

Canadian Sheep Federation Executive Director’s Report February 2021

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Action Items from the February 2021 Board meeting

- Agreements are in place for the wrap-up of AgroLedger’s Phase 1 development and planning underway for Phase 2 expected to begin in April 2021.
- CSF, CCWG and CCIA coordinated an approach to improving data integrity for sheep accounts in CLTS.
- The CSF website has been updated with the 2020 Annual Report and 2019-20 ED Reports.

Program Updates

Canadian Sheep Identification Program (CSIP) and Traceability

- The CCIA received its finalized *Literature review and technology readiness assessment of ultra-high frequency radio frequency identification to Canadian livestock applications*. The report set out to assess the role that ultra-high frequency livestock tags could play in Canadian traceability programs as well as the readiness of the industry to adapt the technology. The report concluded that:
"This review was unable to identify a suitable body of scientific evidence to support a strong recommendation for or against the adoption of UHF RFID technologies for use in livestock identification settings in the Canadian Livestock Traceability System(s). This review was successful in quantifying the body of work required for such an adoption, should stakeholders decide that the suite of properties UHF presents is compelling enough to justify such an exercise. From a technology readiness assessment perspective UHF RFID is showing a level of readiness that is encouraging. However a few key gaps in technology or process remain."

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As part of the CSF's commitment to the continuous improvement of Canada's traceability systems, it was our pleasure to support this undertaking. It will be interesting to see where these findings lead. The report is now publicly available, shared with CSF members and on the Canadian Sheep Federation Facebook page.

- CCIA has undertaken an initiative to update CLTS accounts for the sake of improving the system's data integrity. The approach for updating sheep accounts will be different than it is for cattle because of the differences in tag distribution. CSF, CCIA and CCWG have coordinated an approach to updating account information and we appreciate the extra work that CCWG staff is taking on to help with this. Great job guys!! Please be patient when placing your tag orders, they are working hard to improve the value of Canada's traceability system.
- The CSF continues to work with OneCup AI as they refine their facial recognition technology for sheep, providing producer videos for use in training the technology and helping source sheep farms interested in beta testing the technology. Validation of the technology is expected to wrap-up in April and we look forward to seeing how the technology might be integrated into the sheep traceability system.
- Final AgroLedger testing of the first phase of development is underway and we are grateful to the producers who have volunteered to help with testing. Testing is expected to wrap up by the first week of May.

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. [Fspf.cansheep.ca](https://www.cansheep.ca)

Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Sheep

- The outcome of the 5-year review of the *Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Sheep* is now publicly available on the National Farm Animal Care Council website at <https://www.nfacc.ca/sheep-5-year-code-review>. The Code Technical Panel that carried out the review, with support from the Research Committee, identified minor and moderate challenges with the existing Code that should be considered during the 10-year Code update. Similarly, the CTP and Research Committee updated the list of sheep industry research needs. Ultimately, the CTP re-affirmed the Code until the 10-year update. Visit the NFACC website for more details from the 5-year review.

Pregnancy Ultrasound Certification

- The CSF set out to address issues around lack of access to pregnancy ultrasound services. A long-standing issue that has been discussed for some time; shortages of ultrasound services needed action. So, here is what we did:
 - The CSF ratified an industry position about pregnancy ultrasound, as follows:
 - "It is the position of the Canadian Sheep Federation that pregnancy in small ruminants is not an illness needing to be diagnosed but part of the continuous cycle of normal farm practices that allows farms to be productive and profitable. Knowing whether an ewe or doe is pregnant or open is increasingly important to flock/herd management and access to accurate and affordable trans-abdominal

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ultrasound is becoming an important management tool for making that assessment. Trans-abdominal ultrasound scanning is a safe, humane, and non-invasive process for providing pregnancy assessments.

It is important that anyone involved in providing a pregnancy assessment service in small ruminants be fully trained and competent in the use of fully functioning, well maintained equipment and be certified by a national, industry led certifying body. It is important that farm operators have confidence in the abilities, accuracy and affordability of independent technicians, veterinarian technicians and/or veterinarians performing pregnancy assessments. The Canadian Sheep Federation's position is that trans-abdominal ultrasound assessments may be performed by any trained and competent individual regardless of professional designation.”

