

Canadian Sheep Federation Executive Director’s Report

April 2021

| | |
|--|---|
| Action Items from the April 2021 Board meeting..... | 1 |
| Program Updates..... | 1 |
| Canadian Sheep Identification Program (CSIP) and Traceability..... | 1 |
| Canadian Verified Sheep Program (CVSP)..... | 2 |
| Animal Welfare..... | 3 |
| Pregnancy Ultrasound Training & Certification..... | 3 |
| Scrapie Flock Certification Program (SFCP)..... | 4 |
| Chronic Wasting Disease Herd Certification Program (CWD HCP)..... | 4 |
| Industry Initiatives..... | 5 |
| This month’s meetings | 6 |

Action Items from the April 2021 Board meeting

- *Canada’s Small Ruminant Ultrasound Pregnancy Assessment Training and Certification Program* has been finalized and ratified by the Small Ruminant Ultrasound Oversight Committee.
- The CSF has become a signatory to Animal Health Canada’s Statement of Intent.
- The CSF signaled its support for the research project *Developing Nanopore DNA Sequencing for Routine Rapid Molecular Diagnostics of Gastrointestinal Nematode (GIN) Parasites*.
- The CSF project *Assessing FWR Readiness* was circulated to the CSF-CFIA Humane Transport Working Group for comment.
- Plans are underway for a May webinar by Farm Products Council of Canada regarding a Promotions and Research Agency for Canada’s sheep industry.

Program Updates

Canadian Sheep Identification Program (CSIP) and Traceability

- The Canadian Cattle Identification Agency (CCIA) hosted both its Annual General Meeting and spring Board meeting in April. The following are some key points from the April Board Meeting:

For Broad Distribution

- Age Verification: CFIA is concerned about age changes made in the database prior to slaughter to reflect under 30 months (UTM) of age. They are suggesting making some modifications to the CLTS business rules to address the concerns. Currently, CCIA does not offer data entry or any support (i.e., facilitate communications between producer and feedlot when a correction is needed) with regard to age verification as reporting is neither mandatory nor regulated. Board members were tasked with collecting information from members regarding the need for age verification services, to be incorporated into recommendations for the next meeting.
- CCIA has purchased a property from which to conduct business. It offers similar office space as what is currently being rented and a large warehouse/shop adequate for tag distribution. CCIA takes possession in July 2021 and will move operations to the new location in September. Tag distribution will transition cautiously, aiming at a full migration by May 1, 2022.
- Ultra High Frequency (UHF) Technology: *Literature review and technology readiness assessment of ultra-high frequency radio frequency identification to Canadian livestock applications* was the first CCIA initiated UHF project and the final report is posted at www.canadaid.ca. The second activity of the project was turned down for funding by AAFC, based on their assessment of a UHF implementation plan for livestock traceability being premature. AAFC suggested that conducting a gap analysis would be the next foundational step towards forming a future implementation plan. A joint letter co-signed by CCA, CMC and NCFA was issued to the two key government organizations (CFIA and AAFC). The letter asked CCIA to endorse the vision that is outlined in the letter and be supporting of UHF implementation, so a united position is projected. CCIA staff has been tasked to prepare a workplan for the next steps that includes impact on workloads, timelines, and cost of implementing UHF. Further, a fact sheet will be developed for Board members to recap the UHF situation with their respective organizations.
- The Shearwell Data Loop will be recommended to the Minister of Agriculture for approval. Its an innovative steel/RFID combined tag that did very well in the lab tests. The field trial showed a very slightly below benchmark for retention, but remains an interesting tag option. The new generation Destron Fearing eTag will also be recommended to replace the current version. There have already been problems with the Ketchum Cervid tag as it does not lock properly. CCIA and the Cervid Alliance will meet with the manufacturer and address the problem prior to the tag becoming approved through the proposed regulatory amendments.
- The CSF met with Canadian Cattleman's Association (CCA) and PigTrace representatives, along with CFIA traceability leads to discuss an approach to adopting standards for UHF identifiers within the NIDMAC framework. A NIDMAC meeting to discuss adoption of new technologies will take place in June.

