



By Jennifer Fleming, Executive Director

The last 16 months have been incredibly challenging for the sheep industry. Prior to the border being closed the Canadian sheep industry was experiencing period of expansion. Farm cash receipts rose 28% between 2000 and 2002, live animal exports had increased 63% in 2002 compared to 2001 and inquires for breeding stock were being received from several countries including; US, Mexico, China and Brazil. Impressive results when considered in the light that this was a continuation of a trend that had occurred for several years.

When the US border was closed 98% of our live animal exports were to the United States with the remainder primarily to Mexico. With the resulting backlog of lambs and coupled to little prospect of a quick resolution to this problem; sheep industry farm cash receipts for the first quarter of 2004 have dropped 42% when compared to 2003.

Through all of this many producers have called the CSF office wondering what we are doing for them. And rightly so! As your national representative CSF placed the highest priority on this issue.



The difficulty is that many of the activities that we are engaged in do not lend themselves to providing either fast or immediately tangible results. This does not diminish the importance or significance of these efforts. The reality is that we have spent an inordinate amount of time trying to get the federal government to consult with the Canadian sheep

industry. As the result throughout the course of this crisis programs have been developed and implemented without the sheep industry being consulted, including compensation programs.

Driven by the need to have our voice heard, we have initiated numerous meetings with representatives from various levels of the federal government. This has included meetings with the Hon. Bob Speller *{former Minister of Agriculture}*, Mr. Richard Fadden *{President CFLA}* and Dr. Brian Evans *{Chief Veterinary Officer CFLA}* and the Hon. Wayne Easter,

{Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food}. Since Minister Mitchell has taken office CSF has worked hard to establish the lines of communication between him, his staff and our industry. We fell strongly that we have been successful and are beginning to have the sheep industry's concerns heard and addressed.

During these meetings, we outlined the economic impact of the border closure on our industry and its devastating effect on you as producers. We have also lobbied for resources for programs that would aid in our efforts to open the border. Government has been requested to find resources necessary to develop a comprehensive National Scrapie Strategy. To assist in facilitating this, industry has submitted two funding proposals to the federal government; one to implement a National Voluntary Flock Certification Program and the second to fund a national genotyping program to select for scrapie

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resistance in our seed stock flock. (Note: we should be hearing about whether or not we received this funding in September).

In addition CSF has submitted a proposal to the federal government for industry support. The proposal requests funding; for a ewe lamb retention program,

scrapie surveillance, increased dedicated lamb kill capacity and funds for marketing and promotion. The intent of this proposal is to reposition our industry to respond to the continued reality of the border closure. It is the intent that we emerge from this crisis as a stronger industry.

There is clearly the recognition that we will continue to face considerable challenges in the near future. With this in mind CSF has also secured federal support for a National Sheep Summit. This Summit will bring together key industry players from across the country to discuss issues related to the BSE crisis and also to take

stock of the broader range of issues that face the sheep industry. It is our hope that this will continue to allow open consultation and the ability to better identify issues and formulate innovative solutions to these problems. The current proposal is to hold this Summit in Ottawa in early October and we'll keep you posted.



Changing Seasons - Getting involved

By Randy Eros, Chair

Fall is the time of year when as producers we traditionally get together at Provincial Annual General Meetings to discuss and plan direction for our industry. As the organization representing sheep and lamb producers at a national level the CSF relies on this process for direction to ensure that we are working to meet the needs of Canadian producers.

Our needs as producers are often first identified around the kitchen table, over the fence with neighbours or in the bleachers at the auction. We then get together at our regional or district meetings, discuss our

ideas with other shepherds and staff and send our directors off to Annual General Meetings armed with a list of our needs and wants for the industry.

Some of things off of this list like producer extension, environmental issues and lamb promotion, are best looked after by our provincial organization. The provinces also play a key role in the scrapie eradication programs.

While issues such as ID/traceability, Food Safety and lobbying, fall to the CSF, they cannot be done effectively without provincial input. Your provincial directors will attend the CSF Annual

Meeting in Saskatchewan this year carrying your direction and, with producers from across Canada, prioritize the activities for the CSF.

Likely one of the most pressing issue on the table this year will be the impact of the US border closure on our industry. The CSF directors will have the responsibility of carving out National initiatives that will ensure producers can survive this crisis and move back to the position of growth and market development that we were seeing prior to May of 2003.

Later this fall we will be meeting with the Federal Minister of Agriculture and key industry

players from across the country to review our options for these initiatives. These options are sure to make up part of the discussions at your meeting this fall. So make sure you take time to voice your opinion and point your directors in the right direction.

