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From the flock

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR THE CANADIAN SHEEP INDUSTRY

New Instructional Lamb Cut DVD

By Jennifer Fleming, CSF Executive Director

It's always a pleasure to meet someone who loves Canadian lamb. And it's downright inspiring when that someone is a food expert. It's even better when he is a renowned chef who teaches and influences Canada's future chefs and knows how to bring out the best in lamb. That someone is Master Chef Bob Miller, simply known as Chef Bob, and he's from Prince Edward Island's Culinary Institute of Canada.

Chef Bob shared his passion for lamb with attendees to the annual meeting during a short trip to PEI . He explained over the course of his demonstration that chefs have a growing appetite for a consistency in meat quality and carcass size that they can count on: they want to be able to use the meat creatively and in its entirety.

After Chef Bob's demonstration, we were served an array of scrumptious lamb appetizers with cocktails, and were then ushered to the formal dining room for dinner. A team of the Institute's talented chefs-in-training treated our group to an extraordinary culinary taste experience. The impressive dinner showcased the versatility and delectable flavours of local lamb, through an impressive variety of delicious dishes.



Photo courtesy of Tracey Lamb



New DVD continued

All of this was part of the official launch of the instructional Lamb Cut DVD, developed by the Canadian Sheep Federation in partnership with the Culinary Institute of Canada (Holland College) and Qu`Anglo Communications. The DVD features Chef Bob fabricating a lamb carcass into a full range of primal and sub-primal cuts.

Those who attended the DVD-launch press conference were able to view the video and take a tour through the Fresh Canadian Lamb website (www.freshcanadianlamb.ca).

The website is home to information designed for lamb producers, grocery retailers and food-service professionals across Canada. It is a source for information related to preparing and merchandising lamb products for sale and consumption. This is the site where you can find information and resources needed to promote Canadian lamb as an all-around, easy-to-prepare product.

FreshCanadianLamb.ca is your site to use. Explore the information and featured tools on the site designed to raise industry and consumer awareness of the quality, value and variety of great tastes that can be enjoyed with fresh Canadian lamb.

This event helped to reinforce the opportunities around raising awareness of Canadian lamb, as well as showing appreciation for the culinary attributes and versatility of our product. From the local farmer's gate to the consumer's dinner plate, the team demonstrated how each and every part of the lamb carcass can be used -- and enjoyed through an assortment of culinary dishes.

Anaplasmosis detected in Southern Saskatchewan

Source: CFIA

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) is conducting a national serological survey in the Canadian cattle population in order to detect the presence of Anaplasmosis, Brucellosis and Bluetongue.

Further investigation by CFIA following the finding of an Anaplasmosis seroreactor in the pre-defined "High Risk" area resulted in the detection of a positive cow in a herd located in Saskatchewan.

Eighty animals from the herd tested at the same time were negative and an additional animal was ELISA positive and PCR negative. The farm is located 48 km from the United States (Montana), in the same area of Saskatchewan that was affected by the 1983 Anaplasmosis outbreak. Ticks capable of transmitting Anaplasmosis exist in Canada.



Wal-Mart's New Food Safety Requirements

By Lorraine Hall, National Coordinator OFFS

You've probably been there at least once, if not a hundred times. It's one of the largest, most well known retail stores. Have you guessed yet? I'm referring to Wal-Mart. Recently, Wal-Mart announced new food safety requirements for its suppliers. Early in 2008, Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. announced that their suppliers for stores in the U.S. must complete initial certification under the internationally recognized Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) standards between July and December of 2008. Full certification is required by July 2009. Wal-Mart is adopting GFSI standards for all of its suppliers globally. So, what is the GFSI, and what does this mean for Canada?

The Global Food Safety Initiative is managed by Belgian based CIES – Comité International d'Entreprises à Succursales, or The Food Business Forum, which is a retailer-driven group with manufacturer advisory members. The CIES provides strategic direction and guidance in areas that can affect the whole food industry, such as food safety and traceability. Under the umbrella of the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI), eight of the world's largest retailers including Wal-Mart and UK based Tesco, have come to a common acceptance of four GFSI benchmarked food safety schemes and are requiring their suppliers to comply with these standards.