Canadian Verified Sheep Program (CVSP)

- Did you know...that the Canadian Verified Sheep Program provides **FREE** online food safety, animal care (welfare) and biosecurity training for producers, farm employees and other industry stakeholders? The program provides some great record keeping and flock health plan tools...also **FREE** of charge to all participants. The CVSP is recognized by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's Food Safety Recognition Program, having achieved Technical Review Part II. No small feat!
Register today, take the training for free and complete the program at your own pace. [Fsfpcansheep.ca](http://fsfp.cansheep.ca)

Animal Welfare

- The National Farm Animal Care Council (NFACC) released its *Project Achievements Report (September 2018 – March 2021), Advancing Animal Welfare and Public Trust Through Codes of Practice* in April. A copy of the report can be found on the NFACC website at www.nfacc.ca.
- The CSF has drafted a project proposal that would assess the readiness of feed, water, and rest facilities to handle and house sheep, as required by humane transportation regulations. Project deliverables include developing:
 - a publicly available listing of FWR facilities available to the sheep industry,
 - individual recommendations for existing facilities outlining how best to adapt process and retrofit infrastructure to accommodate sheep safely and humanely, and
 - a set of standards for commercial FWR sites and transporters, detailing infrastructure requirements for handling sheep, safety and humane handling requirements for handlers, essential biosecurity protocols for FWR sites and livestock traceability event recording and reporting requirements.

The proposal has been approved by the CSF Board and was circulated for feedback to the CSF-CFIA Humane Transport Working Group. Similarly, NFACC's transport code working group representing intermediate sites was provided an opportunity to comment on the nature and scope of the project. Once feedback has been incorporated into project design, the proposal will be submitted for funding.

- The Canadian Association of Fairs and Exhibitions (CAFÉ) convened an Animal Care Committee to help in the development of a *Best Practices for Animal Care at Public Events* guide for fairs and exhibitions across Canada. The Committee is made up of experts from various sectors of the agricultural industry who will investigate the best practices already in place and how they differ when it comes to public events. The committee is responsible for providing consultation and expertise for public events on animal care topics.

Pregnancy Ultrasound Training & Certification

- The Small Ruminant Ultrasound Oversight Committee has ratified the final version of *Canada's Small Ruminant Ultrasound Pregnancy Assessment Training and Certification Program*. Canada's ultrasound pregnancy assessment training and certification program offers two program pathways; *Trained* and *Certified*.
 - The *Trained* pathway requires completion of the theory training unit as outlined below with the option of completing the practical training unit. The practical training unit is not required to be deemed *Trained*. This pathway is intended for those who's goal is to perform their own on-farm pregnancy ultrasound assessments. *Trained* individuals who wish to upgrade their program status to *Certified* will need to demonstrate practical training or experience equivalent to that required of *Certified* individuals and will be required to successfully complete the examination process outlined below.
 - The *Certified* pathway requires completion of the theory and practical training units as outlined below, as well as an examination to evaluate skill level. This pathway is intended for those who wish to provide commercial ultrasound pregnancy assessment services. *Certified* technicians endorsed by the SRUOC are deemed to be proficient in conducting pregnancy ultrasound assessments in keeping with the expectations of Canada's small ruminant industries. *Certified* program status does not necessarily confer the right to practice.
- Work is underway to develop training materials with help from international partners and domestic ultrasound technicians. The goal is to offer the first training courses this summer.

Scrapie Flock Certification Program (SFCP)

- The best defense is a good offence. Scrapie is a devastating neuro-degenerative disease that affects both sheep and goats, and a disease that is difficult to control given the nature of its incubation period, mode of transmission and duration of infection. An animal can become infected with scrapie at any point in its life, and there is no way to tell definitively where a positive animal became infected. More importantly, once an animal becomes infected, it can shed and share that disease with other animals without showing any clinical signs of the scrapie. Since 1984, 200 Canadian farms have been identified as scrapie source or infected farms. Disease control actions on each of these farms have seen anywhere from 1 animal to 20% of the population destroyed because of scrapie. Join us in the fight to eradicate scrapie from Canada. Visit our website to learn more about the steps you can take to protect your flock against scrapie, www.scrapiecanada.ca. The Scrapie Flock Certification Program is one way to mitigate your risk of scrapie, but it is not the only way. You can reduce risk by introducing scrapie resistant genotypes into your flocks (<https://scrapiecanada.ca/scrapie-genotyping/>), you can purchase animals from SFCP Certified farms and you can scrapie test animals over 12 months of age that die on farm by submitting them to your district CFIA office (free of charge) or an approved lab (you will be invoiced through your veterinarian). Find out more about testing for scrapie here <https://scrapiecanada.ca/sfcp-samples/>.
- Scrapie Canada is an arm of the Canadian Sheep Federation tasked with the delivery of the industry's scrapie eradication programming including administration of the Scrapie Flock Certification Program (SFCP). The SFCP is an internationally recognized compartment program, set to the OIE's global standards for scrapie control. Canada currently has two recognized terrestrial animal compartment programs for disease control and the CSF serves as regional administrator and status assessor for both programs.