- We convened a working group that including representatives from sheep and goat industry organizations, as well as practicing ultrasound technicians. The working group supported the CSF's position on pregnancy ultrasound services.
- In a collaboration between the Canadian Sheep Federation and Canadian National Goat Federation, the small ruminant industry drafted a pregnancy ultrasound certification program that will help provide ultrasound training and certification to ensure greater access to ultrasound services for Canadian producers. The certification program will include:
 - Training in pregnancy ultrasound theory.
 - Apprenticeships.
 - Competency assessment.
 - Written examination.
 - Certification.
- We surveyed producers to make sure we are on the right track and getting producers the tools, they want and need. Here is what we heard from the 350 respondents:
 - 74% agree that pregnancy ultrasound determination is a valuable management tool (and additional 22% agree it is valuable if the price is right)
 - 29% said that it is difficult for them to get pregnancy ultrasound services and an additional 29% said they could have someone do the ultrasounds, but they must book well in advance to secure a spot. Only 28% said that getting ultrasounds done was not an issue.
 - 70% said they would be interested in taking pregnancy ultrasound training.
- The goal is for ultrasound training to start in the spring of 2021.
- The CSF has been working with provincial partners addressing this issue as policy around the use of pregnancy ultrasound is managed at the provincial level.

Scrapie Flock Certification Program

- 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

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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 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.
- We are currently working with the CFIA to develop a plan for remediating inventory reports for producers impacted by the suspension of an accredited veterinarian. Some producers will be required to conduct a physical inventory this year even if they would normally be entitled to do a paper inventory, to ensure inventory data is accurate. Individual producers will be contacted if their file is affected by this remediation plan.
- 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>

Industry Initiatives

- We have been working with the CFIA and Intervet to get access to a *C. perfringens* Type A vaccine for Western producers experiencing lamb losses due to the bacteria. There is currently no type A vaccine approved for use in Canada. We are looking specifically to the Covexin 10 vaccine as it provides protection for a range of diseases and in this setting can be used as an alternative for Glanvac 6. Covexin 10 does not protect against

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Caseous Lymphadenitis like Glanvac 6 does but Case-Bac is approved in Canada so producers needing Caseous protection can use both Covexin 10 and Case-Bac.

Normally, the Canadian Centre for Veterinary Biologics (CCVB) only allows emergency access to vaccines that are not approved in Canada through a permit that allows one vet to import enough for one client. The logistics (transportation, cost, permits, etc) of importing vaccines this way is prohibitive and the manufacturer would not be willing to conduct the imports in this instance. By making an exception that allows the manufacturer to import a larger lot of vaccines into a single point in Canada to then be distributed through the emergency permit process, the CCVB has made it possible for us to affordably source the vaccine for the producers who truly need it. That being said, we are not able to get the vaccine into Canada until the fall of 2021 despite our best efforts to fast track the process. We are working with Intervet to have the vaccine available in Canada by November of this year. **We are compiling a list of producers who require the vaccine and ask that if you need to vaccinate for *C. perfringens* type A please let us know before June and include the number of doses you require.** We will also need the name of your attending veterinarian as they will have to file the emergency use permit to get the vaccine and we need to ensure that you have spoken for the vaccine to fill the permit in the fall.

You can vaccinate pregnant ewes with Covexin 10, with two doses 4-6 weeks apart in year one and a single booster in subsequent years. Vaccinating pregnant ewes conveys protection to their lambs. Alternatively, you can vaccinate lambs beginning at 2 weeks of age with two doses 4-6 weeks apart. A little bit about *C. perfringens* type A:

