



July was a busy month for the CSF with the highlight most definitely being the World Sheep and Wool Congress. Randy and Susan Hoyles, Development Coordinator for the Sheep Producers Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, have both written articles for *From the Flock* regarding the Congress. Having the Congress here in Canada was an exciting opportunity for those of us involved in the industry. It not only allowed us to exchange information with industry representatives from around the world, but it also allowed Canadian sheep industry representatives the chance to meet and discuss issues that our industry is facing.

During the Congress, the CSF participated in a general information meeting on genetic programs in Canada. This was an opportunity to share what is happening across the country. Even though there is no single "national" program producers are still making use of programs to select breeding stock on genetic merit. There is interest from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food (OMAF) and the Centre d'expertise en production ovine du

Québec (CEPOQ) to expand the availability of their Sheep Flock improvement programs to producers in other provinces.

Having so many industry personnel in Quebec City also offered us the opportunity to have an On-Farm Food Safety meeting. During this meeting the changes that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency requested to our



program were discussed as well as an implementation strategy. The next few months will be busy as the CSF gears up to implement all aspects of the program including trainer training, producer training, as well as the development of a distance education producer training program that will be available both as a web-based program or through mail-out correspondence.

It should also be noted that during the Congress, Randy and Jonathan Wort,

provided the Congress with an excellent presentation on the Canadian sheep industry. They walked the audience across Canada, providing details on how each province's sheep industry is unique. Randy and Jonathan also took time out of their schedule at the Congress to be interviewed by David Blair of CBC radio international. The interview

focused on the make-up of the Canadian sheep industry and also some of the issues we are currently facing.

While the majority of us were in Quebec City enjoying the Congress, Monica attended the Canadian Livestock Identification Agency (CLIA) meeting in Ottawa. The mandate of the CLIA is to form a national database for livestock and to be a liaison between commodity organizations and the government around issues related to tracking and trace-

ability. Ultimately the CLIA will store traceability information up to the slaughterhouse. The organization will be looking towards determining the minimum criteria for livestock identification so that all species have common areas that can be shared. The main message from the meeting was that if commodities want to be part of the CLIA, they must be able to transfer data electronically.

July ended on a high note. Cathy Lennon was able to secure sponsorship for the First Ministers Meeting in Niagara-on-the-Lake Ontario. John Hemsted, chair of OSMA, Chris Kennedy, OSMA vice-chair, Jonathan Wort, CSBA chair and our Chair, Randy Eros had the opportunity to meet and discuss the sheep industry with several of the Premiers and other provincial ministers and staff. It is a rare and welcome opportunity to highlight the sheep and lamb industry to a Premier over a glass of wine and a wonderful lamb dinner. Many thanks to OSMA for their hard work in making this happen.

*Jennifer Fleming, Executive Director*

## The World at our Doorstep

By Randy Eros, Chair

From the 18<sup>th</sup> through to the 24<sup>th</sup> of July shepherds from all across the world met in Quebec City at the World Sheep and Wool Congress. This event is held every 3 years and is an opportunity for industry leaders, staff, researchers, live-



stock specialists, equipment suppliers and just farmers to get together and share what is going on in our industry.

Three days of presentations and workshops on industry overviews and meat, wool and milk production. It is safe to say that if someone had a question about any aspect of sheep and wool production there was someone there to answer it.

You don't usually solve many of the critical problems in the sheep industry at these events. The border to the US is still closed, sheep still can't get down into Mexico and the Kiwis and the Aussies are still sending us their lamb. It may not be the time to solve the problems but it is the time to gain a better understanding of what is

happening elsewhere in the world and what is driving the producers in other nations.

After 3 days of heady discussions the whole event moved down the block to the "Barn" and we had a chance to enjoy the CSBA show and Sale. Three hundred of the nations finest Seed Stock and Show Animals were shown and sold. The prices were up significantly from last year (\$200 on average over last year) and a lot of Mexicans and Americans were quite disappointed that they had to sit on their hands. Several of these folks headed home to share their frustration and disappointment with their own lawmakers. (Every little bit helps).