Chronic Wasting Disease Herd Certification Program (CWD HCP)

- The CSF serves as the Regional Administrator and Status Assessor for the cervid industry's Chronic Wasting Disease Herd Certification Program (CWD HCP) in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, and Quebec. The CSF began administering the CWD HCP in Ontario back in 2009, when the program closely resembled the Scrapie Flock Certification Program and administering the program was a natural extension of the SFCP work. More recently the governments of Saskatchewan and Quebec, who had been delivering the program in their regions, approached the CSF looking for a new administrator. The CSF took over the files to help ensure the program remained available to farmers, and we can maintain the program on a cost recovery basis. As with the SFCP, the CWD HCP's National Standards are maintained by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and the CSF's delivery of the programs is audited annually to ensure the program is delivered in keeping with the CFIA's requirements.
- CWD HCP enrolled producers are reminded of the importance of following program requirements in their day-to-day work. The program is more comprehensive than simply remitting an annual report and if there is ever an instance where CFIA needs to inspect your farm for compliance, they will look closely at your on-farm practices and record keeping. Make sure you have copies of all program materials readily available and ensure you are following all the program's biosecurity practices. Information about the CWD HCP is available on our website <http://www.cansheep.ca/cwd.html>
- A CWD HCP Appeals Committee convened to consider an appeal of a program decision. The process is expected to require 2-3 meetings to complete. The CWD HCP allows the appeal of certain program decisions and in addition to Committee members, allows for observers from government and industry to attend.

Industry Initiatives

- The CSF was pleased to learn that its request for funding of 9 summer students through the Canada Summer Jobs Program is approved. Originally slated to begin April 23rd, the start date for the jobs was pushed back to May 31st to allow enough time to advertise positions and interview students. Positions include software developers, software quality assurance, communications manager, economic analyst, and records clerk.
- The FMD Working Group released its revised *Business Case for a Canadian Foot and Mouth Disease Vaccine Bank*. The purpose of the report was to formally qualify the extent of industry's contribution to the ask for government to financial support an FMD vaccine bank. In addition to the FMD Working Group convening to discuss the report, livestock groups met to discuss the report's implications and next steps. From the report:

Executive Summary

"An outbreak of any Foreign Animal Disease (FAD) in Canada would be significantly disruptive to both the general and agriculture economy, but Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) is obviously the most significant threat. FMD in Canada's livestock industry would result in an immediate ban on exports of cattle, swine and other ruminants and their related products. These and other impacts are estimated at up to \$65 Billion, potentially involving the loss of millions of animals, destabilizing of the industry, and downsizing for the beef and pork sectors of the industry. The operating reality of modern animal agriculture in Canada has changed over time and currently includes extremely large herds and extensive intra and inter-provincial movement of animals, animal products, and services and suppliers to animal agriculture. This extensive interaction makes it difficult to control an FMD outbreak in livestock dense areas without the rapid deployment of appropriate supply of FMD vaccine. This theory is supported in recent modelling simulations conducted by CFIA that have demonstrated that vaccination would reduce the number of premises infected and the length of the outbreak by up to 50%. This reduction would result in significant financial benefits to Canada and allow international trade to resume much more quickly.

Canada currently has approximately 250,000 doses of between 10-12 different strains available through the North American FMD Vaccine Bank (NAFMDVB). Recent work done by CFIA clearly indicates that this is insufficient, given that approximately 2.5 million doses would be needed in our most livestock dense areas. Ultimately, a lack of sufficient vaccine to aid in the response would prolong Canada's recovery of the OIE FMD Free without Vaccination status, thus significantly increasing the financial & social loss to the Canadian livestock industry, and ultimately the Canadian economy.

On the positive side, evolving international policies and acceptance regarding the use of vaccines create new opportunities for a more effective and less costly response. In recognition of the opportunities created by greater use of vaccine, US industry and government began discussions in 2017 towards the creation of an FMD Vaccine Bank wholly owned by the United States.