GFSI was launched in 2000 at the CIES annual congress. Following the BSE (Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy) crisis, consumer trust was at a low, and food safety was at the top of consumers' minds. The Global Food Safety Initiative was launched to strengthen consumer confidence in a collaborative way. Funding for GFSI is provided by The Food Business Forum, which consists of retailers, manufacturers, and third party service providers. In a nutshell, the GFSI is funded by the industry for the industry.

At its outset, the purpose of GFSI was not to create one international food safety standard. Many standards were already in place around the world. What GFSI does is benchmark already existing food safety standards to determine whether the scheme is equivalent to the minimum criteria set out in the GFSI Guidance Document. The GFSI then communicates the results to retailers or manufacturers who make the final decision about what standard they will require. Of the food safety standards that GFSI has benchmarked, four meet the criteria set out by GFSI, including Dutch HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) and SQF (Safe, Quality Food).

The purpose of GFSI is also to encourage food safety stakeholders to share knowledge and strategy for food safety through different platforms and projects. The GFSI does not undertake any accreditation or auditing activities but leaves that function to the specialists already in the marketplace. However, the Technical Committee does deal with auditor accreditation and competence, providing training for auditors in emerging markets through a GFSI starter kit.

To date, eight companies have come to a common acceptance of GFSI benchmarked standards, including Wal-Mart and Tesco. For these companies, this move away from their own internal standards means fewer audits because of the common acceptance of standards. If a supplier is providing a product to one of these retailers that already have GFSI standards in place, an audit by another retailer recognizing the same standards would not be required. This results in more cost efficiency in the supply chain, as well as a comparable audit approach and results. "Once certified, accepted everywhere" is the GFSI motto.

Continued on next page



On-Farm Food Safety continued

In 2007, over 30,000 certificates were issued to retail suppliers against GFSI recognized schemes, up 50% from 2006, which was up 50% compared to 2005. This represents \$740 billion (U.S.) worth of food products across 425,000 stores worldwide.

Globally, Wal-Mart is adopting GFSI standards. From its Canadian suppliers, Wal-Mart will demand SQF program compliance starting in 2009. What does this mean for sheep producers at the farm level? The good news is that SQF will recognize our Canadian programs through SQF 1000. SQF 1000 is a HACCP-based, supplier assurance code for the primary producer. Essentially, on-farm food safety programs, such as the Canadian Sheep Federation's Food Safe Farm Practices Program will be recognized under this umbrella. For a sheep producer whose product could eventually end up at a Wal-Mart store, this would be an excellent time to consider what standards must be met, and make steps towards implementing the Food Safe Farm Practices program.

For more information, please visit the following website www.rossinc.com; click on News and Events and then go to Web casts.

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Scrapie Canada Update

By Courtney Denard, Scrapie Project Coordinator

Although many Canadian producers are aware that US sheep and goats can now be imported into Canada, some confusion still remains surrounding the process. Scrapie Canada frequently receives calls from producers asking questions like how do I import? And which producers in the US can I import from?

In order to import male sheep and goats from the US (including semen), producers need to obtain an import permit from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). They do not need to be enrolled on the Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program (SFCP). Producers can obtain an import permit by contacting the local CFIA District Office that represents their region and requesting a permit. In the case of males, the American exporting producer does not have to be enrolled on a scrapie program either.

When it comes to importing female sheep and goats (including embryos), things are a little different. Firstly, producers need to be enrolled on the SFCP prior to obtaining an import permit. To enroll on the program, producers can contact Scrapie Canada for an application package as well as for more information. Once officially enrolled on the program, producers can contact the CFIA to obtain an import permit.

Same goes for producers on the American side. All US producers exporting female sheep and goats to Canada must be enrolled on the US Scrapie Flock Certification Program. This is where a lot of the confusion begins because not all American producers on US scrapie program can export females into Canada.

Canadian producers can import females from any American flock or herd participating at the “Export Monitored” level.

US flocks or herds participating in the “Complete Monitored” level of the program are eligible to export females to Canada only if they have been submitting all mortalities over 18 months of age for scrapie brain testing. Perspective US exporters with “Complete Monitored” flocks or herds need to confirm eligibility with their Area Veterinarian in Charge and obtain a statement that says through record verification, all mortalities over 18 months of age have been submitted for scrapie brain testing. The statement also needs to declare the period of time over which the brain testing has been completed. Perspective Canadian importers will be required to submit a copy of this statement when applying for an import permit if the animals are coming from a flock or herd enrolled on the “Complete Monitored” level.