The final event of the week was the Shearing com-

petition that had 17 shearers from 4 countries going head to head for some serious cash prizes.

A big thank you goes out to Vincent Bernier and his crew of dedicated staff and volunteers for the hard work and commitment to this event. And to the staff and volunteers from the CSBA and the Quebec Purebred Association who made the show and sale a great success.

It is events like this, and especially at a time like this, that help to rekindle the excitement that we all know can and does exist in our industry.

The next World Sheep and Wool Congress will be held in Queretaro, Mexico in 2007. It will be very interesting to see how far we have come by then.

## Food Safety— Remembering our Target Audience

By Ryan Van Loon, National On-Farm Food Safety Coordinator

As we push towards the implementation of our Food Safe Farm Practices Program, it becomes ever clearer that success will hinge on generating producer interest and sustaining producer uptake. Since this is a voluntary program, it is only natural and appropriate that producers ask: what's in it for me?

There are many reasons why a good food safety program has the potential to benefit the industry as a whole (including producers). Increased international trade and market development, as

well as a built in insurance to the system should a food safety outbreak occur are a couple of the more commonly mentioned benefits. But how tangible are these notions at the producer level? During the recent election run we all heard numbers thrown around in the millions and billions on party initiatives in an attempt to woo our vote—but how little do these numbers really mean and how does the average person put these numbers into context? At the end of the day you are no more informed as to how this will affect you as

an individual. Likewise, as valid as these food safe benefits are to our industry, they can sometimes be perceived as somewhat removed from the producer. We must remember at all times *who* the audience is—the producer—and ensure that their benefits are clearly outlined.

The following lists some direct advantages to producers who participate:

*A penny saved is a penny earned.* This is the old adage that your spending habits are as

important to net income as the money you make selling the product. One of the major advantages of documentation and record keeping is that it allows you to measure where, and how, your money is spent, so that one can define areas of waste and overspending, or areas where spending should be increased to generate a more valuable product.

In fact, there are many producers that do keep good records and are unaware of how little more they must do to satisfy the requirements of the program.

*Marketing Lamb:* Value chain integration is a natural outflow from a recognized food safety program. Producers need more accessibility to markets—many sell through the live market because they have no other option. By providing proof to retail that the product is of known food safety standards and produced under a recognized HACCP program, the door is opened to marketing lamb through more stable and financially viable alternatives—such as value chain integration.

*Keeping up with the Jones':* Internationally, including our neighbours south of the border, food safety programs are becoming the norm rather than the exception. Everyone is gearing up for tighter food safety and

security. In Canada producers have the unique opportunity to take part in a program that was proactively developed in part by actual producers, rather than wait for an inevitable program forced onto the industry by the CFIA. The sheep industry has evolved from its cottage roots into a viable industry. Our industry should maintain, if not exceed international standards and lead, not for the sake of setting the bar higher, but so that we can take the industry in a direction that is most suitable to those who are most directly affected—the producer. Leaders have the unique opportunity of paving the way of the future. Producers have the unique opportunity to activate this process through strong participation.

*Claiming domestic market:* With a certified food safety system in place producers can gain leverage within the domestic market, outperforming imports on quality and food safety specs. We have the potential to offer to the Canadian consumer the choice of purchasing a domestic product of known high quality and food safety standards. Currently we only supply 50% of the na-

tional demand for lamb—the majority of the remainder being New Zealand lamb. There is a great opportunity to expand into this domestic market. Through the participation in our Food Safe Farm Practices Program, producers will help to improve the perception of our Canadian lamb including product standards, consistency and marketing strategies.



## *A Newfoundland Perspective on the Sheep and Wool Congress*

*By Susan Hoyles, Development Coordinator for the sheep producers of Newfoundland and Labrador*

It was a rare opportunity to be able to attend the World Sheep and Wool Congress so close to home. The interaction with world class sheep producers and researchers about so many different topics in the sheep industry was so valuable to our industry here in Newfoundland.