The analysis conducted by the USA has resulted in the inclusion of 150 million dollars in the recent US farm bill to set up a US FMD vaccine bank outside of the NAFMDVB. This investment will allow them to purchase and maintain a bank of 10 – 12 different strains of 25 million doses each. This movement to an independent Bank outside the NAFMDVB constitutes an additional risk to Canadian livestock groups. However, the reality is that even within the current vaccine bank framework the Canadian livestock sector is exposed. There are simply not enough vaccines in place to accommodate the necessary measures in the event of a large-scale outbreak.

For Broad Distribution

As a result, the Canadian livestock industry in collaboration with Agriculture and Agri-food Canada (AAFC) is asking the Canadian Government for support in the development of an independent Canadian FMD Vaccine Bank which could increase the number of doses available to effectively respond to an outbreak in all regions of Canada.

The Canadian Livestock Industry is committed to an on-going annual contribution of over \$62 million annually to traceability, animal care and biosecurity which are critical success factors for an effective vaccination strategy.

While it is recognized that these activities would have impacts beyond FMD in terms of disease coverage, the most critical disease concerns would be those related to FMD given the devastating economic impact it would have. In addition to the contribution from industry, there is a need for a contribution of an additional \$3.2 million to populate the Bank and ensure that there are sufficient vaccines available in the event of a FMD outbreak in Canada.

This investment is a critical element in disease preparedness and when both industry and public contributions are considered, the \$65.5 million annual cost reflects a .1% "insurance" premium, which would be significantly lower than a traditional insurance cost. When only the public contribution is considered, this premium falls to .005%, suggesting that the investment is rational and financially responsible.

An FMD outbreak in Canada would potentially be devastating to the Canadian livestock sector. It would also have significant impacts on the Canadian economy. While the use of a vaccination strategy is not a complete solution, it does help ensure that any impacts of a significant disease outbreak are mitigated to the extent possible.

To be clear, it is recognized that both the Government of Canada and the Canadian livestock sector already contribute significant resources to the agricultural industry and these contributions are greatly appreciated. This request is for marginal funds that can help ensure that all aspects of the industry and the benefits that accrue to the Canadian economy are protected in the event of an FMD outbreak which could otherwise devastate the investment already made and the infrastructure in place.

The purpose of this document is to formally qualify the extent of industry's contribution to this ask."

- With the help of Merck and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, and with input from Canadian producers, we were able to finalize the first import of Covexin-10 to help those with *C. perfringens* Type A issues on-farm. There was previously no access to a suitable vaccine in Canada and without some flexibility in emergency use import regulations, an unlikely chance to get the vaccine to producers who need it. Fortunately, the Centre for Veterinary Biologics allowed the first of its kind exemption that permits Merck to import a batch of vaccine for emergency use. This makes the import economically viable enough for Merck to conduct import. We are grateful to the CCVB, CFIA and Merck for helping us out!
- Following a March presentation to the CSF Board of Directors by Farm Products Council of Canada, the CSF is planning an industry-wide webinar regarding the potential for a Promotions and Research Agency (PRA) for Canada's sheep industry. The webinar will be hosted by FPCC and hopes to include a presentation from the beef PRA group about the benefits the agency provides for the cattle sector. Stay tuned for webinar details.

This month's meetings

- AgroLedger weekly standup X 3
- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada – Agriculture Climate Solutions
- Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) Working Group X 2

For Broad Distribution

- Canadian Cattle Identification Agency – Annual General Meeting
 - Chronic Wasting Disease Herd Certification Program Working Group X 2 – National Standards Review
 - Campaign for Wool Canada – Matthew Rowe
 - Canadian Cattle Identification Agency – Board of Directors
 - Post-NPAC (National Policy Advisory Committee) debrief – attended by Liezel Kennedy
 - Agricultural Trade Consultative Group – attended by Morgan Moore
 - Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) Industry meeting – attended by Allan Ribbink
 - Market Access Secretariat – UK
 - Livestock sector discussion – Ultra-high frequency identifiers
 - Canadian Association of Fairs and Exhibitions (CAFÉ) – Animal Care Committee
 - Centre for Emerging Zoonotic Disease (CZED) – monthly meeting
 - Thrive AgriFood – Canada’s AgTech & Food Tech Challenge
 - Animal Health Canada Working Group
 - CWD HCP Appeals Committee – program appeal
 - CFIA/Industry bi-lateral UHF discussion
 - Farmed Cervid Health Committee
 - Merck – Covexin-10 import planning
-