A complete list of participants on the US Scrapie Flock Certification Program can be found online at: <http://scrapietag.aphis.usda.gov/reports/sisstate.php>. To determine which level the American producer is enrolled under, see the “status” column in the table. For more information on the status of a US flock or herd, producers can also e-mail the following address: scrapie_program@aphis.usda.gov.



Bluetongue Insurance Available for 2009 Season

The Canadian sheep announces the availability of Bluetongue Insurance for the 2009 season. The industry took the innovative step of developing an insurance policy to protect sheep farmers in the event of an outbreak of Bluetongue disease. Bluetongue Insurance for Sheep, introduced in 2008, is a commercial insurance program endorsed by the Canadian Sheep Federation (CSF) with the assistance of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Private Sector Risk Management Partnerships (PSRMP) Program.

The Bluetongue Insurance program provides sheep farmers with affordable insurance coverage for mortality, business interruption and consequential losses due to Bluetongue Disease – an insect borne viral disease of sheep. This voluntary insurance program will supplement funding provided to sheep farmers through current government agricultural assistance programs.

The impetus for development of Bluetongue Insurance was provided by import policy changes introduced by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency coupled with the discovery of Bluetongue disease in the United Kingdom and in several Northern European countries.

The Private Sector Risk Management Partnerships (PSRMP) Program is a federal initiative that offers financial and technical assistance to producer organizations for new agricultural risk management projects.

Fast Facts (www.cansheep.ca)

- There are over 11,000 sheep farmers in Canada
- The value of farmed sheep in Canada is over \$300M (Source: Statistics Canada, 2006)
- There are approximately 70,000 head of registered purebred sheep in Canada representing 48 different breeds

About the Canadian Sheep Federation

- Established in 1990, the Canadian Sheep Federation is a national non-profit organization that represents all Canadian sheep producers.
- Our mission is to work closely and cooperatively with all levels of government and industry-related organizations, both domestic and foreign, to further the viability, expansion and prosperity of the Canadian sheep and wool industry.

About Bluetongue Disease

- Bluetongue disease is caused by the Bluetongue virus. It is a non-contagious, insect-borne disease of mainly sheep and less frequently of cattle, goats, buffalo, deer and antelope.
- Symptoms can include high fever, excessive salivation, swelling of the face and tongue. Swelling of the lips and tongue gives the tongue its typical blue appearance, though this sign is confined to a minority of the animals. Recovery can be very slow.

About Private Sector Risk Management Partnerships (PSRMP)

- The Private Sector Risk Management Partnerships (PSRMP) Program of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada is a federal initiative that offers financial and technical assistance to producer organizations for new agricultural risk management projects. PSRMP looks for projects that deal with predictable risks which may represent a significant threat to an individual farm operation but generally only a minor risk to the sector or its market.



Bluetongue Insurance continued

About Private Sector Risk Management Partnerships (PSRMP)

- These projects focus on risks that are not currently covered by government programs or the private sector.
- Canadian national, regional or provincial producer organizations representing member-producers who are directly involved in the production of agricultural products are eligible to apply for assistance.

About Our Insurance Partners

- Bluetongue Insurance is provided by the Echelon General Insurance Company in conjunction with their partners Sylvite Financial Services Inc. and administrative broker The Precept Group Inc.
- Sylvite Financial Services Inc. is a division of the Sylvite Group of Companies, one of Canada's largest diversified agricultural services companies. Initially formed to meet the insurance needs of the farmer, Sylvite Financial Services Inc. has evolved into an innovative and dynamic financial services firm with deep roots in the agricultural markets.
- The Precept Group Inc.: Insurance and Risk Management was formed in 1998 with the merger of three well established insurance brokerage firms, with roots going back to 1912.

- Reinsurance will be provided by Endurance Reinsurance of America (Endurance Re), a Delaware domestic insurer and reinsurer with policyholders' surplus of \$592,863,197 as of December 31, 2007. Endurance Re is a subsidiary of Endurance Specialty Holdings Ltd., a Bermuda-based specialty provider of insurance and reinsurance on a global basis, with over 700 employees. Endurance Specialty Holdings Ltd. is publicly traded on the NYSE (ticker symbol: ENH) with \$7 billion in assets and over \$2 billion in shareholders' equity.

