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From the flock

APRIL 2008 • VOLUME 5• ISSUE 4

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR THE CANADIAN SHEEP INDUSTRY

Results from the Second Year of the Lakeland Project

By Cathy Gallivan, Susan Hosford, Tracy Hagedorn, Wade Meunier, Sunterra Meats, Mel Mathison, Lakeland College

Editor's Note: The Lakeland Carcass Sire Project is a three-year project scheduled for completion March 2009. The results presented below are preliminary results from the second year of the project only; final conclusions about the terminal sire breeds used in the study will only be available at the end of the project.

For complete version please refer to the website: **www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/sg12068**

OBJECTIVES

The objective of the Lakeland Sire Reference project is to compare the ability of five of the most commonly used terminal sire breeds of sheep in western Canada (Suffolk, Charollais, Canadian Arcott, Texel and Ile de France) to sire lambs that grow quickly and produce lean carcasses with a high yield of wholesale cuts.

OVERVIEW

In each year of the project, rams of these five breeds were mated to ewes in the Lakeland College commercial ewe flock.

In 2006, the new ewes were single-sire mated to 26 rams (representing the five terminal sire breeds in the study) from Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario.

In 2007, 263 lambs were born, weaned and fed to market weight. From there they were transported to Sunterra Meats in Innisfail for slaughter, grading and processing into wholesale cuts.

The lambs were sired by terminal sires of the Canadian Arcott (58), Charollais (41), Ile de France (64), Suffolk (53) and Texel (47) breeds. The majority of lambs were raised as twins (153), there were 69 singles and 41 lambs were reared artificially.

MARKET WEIGHTS

- The ranking of sire breeds for weaning weight and age at slaughter are in agreement with the expectation that larger breeds, such as the Suffolk and Charollais, will grow faster up to slaughter weight.

- Larger breeds that grow faster are also expected to be leaner at a given slaughter weight and the lower carcass GR measurements of the Suffolk- and Charollais-sired lambs are consistent with this expectation.

CARCASS WEIGHT

- The average lamb born in 2007 was slaughtered at 139 days at a weight of 53.1kg.
- Hot and cold carcass weight were similar for all five terminal sire breeds
- Lambs sired by Suffolk or Charollais rams had less backfat than GR Ile de France, Canadian Arcott and Texel rams

MUSCLING

- Ile de France-sired lambs had leg conformation scores that were superior to those of Canadian Arcott-sired lambs, and loin conformation scores that were superior to those of Suffolk-sired lambs.

- Texel-, Charollais- and Ile de France-sired lambs had significantly higher shoulder conformation scores than Suffolk-sired lambs.

In contrast to the growth traits, lambs sired by the smaller breeds of rams (Ile de France and Texel) outperformed the larger breeds for all of the carcass conformation scores.

RETAIL CUTS

It is difficult to choose a clear winner for the weight of trimmed wholesale cuts. The Canadian Arcott-sired lambs had the best result for the rack and the worst result for the tunnel-boned leg. The Texel-sired lambs had the best result for the shoulder and the worst result for the short loin. The Suffolk, Ile de France and Charollais were tied for the heaviest tunnel-boned leg.

FINAL THOUGHTS

So, which is the best terminal sire breed?

It depends on who's asking:

- Breeder
- Commercial lamb producer
- Processor – provincial or federal
- Wholesale or retail market

It also depends on what market lambs are shipped to. A market goal should be the best dollars for the most numbers of lambs produced. Which is your market:

- genetics to produce carcass lambs
- farm direct for retail, food service
- the freezer trade
- provincial processors
- federal processors like Sunterra Meats

Information from this project will assist Canadian producers make better marketing decisions …which lambs work best for which market and which terminal sire breed will help produce that type of market lamb.