While it is important to get the work done at these producer meetings let's remember to that this is also a chance for producers to enjoy each others company. So embrace the opportunity to learn form the meeting, the chance to renew old acquaintances and to meet new shepherds.

Making Food Safety Work for the Producer

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

It is a difficult time for the producer as the prices continue to flex under the weight of the closed border. All of us who are involved with the OFFS planning are particularly sensitive to the need to offer the

tions to aid in producer training workshops and on-farm support. In effect, what this funding allows the CSF to do is pay for the producer's fee to sign up to a workshop, and for the CSF to recover those funds through the sub-

b) audit fees can not exceed the cost/benefit of the program to the producer.

The potential costs for auditing a farm are of a concern to all of us who are involved in the

proach the program in 'increments' we are offering the option of a 'producer declaration'. In this tier a random audit process will still apply; however, the number of audits performed in this tier would be minimal, with no mandatory first audit required to get on the program.

After attending the COFFS WG meeting, I am pleased to announce that the audit frequency chart has been revised from a 3 year cycle to an 8 year cycle. What this essentially means is that under the previous system a producer would have 2 full audits and one partial audit every three years.

Under the new frequency chart the audit cycle has been extended to 8 years and requires only one full audit per cycle (with either partial audits and/or self declarations in the years between assuming that the producer passes the audit and remains in the lowest risk level). For those who pass their audit and remain in conformance, one full audit every 8 years is a much more palatable system for the producer.



producer the choice to participate despite these poor economic times. As this is a voluntary program, participation will hinge on some basic economic realities. There were two key areas that we feel are particularly sensitive to the success of producer uptake:

a) the producer training workshop has to be affordable to producers

Funding is to be provided to producers by Agriculture Canada to the various national commodity organiza-

tion of receipts and a signed affidavit by the producer, acknowledging that a portion of his/her funds has been allocated to the training workshop. The monies allocated through this fund are finite and will be available on a 'first come/ first serve' basis to all commodities. In this respect, we are positioned well, because we are among the first commodities out of the starting block for implementation. In essence, through this funding, all sheep producers can attend our workshop free of charge through the initial stages of implementation (until the money runs out).

implementation of this program. It is only reasonable that producers pay for a service that will offer them a potential to recover costs incurred. Asking the producer to pay \$600-700 for a full audit will surely hinder the interest in our program. There are two solutions that have come about to confront this challenge:

Producer declarations vs. full certification: Our program has been developed into two tiers. For those who would like to participate in our program without incurring some of the costs associated with audits, or for those who would like to ap-

Sheep Identification & Traceability – Improvements and the Future

By Monica Séguin, Executive Administrative Assistant

The CSF will be enhancing the Canadian Sheep Identification Program (CSIP) later this fall by introducing radio frequency identification tags (RFID). The advantages of the electronic tags to a commercial sheep farmer will depend on an individual farmer's circumstances, as the use of RFID tags will be optional. However, these tags will be mandatory for those wishing to ship lambs into Quebec. As of January 1st 2005 any sheep or lambs being transported, sold or sent to slaughter in Quebec MUST bear either an RFID tag and a pink Ketchum Kurl-
Lock tag OR an RFID tag with its corresponding dangle tag. It is the responsibility of the seller to ensure that animals entering Quebec are properly identified.

The expansion of the CSIP program is a necessary step to facilitate the tracing and tracking

of animal movement from the farm to the slaughterhouse. The present identification scheme, although an effective tool for locating the animal's flock of origin, cannot trace the movement of a particular animal, or its products. Therefore a traceability system, with the aid of RFID tags, is

would be one that would benefit producers (ie. in the case of disease outbreak), processing plants (ie. assist in securing market access) and retail outlets (ie. managing recalls). The introduction of RFID technology is the first step in achieving such a program.

the UK. Their comparative field study hopes to evaluate the components of an RFID sheep tracking system (ie. tags, boluses and readers) used in typical environments (range and farm, large flocks and small etc.). There are currently 68 farms participating in the pilot project and experimenting with a variety of tracking devices or methods (ie. RFID or paper based) An interim report is expected later this fall.

Why do we need to be able to track our sheep and lambs? Livestock tracing will enhance consumers sense of stability and continuity in our industry

and will also enhance the On-Farm Food Safety Program by bolstering the production of safe food. Canadian shepherds will also greatly benefit from RFID technology and the forthcoming traceability initiative.

needed to develop linkages between retail and farm levels.

The CSF is currently investigating the commercial viability of a national traceability program. The development and implementation of a national traceability program for sheep farmers

Several countries and commodity organizations are investigating, implementing or running traceability pilot projects or programs. I recently came across a sheep ID pilot project being conducted by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) in