For More Information

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Animal ID: 13 States Now Exceed 50 Percent Premises Registered

Source: www.cattlenetwork.com/Content.asp?ContentID=262959

WASHINGTON, Oct. 23, 2008--The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) today announced that 487,670 premises are registered nationwide as part of the National Animal Identification System (NAIS).

Producers registered more than 50,000 premises so far in 2008 and 13 states now have at least 50 percent of their total estimated production premises registered through NAIS. The latest state to go over 50 percent premises registration is Iowa.

"Premises registration is the foundation of the NAIS and allows us to better respond to animal health events in the United States," said Bruce Knight, under secretary of USDA's marketing and regulatory programs. "The growth in premises registrations this year demonstrates that producers want to work with USDA to protect their animals, their livelihood and their communities. I applaud those who have made the choice to register their premises."

The 13 states that have topped the 50 percent mark are Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Massachusetts, Nebraska, Nevada, New York, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Utah, West Virginia and Wisconsin. Illinois is very close to the 50 percent mark, with 48.3 percent of its estimated 30,046 premises registered.

Delaware now has more than 40 percent of its premises registered, while Alaska, Colorado and North Carolina now have more than 30 percent of their premises registered. Several other states have made significant gains in the number of premises registered.

During 2008, Mississippi tripled the number of registered premises, while Ohio more than doubled the number of registered premises in the state. The number of registered premises in Alabama and South Carolina increased by more than 150 percent. Direct mail and outreach efforts to farmers and ranchers continue this fall to encourage additional registrations.

USDA is working cooperatively with states, tribes and industry partners to implement NAIS, which is a modern, streamlined information system that helps producers respond quickly and effectively to animal disease events. It consists of three components: premises registration, animal identification and tracing. The premises registration component of NAIS ensures the availability of a nationwide communications network to assist producers and animal health officials in the event of an animal disease event. There is an estimated 1.4 million production premises in the United States.



COOL Implementation: The First 45 days

Source: Source: Derrell S. Peel, OSU Extension Livestock Marketing Specialist
http://www.cattlenetwork.com/Cattle_Identification_Content.asp?contentid=269080

After much controversy and confusion about the rules for COOL it is appropriate to look at impacts on producers and consumers after roughly six weeks of mandatory COOL. USDA-AMS has previously indicated that the first six months of COOL will be devoted to education and implementation of COOL before the focus shifts to enforcement. The final rules for COOL have not been published so there is still a chance of more changes to the rules.

In Oklahoma, general indications are that COOL is not resulting in major difficulties for cattle producers. Most cattle auctions in the state are providing affidavit forms for their customers, usually as continuous affidavits which are filed with the auction. It is less clear that cattle buyers are aware that they need to be asking for COOL documentation for purchased cattle although in many cases the documentation is included in routine documentation of the transaction. In private treaty sales, both buyers and sellers need to make the effort to make sure that COOL documentation is passed from seller to buyer. The affidavits developed by the industry seem to be successful in minimizing the burden on producers to provide required COOL documentation. It remains to be seen how effective and complete the paper trail will be if and when there is an attempt or need to verify origin back to the producer from retail.

At the consumer level, most retailers are now providing the required COOL information on retail beef sales. In Oklahoma, it appears most beef is utilizing the "Product of USA, Canada and Mexico" label initially. However use of the "Product of USA" label may increase in the future. There have been only a few reports of any consumer reaction of any sort to whatever label is being used.

Although some retailers have a preference for using a particular product and label, several retailers have indicated that they are more concerned with using only one type of label (regardless of which label it might be) to avoid the expense of tracking multiple product categories.

Much of the cost of COOL has always been presumed to occur at the packer level where it is most difficult to segregate product of different origins. Most major beef packers have designated certain plants and shifts to process mixed label cattle and minimize these costs. This results in some additional shipping costs for some producers. The magnitude of these additional costs for packers and producers is not yet clear.

The major bone of contention about COOL has always been whether the potential benefits would outweigh the costs of implementation. It is clear that it will take more time before either the costs or benefits of COOL will be known.