Acknowledgments:
Sunterra Meats, Innisfail, AB
Lakeland College, Vermilion, AB
Diversified Livestock Fund of Alberta
Ag&Food Council, ACAAF Fund
Alberta Agriculture & Rural Development
Alberta Sheep & Wool Commission
Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture
Saskatchewan Sheep Development Board

How Implementing On-Farm Food-Safety Programs Can Help You Control Parasites

By Lorraine Stevenson, On-Farm Food Safety Coordinator

Recently the Canadian sheep industry has experienced a rise in the incidence of parasites, particularly C. Ovis (sheep measles)

C. Ovis is actually a dog tapeworm that can be ingested by sheep when they encounter dog feces during grazing. Depending on their species, tapeworms target and damage different organs in the sheep, causing scarring, cysts and ultimately resulting in carcass condemnation.

The number of lamb carcasses condemned in Western Canada due to damage caused by this parasite continues to be an issue. Controlling and eliminating C. Ovis and other parasites may take some time and effort, but your bottom line will ultimately benefit. This article outlines the ways that implementing Food-Safe Farm Practices (FSFP), CSF's on-farm food-safety program, can help you manage and control C. Ovis and other damaging parasites.

Implementing the FSFP program, can give you an improved understanding of flock management as a result of systematic record keeping. In the March article of From the Flock, Dr. Paula Menzies states that the key to controlling C.Ovis is regular deworming of your farm dogs, at a minimum of every 2-3 months if cysts are not present in your sheep. The FSFP program requires that the use of all animal health products, including internal and external parasite control products, be recorded. Although the program refers to animal health products used in sheep, the treatment of parasites in dogs has a direct effect on the health and quality of your flock, and this activity could be recorded to assist you in keeping track of, and managing the timing of this treatment. The date of treatment, product, dosage, and animal(s) treated is all information that could be helpful if recorded.

If it is necessary to treat your sheep flock for parasites, use of the FSFP records can help you correctly track and manage the administration of these products. Treatment date, product, dosage, animal (or pen) identification, withdrawal date, route of administration, and animal weight are required records, which can assist you in not only managing parasites, but also other aspects of your flock's health. The FSFP manual has samples of these record sheets already set up, but you can also design your own.

The FSFP program also addresses the purchase and storage of animal health products. The good production practices outlined in the manual will help you ensure that products are fully effective for their intended purpose and have predictable withdrawal periods. All animal health products should be stored according to the manufacturer's instructions in regards to temperature, humidity, and light sensitivity. Any products that have expired, frozen, been exposed to excess heat, or had the tops damaged by repeated use should be discarded.

The FSFP manual includes detailed instructions on proper handling of these products, as well as an inventory record that should be kept up to date. Properly storing animal health products and keeping accurate inventory records will ensure that the products you have retain their efficacy, assisting you in managing flock health, including the control of parasites.

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Controlling Parasites continued

Another aspect of the FSFP program that can help you manage parasites is the proper purchase, handling, and storage of feed and bedding.

- Feed and bedding should be inspected for possible contaminants such as feces that could harbour parasites.
- Design and maintain feed storage areas to prevent access by cats, birds, dogs, rodents, and other animals to prevent fecal contamination of the feed.
- If you employ a feed transporter, ensure that the company or individual has good management practices in place for proper cleaning of the transport vehicle between loads.
- Make the farmyard unattractive to vermin that can carry parasites by cleaning up old buildings, debris, and spilled feed.

Practicing biosecurity on your operation can also help you control the introduction of unwanted parasites into your flock.

- Visitors to the farm should be wearing clean footwear. If footwear is soiled, you can provide visitors with clean footwear or disposable plastic boots.
- Another option is the use of footbaths, which should be used every time someone enters or exits the premises. Footbaths should be changed every three days, or more often if they become contaminated with organic material.
- A boot brush along with the footbath can be used to remove organic material, so that the disinfectant can do its work properly. Footbaths should be a minimum of 10 cm deep (4in.) however, adding salt will deactivate the disinfectant.
- Insist on clean clothing and equipment for anyone who will be handling your animals.
- Finally, one of the most effective ways to help control parasites on your farm is to dispose of dead stock properly. Burial should be at least 2 feet deep, or composted properly so that dogs and coyotes cannot scavenge the carcass and infect the wild animal population.

They are many other ways that implementing the Food Safe Farm Practices program on your operation can assist you in managing and controlling parasites and other unwanted vermin. If you are interested in learning more about the FSFP program, please do not hesitate to contact me at lorraine@cansheep.ca or 1-888-684-7739.

