada, including the development of interactive data dashboards that integrate information on vector populations, environmental risk factors, and disease spread projections. With climate change accelerating the expansion of disease-carrying vectors, there is increasing concern about the introduction of novel pathogens into Canadian livestock populations.

One of the primary issues under discussion has been the spread of Cache Valley virus (CVV). Reports indicate a rising number of confirmed cases across multiple provinces, with significant concern about underreporting due to a lack of accessible diagnostic testing. CVV is known to cause reproductive losses in sheep, leading to congenital malformations and abortion storms. The CAHSS Small Ruminant Network is actively exploring options to improve surveillance, with discussions centered on whether CAHSS could play a role in developing a national monitoring framework for the disease.

Veterinary researchers have noted that Cache Valley virus tends to follow a cyclical pattern, with outbreaks occurring every three to four years. However, the recent increase in reported cases suggests that climate-driven shifts in vector populations may be altering traditional outbreak cycles. In response, CSF is advocating for increased surveillance efforts and improved producer access to diagnostic testing to better understand the virus's distribution and impact.

Strategic Implications & Next Steps for Disease Surveillance

CSF's leadership in disease surveillance represents a critical pillar in protecting Canada's sheep industry. Through strategic partnerships with veterinary institutions, government agencies, and research facilities, the organization is establishing a robust framework that empowers producers with cutting-edge surveillance tools and real-time disease monitoring capabilities. Key priorities moving forward include:

- 1** Strengthening the national Cache Valley virus surveillance network by implementing standardized diagnostic protocols and establishing a centralized reporting system for tracking disease patterns across provinces.
- 2** Deepening industry involvement in HPAI prevention strategies through enhanced producer education and rapid-response protocols, with specific focus on containing the emerging D1.1 strain.
- 3** Spearheading the integration of sheep-specific considerations into Canada's vector-borne disease monitoring framework, ensuring comprehensive coverage of industry-specific threats.
- 4** Developing a state-of-the-art digital platform in partnership with CAHSS that delivers real-time disease alerts and prevention strategies directly to producers' mobile devices.

The foundation of a thriving sheep industry rests on sophisticated disease surveillance systems that can rapidly identify and respond to emerging threats. CSF's strategic leadership in coordinating national monitoring efforts has positioned the industry to better protect flock health through data-driven decision making and collaborative response protocols.

Looking ahead, CSF will intensify its advocacy for research funding, advanced diagnostic capabilities, and strengthened cross-border collaboration. By fostering partnerships between producers, veterinary experts, and regulatory bodies, CSF is building a resilient surveillance framework that will safeguard both animal welfare and industry prosperity for generations to come.

What's New at the Global Sheep Producers Forum

The Global Sheep Producers Forum (GSPF) met in February 2025 to discuss a range of critical issues affecting the international sheep industry, including future event planning, policy collaboration, veterinary medicine access, and group administration. This forum serves as a key platform for international cooperation, allowing sheep-producing nations to align strategies, share expertise, and advocate for policies that strengthen the industry worldwide.

One of the central themes of the meeting was the continued development of the Next Generation program, an initiative aimed at fostering leadership among young sheep producers through structured training and international exchange opportunities. The group also discussed veterinary medicine shortages, sustainability policy alignment, and regulatory challenges that affect sheep production across multiple countries.

Planning for Future Events and Initiatives

Next Generation Program

With the successful completion of past international producer exchanges, there was strong support for continuing and expanding the Next Generation program. Discussions focused on planning a 2026 event in Australia, with the potential to extend the trip to include New Zealand.

Recognizing the logistical challenges of organizing such an initiative, members agreed that early planning and securing additional sponsorship will be essential to ensuring the program's success.

Meeting Schedule Adjustment

Another key topic was the timing of GSPF meetings. The group recognized that February has become a difficult time for many members due to overlapping industry events. Moving forward, the group will explore scheduling meetings in the spring, which may allow for better participation. There was also interest in identifying opportunities for in-person meetings, potentially aligning them with major industry events like the American Lamb Summit in July.

Veterinary Medicine Access

A significant portion of the discussion focused on the challenges surrounding access to veterinary medicines and vaccines. Multiple countries reported shortages and increasing costs, which have been exacerbated by rising registration fees and reduced investment from pharmaceutical companies. The UK reported ongoing vaccine shortages, while Canada has experienced declining availability of registered veterinary products due to regulatory hurdles.

International Regulatory Reform and Collaboration

New Zealand's Regulatory Approach

New Zealand provided an update on its regulatory reform efforts, which aim to simplify approval processes and modernize fee structures to align with cost recovery models. This raised the question of whether other GSPF members could collaborate on a multilateral approach to veterinary product approvals, reducing the barriers for pharmaceutical companies to maintain products across multiple markets.

There was consensus that greater cooperation between regulators could help address these challenges, and the group discussed the possibility of engaging government officials in future discussions on harmonized approvals. Given the importance of this issue, a follow-up meeting was scheduled for early April to focus on identifying priority areas and developing an action plan.

Expanding Membership and Administration

As part of its strategic growth, the GSPF is considering expanding its membership to include representatives from Ireland. While this idea was well received, the group agreed that reconnecting with current members and solidifying leadership priorities should be the immediate focus before extending invitations to new participants.

Another administrative priority is identifying a new secretariat to manage GSPF's operations. The departure of a key administrator has left a gap in organizational support, and potential candidates are being considered to fill this role. Discussions are ongoing, with a plan to finalize new administrative arrangements before the next meeting.