We attended the Congress as a group of seven, including four sheep producers, one government employee and two association staff. We all were there to share the experiences that the Congress had to offer as well as develop individual perspectives to

bring back and enhance our different positions in the sheep industry in Newfoundland.

The industry in Newfoundland is very small on the world scale but not necessarily less important. Like all the countries and regions represented at the Congress, we bring our own unique brand to the sheep industry; one that is indigenous to our province, with traits and behaviours that thrive in the sometimes harsh Newfoundland climate and conditions.

Expansion of the commercial flock is a primary goal for the Sheep Produc-

ers Association of Newfoundland and Labrador. The Congress offered many opportunities for our producers and staff how production occurs in other parts of the world through the workshops and farm tours. Being able to see the sheep at the show and sale barn was a great hands-on learning experience. The producers had the opportunity to see sheep that are not found in Newfoundland, talk to the producers, discuss genetics and breed characteristics. We all enjoyed the showcase of the different breeds in the show.

Outside of the scheduled Congress activities, a lot of contacts were made. The Canadian Sheep Federation did a great job of making contact with all the provincial organizations including Newfoundland and making us feel welcome and represented at the Congress.

Coming from a province with a small sheep industry with no where to go but up, the Congress was a great way to see the world sheep industry in 6 days. The Sheep Producers Association of Newfoundland and Labrador will be better served in having been a part of this Congress.

## The Link Between Science and Agriculture

By Monica Séguin, Executive Administrative Assistant

As a Masters student in Animal Behaviour & Welfare at the University of Guelph, I am given the opportunity to attend scientific meetings as part of my studies. This year the 2004 Joint Meeting of the American Society of Animal Science (ASAS) and the American Dairy Science Association (ADSA) was held in St. Louis, Missouri. This conference brings scientists from around the world together to present and discuss research projects pertaining to biosecurity and environmental issues of livestock production as well as the nutrition, management and well-being of mainstream and exotic livestock species.

I was pleased to discover that there were several international speakers addressing aspects of sheep and lamb production but disappointed by the lack of research focusing on sheep and lamb well-being. Of the 1,893 abstracts submitted to the conference, only 36 abstracts (~ 2% of the total) were directly related to

sheep with the majority relating to nutrition and genetics and one addressing the well-being of transporting lambs. Interestingly, over half of the research papers presented were from Mexico.

Since my background is in animal well-being, Dr. Temple Grandin's seminar 'Bridging the Gap

and handling of sheep.

The main message from her seminar was the daunting task of transferring knowledge from the laboratory to the field. There is a tremendous amount of research being conducted into animal care and well-being and well executed research



*Between Animal Welfare Research and Application*' tweaked my interest. Dr. Grandin is a designer of livestock handling facilities and an Associate Professor of Animal Science at Colorado State University. She is internationally renowned for her handling facility designs for cattle and for her assessment systems of livestock handling in slaughter plants (ie. cattle and swine). She has also been involved in several research projects investigating the restraint tech-

can lead to practical applications in industry. For this to be successful though, it requires buy-in from all levels of the food production chain. Dr. Grandin could not stress enough that individuals in the agri-food sector must be open to change and become pioneers for improved animal care and well-being. This becomes even more important as societal pressure increases and countries begin to pass animal well-being legislation (i.e., European Union).

So why the lack of Canadian research and what can we do. Perhaps it is the daunting task of transferring knowledge from an idea to a practical application. Or perhaps it was just a lack of attendance that led to no Canadian sheep research being presented at this meeting. One should not underestimate the link between science and agriculture as they go hand in hand. As an industry we should support the ongoing investigation into new techniques and practices and encourage Canadian researchers to conduct and promote research pertaining to sheep. Since our Mexican counterparts are highly involved in sheep research, should we not try to form liaisons to keep abreast and get involved with the plethora of new discoveries and information? Producers can directly benefit from these scientific discoveries leading to improved health and well-being of their flocks.

For more information, Dr. Grandin's website address is [www.grandin.com](http://www.grandin.com). Next year's Joint ADSA-ASAS conference will be held in Cincinnati, Ohio from July 24-28<sup>th</sup>.