The Canadian Sheep Identification Program: Changing with Industry and Government

By France Lanthier, National Coordinator ID and Traceability

On January 1st 2004 the identification of sheep by means of eartags became mandatory in Canada. Sheep must be identified by a Canadian Sheep Federation approved eartag, which bears a unique identification number, before leaving the flock of origin. The tag distributors are responsible for keeping track of which tags numbers go to which producer. This information is then reported to the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency (CCIA) database by the distributor. The CCIA enters the ID information in a confidential and secure database.

Producers are required to keep records of animal movements under the Canadian Sheep Identification Program (CSIP). The following information must be captured: date, number of animals, coming in or leaving the farm, buyer/seller, class of sheep (ewe, ram, cull, etc), and CSIP tag number. This information must be recorded for the following animals:

- All sheep or lambs entering the flock for breeding purposes
- All sheep 18 months or older leaving the flock for a destination other than a provincially or federally inspected abattoir

There have been concerns over the years about the level of access government bodies have to this database. The database information can be accessed by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), the CSF and the RCMP in the event of a health or safety issue involving an animal, or a lost or stolen animal. Access to the database by the CFIA, along with producer records, allows expediting the process of tracing the animal's movements from the flock of origin to its place of retirement.

While the current CSIP program does touch on elements of a traceability program, during its development and at the time of its inception the CSIP was intended to address animal health issues only. Since this time however, producer management needs, and government traceability needs have changed, resulting in a need for changes to the CSIP program.

Standards have been proposed to amend the CSIP to encompass animal movement and premise identification in addition to enhanced animal identification.

The proposed identification standards are:

- Animals must be individually identified prior to movement or within a timeframe after birth:
- Activation of tags reported prior to movement or within 30 days
- Retirement of tags within 48 hours by abattoirs
- Retirement of tags within 7 days of carcass disposal or export
- Imported animals identified and activated within 7 days of import
- Report age – animals are not to be older than what is reported

Activation refers to the act of reporting to the database that a tag is active (in an animal) while retirement refers to the act of reporting to the database that a tag is no longer active, that is no longer identifying a live animal.

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CSIP continued

The proposed animal movement standards are:

- Accurate & complete history of movements of individual animals
- Farm, auction, fair, assembly yard – report receipt of animals (tags) within 48 hours
- For person sending/receiving report conveyance ID (license plate)
- Sender/receiver to report premises of departure and destination

The standards surrounding premise ID are a provincial matter and are being handled by provincial governments in consultation with industry. While different provinces are at different stages of developing these standards the performance outcomes for all provinces are to include:

- Premises attributes be accurate, complete and updated at least annually
- Data be easily transposable to a geographic information system and to emergency response systems
- One unique ID# per premises regardless of variety of species or production types present

In order to successfully meet the needs of government for traceability and the needs of the sheep industry, the standards for animal ID, animal movement, and premise ID will have to be practical and affordable for the producer and the other stakeholders along the chain such as the auctions and abattoirs.

The CSF encourages all stakeholders to share their comments, concerns, and suggestions concerning the proposed standards for traceability.

News From Around the World

Tighter restrictions on imports

Reproduced from: www.farmersjournal.ie

Tighter restrictions on the import of livestock that could bring Bluetongue Disease into Ireland will be possible following new rules agreed at this week's EU Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health (SCoFCAH) in Brussels. Member states will be allowed to ban until the end of this year, the importation from Bluetongue restricted areas of all cattle and sheep over 90 days old unless they have been vaccinated or unless natural immunity to the disease can be demonstrated in the animals.

Welcoming the opportunity to have tighter controls on imports, UFU president Kenneth Sharkey has urged the Minister for Agriculture, Michelle Gildernew, to introduce the tighter restrictions at the earliest opportunity. A question apparently hangs over whether or not the restriction will include importation of animals being brought in for immediate slaughter.

Sharkey commented: "We believe these new EU rules should be interpreted to achieve the maximum effect. This would include ensuring the importation of animals into Northern Ireland for direct slaughter is prohibited and that any animal which has previously 'resided' in an infected Bluetongue region should also be excluded from import".