Strategic Implications for CSF & Next Steps in Global Collaboration

The CSF remains actively engaged in the Global Sheep Producers Forum, ensuring that Canadian producers have a voice in shaping international policy, trade discussions, and industry best practices. Over the coming weeks, CSF will work with forum members to:

Next Generation Leadership

Advance planning for the Next Generation program, ensuring young Canadian producers have the opportunity to participate in future exchanges.

Veterinary Medicine Access

Continue collaboration on veterinary medicine access, advocating for regulatory reforms that reduce barriers to veterinary product availability.

Sustainability and Animal Health

Monitor sustainability and animal health discussions, ensuring that Canada's policies align with global industry efforts.

Organizational Support

Support the transition to a new secretariat, helping GSPF maintain its organizational effectiveness.

The Global Sheep Producers Forum continues to serve as a valuable platform for international collaboration, providing an opportunity for CSF to engage in high-level discussions that impact the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of Canada's sheep industry. With key initiatives such as the Next Generation program, regulatory alignment efforts, and expanded industry cooperation on the horizon, CSF's involvement in this forum remains essential to ensuring Canadian producers benefit from global best practices and policy advancements.

Code Development Process Update

The National Farm Animal Care Council (NFACC) continues to lead the process of updating the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Sheep, with work now well underway following the first in-person meeting in December 2024. This update is an important step in ensuring that the latest scientific knowledge, practical industry experience, and evolving public expectations are reflected in the standards that guide sheep production in Canada. The Code Committee (CC) and the Scientific Committee (SC) are collaborating to review key welfare topics, ensuring the revised Code remains both scientifically credible and practical for producers to implement.

NFACC has publicly confirmed that the December meeting in Ottawa was focused on team-building, setting priorities, and structuring the work ahead. One of the main objectives was to identify the priority welfare issues (PWIs) that the Scientific Committee will review over the next year. These topics were selected based on the Top-of-Mind survey, which gathered input from stakeholders across the industry. The Committees also outlined the order in which the Code sections will be reviewed, with subcommittees now being formed to begin the initial work on each section.

Current Progress and Next Steps

With the structure now in place, subcommittees are actively beginning the review process in preparation for the next in-person meeting, scheduled for summer 2025. While details of ongoing Committee discussions remain confidential until formally released by NFACC, it is clear that significant progress is being made in outlining the key areas of focus for Code revisions. The work ahead will be complex and detailed, requiring careful consideration of how scientific evidence, practical management, and regulatory expectations align in setting updated standards for sheep care.

The involvement of both producers and scientific experts ensures that the process remains balanced and grounded in real-world sheep production realities. Discussions at this stage are already shaping how future recommendations will be structured, particularly in areas that have seen advances in animal health, welfare science, and management practices.

Advancing Industry Initiatives Through Collaboration

Data-Driven Animal Health

CSF has been actively participating in traceability working groups and discussions on supply chain integrity, particularly through engagement with DIASCA's Traceability Working Group.

Policy Development

CSF's participation in these global and national discussions ensures that Canadian sheep producers remain well-positioned to adapt to evolving regulatory and market demands.



Global Disease Burden

CSF remains engaged with international efforts to quantify and mitigate the economic impact of animal diseases, including participation in discussions from the Global Burden of Animal Diseases (GBADs) initiative.

Industry Innovation

As technological advancements reshape the agricultural landscape, CSF continues to advocate for policies that recognize and support these innovations.

The Canadian Sheep Federation (CSF) continues to engage in a variety of strategic initiatives that align with industry priorities, technological advancements, and international collaboration efforts. While each of these projects addresses a distinct aspect of traceability, disease surveillance, sustainability, and data integration, they are ultimately interconnected in their impact on sheep production and global market access.

From traceability to disease surveillance and data management, CSF's participation in these global and national discussions ensures that Canadian sheep producers remain well-positioned to adapt to evolving regulatory and market demands. The organization will continue to monitor emerging technologies, advocate for practical policy solutions, and engage in knowledge-sharing initiatives that strengthen the resilience of the Canadian sheep industry. By aligning traceability, biosecurity, and economic sustainability efforts, CSF is laying the groundwork for a more interconnected and forward-thinking sheep sector in Canada.

The March update highlights the significant work being undertaken across multiple fronts to ensure a strong and sustainable future for the Canadian sheep industry. From ensuring continued market access amid U.S. trade challenges, improving disease preparedness, strengthening international collaboration, and modernizing traceability systems, CSF remains committed to advancing strategic priorities that directly impact producers. As regulatory changes, disease threats, and market dynamics continue to evolve, the organization will remain focused on advocacy, innovation, and producer engagement, ensuring that industry needs remain at the center of policy decisions. Looking ahead, CSF will continue to work with government, industry stakeholders, and international partners to build a resilient and forward-thinking sheep sector that is well-equipped to meet future challenges and opportunities.

CSF March Update: Building a Stronger Future for Canadian Sheep Industry

The Canadian Sheep Federation continues to drive significant progress across multiple strategic fronts to strengthen and sustain our industry's future. Our comprehensive approach focuses on securing market access, enhancing disease preparedness, fostering international partnerships, and modernizing traceability systems - all directly benefiting Canadian producers.

In response to evolving regulatory requirements, emerging disease threats, and dynamic market conditions, CSF maintains unwavering dedication to effective advocacy, innovative solutions, and meaningful producer engagement. This ensures that industry needs remain at the forefront of all policy decisions.

Looking ahead, we are strengthening our collaborative relationships with government bodies, industry stakeholders, and international partners. These partnerships are crucial in building a resilient and forward-thinking sheep sector that is well-positioned to transform future challenges into opportunities for growth and success.