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**Canada**

**Growing Forward 2**  
A federal-provincial-territorial initiative

This project was made possible by funding from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) through its Canadian Integrated Food Safety Initiative (CIFS). AAFC is pleased to participate in this project and is committed to working with its industry partners to increase public awareness of the importance of the agri-food industry to Canada.

# CANADIAN VERIFIED SHEEP PROGRAM



## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the Canadian Verified Sheep Program? Did it replace

The Food Safe Farm Practices Program is an on-farm food safety program developed by and for Canadian sheep and lamb producers. It is a HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) – based program designed and written by a team of producers from across Canada, with the guidance of veterinarians, industry representatives and government experts.

### Is the CVSP program a mandatory requirement producers?

No, this is a voluntary program that was developed through a partnership between producers, industry and government personnel from across Canada. The Canadian Sheep Federation (CSF) developed this program to help support the industry in continuing to provide safe products for their customers. There are 14 other Canadian On-Farm Food Safety Programs (COFFS) many which include Animal care/Biosecurity for various commodity groups currently recognized and implemented by Canadian primary producers.

### How much time and labour will this require?

This will depend on what level you are starting from. Most producers experience an increase in the amount of time required to complete the necessary record-keeping activities. The CVSP program has been designed to minimize this and provides producers with templates for each record, which will help to reduce the time needed to get started.

Producers will establish their own protocols, together with their flock veterinarian, and will establish routines. Depending on their management

style, the need for recording of flock treatments will eventually become second nature as you become more familiar with the recording requirements.

### How much Paperwork is involved?

There are specific records that need to be maintained. Most producers recognize that they are already keeping much of the required information and that this is not a major obstacle to participating in the program. Example records are included in the Producer Manual. You are encouraged to use these; however, you can design your own records provided all of the required information is included.

Depending on your operation, you may not be required to complete all records. For example, not all producers will be using medicated feeds, and as such, will not require use of that record. This will depend on what animal health products you use.

### Will I get paid more for my product?

There has been no direct evidence to suggest that producers in any commodity have received more money for their products after achieving certification in a CVSP program. CVSP Products are considered *Raised Humane Product*.

However, by being able to provide documentation that you have respected drug withdrawal times and followed veterinary prescriptions, and demonstrated strong animal welfare practices serves to protect you from liability should an issue arise.

Participation in the CVSP program demonstrates that a producer has shown due diligence to provide a safe food product raised humanely for human consumption and will limit producer liability. In an environment of increased traceability, the CVSP program serves to protect producers.

### **If I already keep my own records do I need to use the CVSP templates?**

No, you do not need to use the template records provided in the FSFP program. However, you must review the program requirements and ensure that all of the mandatory information is being captured and can be easily accessed. Your records need to be retrievable and legible and include all of the information required by the OFFS program

### **How much does an audit cost?**

Because producers are only beginning to show interest in the program, there has been difficulty in determining what the cost of an audit will be. It is largely dependent on your location to the auditor the size of your operation, and most importantly your level of preparation for the audit.

For instance, you can minimize the cost by being prepared for your audit. Assessment forms, which have to be filled out prior to an audit, help producers prepare. If you have all necessary records ready and available upon beginning your audit, it will simply be a matter of the auditor reviewing the material and touring the premises.

It is also advantageous for producers within close proximity to one another to coordinate audit dates, and auditors are willing to work with them to do so.

Talk to your provincial agricultural ministry representative prior to seeking an audit, as there may be funding available to help with some of the costs. Contact your provincial sheep organization for more information.

### **Who will be my auditor?**

The CSF is responsible for certifying auditors. To ensure consistency and fairness:

- auditor eligibility criteria has been established;
- auditors are trained in HACCP programs, auditing as well as the FSFP program;
- specific conflict of interest provisions are in place;
- all auditing is under the direct oversight of CSF. Audit reports are reviewed for accuracy, consistency and compliance with the FSFP program intentions.

### **Can I be on the program and not get audited?**

Yes, you can implement the FSFP program and operate under it for as long as you like. However, you will not be considered certified on the program until you participate in an audit.

### **What if I am on another program (e.g. Verified Beef Program) are the two programs interchangeable?**

You must be able to show that you are collecting the mandatory information under the CVSP program and that you are meeting the mandatory on farm practices for sheep producers. The programs differ somewhat because the production systems and food safety hazards are different. For example, there are less animal health products approved for sheep in Canada, therefore extra label drug use creates significant food safety risk for sheep producers in Canada.

### **Will a list of certified producer be available the CVSP Website?**

Yes, we are currently working on updating the CVSP website and will be including a list of certified producers and their location, only first of course when a producer has given permission to publish this information.



### **How often will I need to be audited?**

The FSFP program audit has a four-year cycle. Your initial audit begins the cycle.

- **Year 1:** Full audit (initial certification). This requires a farm visit. The participating producer will need to pay for an on-farm audit.
- **Year 2:** Self declaration. No farm visit required, no cost incurred by the participating producer.
- **Year 3:** Records review. No farm visit required, no cost incurred by the participating producer.
- **Year 4:** Self declaration. No farm visit required, no cost incurred by the participating producer.

Each year on your anniversary date, as specified on your certificate, you will need to contact your certification agent (provincial sheep association or CSF) to state you are ready for review.

### **What is a self-declaration?**

Year 2 and 4 of the audit cycle requires you to complete a self-declaration report and submit it to your provincial sheep organization or CSF. The appropriate form will be provided to you when you request your annual audit. This is a formal declaration from you attesting to your ongoing implementation and compliance with the program. It requires you to complete a checklist of items and sign to declare you are continuing to implement all of the mandatory elements of the program

### **What is a records review?**

Year three of the audit cycle requires you to complete a records review. After you contact your provincial sheep association or CSF to request your annual audit, you will be provided with a form detailing the necessary records for which you will be required to provide copies. Be sure to send copies of the requested records and not the originals.