This is likely to be opposed by the meat plant operators. Latest figures on imports of cattle and sheep from Britain into NI, for direct slaughter indicate that certainly some NI meat plants are ignoring the pleas from UFU to stop importing.

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Tighter restrictions on imports continued

The first week of April saw 454 cattle and 2651 sheep brought in for slaughter. Those figures compare with 244 cattle and 3161 sheep during the same week last year.

During the first 3 months of 2008, there were 4917 cattle and 31,357 sheep brought in from Britain for slaughter in NI. These numbers are similar to those of the first quarter of 2007 and they indicate that imports are a significant part of throughput for NI meat plants. Of even more significance, to the meat plants, is the fact that the total NI cattle slaughterings in the first quarter of 2008 were 12 per cent below the level of 2007 at 103,100 head. The clean kill dropped by 15 per cent (15,000) to 85,600 cattle, and this was only partly offset by a rise in the number of cows and bulls, up by 3 per cent to 17,300 head.

Minister Gildernew welcomed the new measures agreed by the EU Commission. She confirmed that the suspension of imports of female breeding cattle over 12 months and female breeding sheep over six months from Bluetongue Restricted Zones entering the North, which was imposed on 1 March 2008, will remain in place until the new measures have officially come into force.

At the Minister's request, a letter has been sent from DARD to the EU Commission, asking them to arrange publication of the new regulations as soon as possible in order to regularise the position.

Minister Gildernew said that she intends to work closely with the industry and farming unions so that all measures to keep Bluetongue out of Ireland are maintained.

She also confirmed that she and her officials were maintaining close contact with the Minister Mary Coughlan and officials in the Department for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in Dublin to ensure an all-island approach to the threat posed by the presence of bluetongue throughout Europe and Britain.

Minister Coughlan has advised farmers not to import livestock under any circumstances. A delegation from the UFU and the Irish Farmers' Association met Minister Gildernew at Stormont this week in advance of the SCoFCAH meeting.

In response to calls from the IFA and UFU to ban imports of animals that had been resident in Bluetongue zones since August 2006 the Minister said that "proportionate and considered measures need to be applied consistent with European law and emerging science. That is why I imposed the suspension of certain imports until the new legislation comes into effect."

The Minister added: "Any inappropriate action would risk the good relations we share with the Commission and other Member States. "Remember we benefited from those relationships by being allowed to continue to trade internationally when Britain had Foot and Mouth Disease and when action was needed to tighten the Bluetongue controls."

The delegations consisted of Kenneth Sharkey, Cyril Millar and Ian Stevenson from the UFU, who were accompanied by Derek Dean and Tomas Bourke from IFA.

Scrapie Canada: Extension of the National Genotyping Survey

By Courtney Denard

April 1, 2008 - GUELPH - Scrapie Canada has received confirmation from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada that the National Survey of Scrapie Genetics in Canadian Purebred Sheep has been extended to December 16, 2008, effective immediately.

Originally, the project was to be completed by November 30, 2006, however, due to slow producer uptake and other factors such as the continued effects of the BSE crisis, Scrapie Canada applied to AAFC to have the program extended.

Between April 1, 2008 and December 16, 2008, producers who wish to genotype their registered purebred sheep or their unregistered offspring of two registered purebred parents should submit blood samples or DNA ear tags to the following labs:

- Vita-Tech (Markham, ON)
- Animal Health Laboratory (Guelph, ON)
- BovaCan Laboratory (Saskatoon, SK)
- TransBIOTech (Levis, QC)

Lab contact information can be found on Scrapie Canada's website at:
www.scrapiecanada.ca/genotyping.html

Producers must also fill out the National Genotyping Survey sample submission form, which is to be sent to the lab with the samples. Producers can obtain this form by contacting Scrapie Canada or at the website below:
www.scrapiecanada.ca/images/English/genotypesubmissionform.pdf

Please note: the sample submission form must be sent to the lab with the samples. If this is not done, producers will be charged the full price of the test (approx. $30 per sample)

Along with the sample submission form, producers must send a cheque or money order made out to the lab for $10.00 (plus tax) per sample. A reimbursement of 70% of the cost of sampling, up to $6.00 per sample, plus half of the cost of shipping will be offered to producers under the project. In order to obtain this reimbursement, producers must send a copy of their veterinarian invoice (and shipping invoice if separate) to Scrapie Canada. Samples completed after December 16, 2008 will not be eligible for project funding.