- "*Clostridium perfringens* type A is frequently associated with enteric disease of poultry, ruminants, horses, pigs and dogs. This chapter discusses some of the diseases caused by the *C. perfringens* bacterium such as Yellow lamb disease, hemorrhagic canine gastroenteritis, and *C. perfringens* enterotoxin (CPE)-associated diarrhea. It is generally accepted that a presumptive diagnosis of yellow lamb disease can be established based on clinical, gross, and microscopic findings. Many vaccines against the different types of *C. perfringens* used around the world serendipitously contain *C. perfringens* alpha toxin (CPA) toxoid, and it is possible that they afford at least some level of protection to animals against yellow lamb disease. *C. perfringens* beta 2 toxin (CPB2)-producing *C. perfringens* type A strains have been associated with enteric disease in several animal species, including horses, pigs, sheep, and goats. In most cases, the evidence is based solely on isolation of CPB2-positive *C. perfringens* from sick animals." – Uzal et al, *Diseases Produced by Clostridium perfringens Type A in Mammalian Species*, 2016.
- The CSF hosted two GenOvis webinars in February with great producer participation. The first of the two webinars, GenOvis: The Basics, had 53 participants and the second, GenOvis: Understanding Reports, had 30 attendees. Both were well received by producers. GenOvis is planning on developing short explainer videos and promotional pieces that the CSF can share with producers.
- A new pan-Canadian wool group started this winter, with a focus on:
 - Promoting Canadian wool as a valuable commodity and promote increased infrastructure for both textile and industrial use of the existing Canadian wool Supply.
 - Supporting Canadian sheep producers in the form of education, newsletters, training, support, and a national voice.
 - Educational campaigns around the value of wool for both producers and end consumers.

The original smaller group, including the CSF Executive Director, met a few times through January and February, and hosted a larger open invitation meeting in late February. The meeting was action oriented and volunteer driven. It was an opportunity for producers to contribute their voice and

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experience towards building a national strategy for growing the Canadian Wool Industry. The meeting had 31 participants from across Canada, with various backgrounds and interests in the wool value chain. Meeting outcomes will be available soon. In the interim, you can learn more about the group and its initiatives through their social media platforms:

- E-mail: CanadianWoolCongress@gmail.com
 - Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Canadian-Wool-Congress-101606238643808>
 - Twitter: <https://twitter.com/CanadaWool>
 - Sign-Up sheet to be a contact with CWC (eventually to receive a newsletter) <https://mailchi.mp/29cbf08b2d11/canadian-wool-congress>
- The Canadian Animal Health Surveillance System Small Ruminant Network met in February to refine their network map, review website content, and offer roundtable updates on small ruminant disease surveillance in Canada. Learn more about the Small Ruminant Network on the CAHSS website <https://www.cahss.ca/cahss-networks/small-ruminant>.
- The Sheep Value Chain Round Table (ShVCRT) met for the last time in February before Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) moves to the new roundtable structure. The new approach will see all animal protein groups convene in a single group, with limited representation from industry groups. Through AAFC's consultation process, the CSF expressed its concern that the new structure would prevent sheep industry priorities from seeing the light of day and that concern remains following February's ShVCRT meeting.
- Following an announcement by Canada's Veterinary Drug Directorate in February that a bilateral approval mechanism for veterinary drugs was negotiated into Canada's new trade agreement with the United Kingdom (in light of Brexit), the CSF met with counterparts from the UK's National Sheep Association (NSA) to identify opportunities to put the new approval mechanism to work for the sheep industries in both countries. We will work with NSA to collate our priority wish lists, identifying the top 2 or 3 products, then work with manufacturers of these products to see if we can bring them to market. The group will meet next in March.

This month's meetings

- C. perfringens Type A vaccine Advisory Group
- Canadian Food Inspection Agency – CWD HCP Appeal Committee
- FMD Working Group
- Canadian Sheep Federation Board of Directors
- Canadian Livestock Transportation Advisory Board
- Canadian Cattle Identification Agency Board of Directors
- Intervet – C. perfringens Type A vaccine
- Canadian Food Inspection Agency – CWD HCP Saskatchewan remediation plan
- Minister Lisa McLeod – Ontario COVID-19 response
- Agriculture in the Classroom – Report
- CSF hosted GenOvis Webinar X 2

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- Agricultural Trade Negotiation Consultative Group – Brexit update
 - OneCup AI
 - Canadian Wool Congress X 2
 - AgroLedger development team X 2
 - Sheep Value Chain Round Table preparatory meeting
 - Canadian Cattle Identification Agency – CLTS data integrity initiative
 - Canadian Food Inspection Agency – Framing Competitiveness and Innovation for Success consultation
 - Canadian Animal Health Surveillance System Small Ruminant Network
 - Sheep Value Chain Round Table
 - Canadian Sheep Federation Audit & Finance Committee
 - National Sheep Association (UK) – Bilateral veterinary drug approvals
 - AgroLedger producer testing group.
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