By genotype testing, it is possible to determine which animals are genetically resistant to scrapie and will pass that resistance onto their lambs. Through the National Genotyping Survey, sheep breeders are offered the opportunity to genotype registered sheep at a discounted rate. Targeting purebred animals will hopefully lead to an eventual increase in scrapie resistance of the entire national flock.

The survey is open to all producers of purebred sheep registered with the Canadian Sheep Breeders Association, the Canadian Katahdin Sheep Association, and the Canadian Finnsheep Breeders Association. Unregistered offspring of two registered purebred parents are also accepted on the project.

Any producer who is interested in the National Genotyping Survey should contact Courtney Denard at Scrapie Canada at 1-866-534-1302 or by e-mail at admin@scrapiecanada.ca.

Scrapie Canada: Importing Sheep and Goats from the USA

By Courtney Denard

Scrapie Canada has been receiving a lot of calls lately from producers who are interested in importing sheep and goats into Canada from the USA. The following is a list of important details that you need to know if you are planning on bringing in female sheep or goats from the US.

1. Both the importing Canadian producer and the exporting American producer must be enrolled on the National Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program (VSFCP). The exporting American producer must be at the same level, or higher level on the program, than the importing Canadian producer.

2. In order to import, you must contact your local Canadian Food Inspection Agency Regional Office to obtain an import license. A list of local offices can be found at www.inspection.gc.ca

3. Female sheep or goats imported from the USA must go directly to the farm that is enrolled on the VSFCP or go direct to slaughter.

4. Once on the Canadian farm, imported female sheep or goats can only be sold to other Canadian producers who are enrolled on the VSFCP. Restrictions on movement apply only until the flock or herd importing animals has met the Canadian definition of a "negligible risk premises." A negligible risk premises is one that has reached the certified level within the VSFCP.

5. Producers do not have to be enrolled on the VSFCP to import males or semen from the USA.

6. Males that have been imported into Canada can be sold to any Canadian producer (the seller and the buyer do not have to be a participant on the VSFCP).

7. Female sheep or goats can be imported from the USA without enrolling on the VSFCP, as long as these animals are spayed prior to coming into Canada.

8. If a producer quits the VSFCP following the importation of sheep or goats from the USA, he/she is not permitted to re-enroll on the program for three years. Special cases can be brought forth and will be reviewed by the Scrapie Committee- a group of industry representatives and producers that meet regularly to discuss and administer the national scrapie program.

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Scrapie Canada continued

If you currently do not have any sheep or goats on your property, and the imports from the USA will be the first, you are still permitted to import. Producers will be temporarily enrolled on the VSFCP. When the animals have entered Canada, they must fully enroll on the program. Please note the following information:

1. Arrange to work with a CFIA scrapie accredited vet once the US animals have been imported.

2. Contact Scrapie Canada to receive a letter of temporary enrollment. In order to receive this letter, you must fill out the Producer Information Sheet and your vet must fill out the Veterinarian Information sheet. These forms can be found on the Scrapie Canada website at: www.scrapiecanada.ca/images/English/appformspg/application%20final.pdf

3. Along with the Producer Information and Veterinarian Information form, producers must submit a farm map to Scrapie Canada.

4. Contact your local CFIA Regional Office to obtain an import permit. You will need the letter of temporary enrollment from Scrapie Canada to do this.

5. Once the sheep or goats have been imported, producers have 30 days to submit all required paperwork, including a completed inventory (signed by your vet) of all sheep or goats on the property. Producers will then be officially enrolled on the program. An official acceptance letter and program certificate will be mailed out to applicants.

6. Once enrolled on the program, the producer must meet all requirements. A list of program regulations can be found on the Scrapie Canada website at: www.scrapiecanada.ca/VSFCPrules-regs.html

For more information on the Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program, please contact Scrapie Canada at 1-866-534-1302.

Further information is available online at www.scrapiecanada.ca/certification.html

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