

## Sheep Health Committee

April 9, 2003

The NIAA sheep health committee met on April 9, 2003 from 1:15 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Mr. Paul Rodgers, Deputy Director of Policy at the American Sheep Industry Association (ASI) was our first presenter. Mr. Rodgers spoke about the current sheep industry. He gave a historical perspective of how the early to mid 1990s was a time when the sheep industry experienced difficulties as the wool incentive payments were phased out, lost packers, lost some of the market share to imports, and lamb prices were low. Since the late '90s, the US sheep industry has become involved in self-help programs and promotion. Much of this has been enabled because of ASI's success in an unjust trade case, which has helped put dollars and optimism back into the hands of sheep producers through ram payments; facility improvement assistance; feeder lamb payments; finished lamb payments for high yield grade, lean lambs; ewe lamb retention payments that have resulted in 1.3 million ewe lambs added to the breeding flock. The US lamb processing plants have been remodeled and are modernized inverted chains. Lamb prices are at a high point. The industry has developed marketing alliances and vertical integration.

The lamb check-off is the only check-off program where packers are assessed and contributing. 300 million pounds of sheep meat were sold in the US in 2002. Wool prices are stabilizing as wool stockpiles work their way out of the world glut.

The rest of the program was regarding progress of scrapie eradication program and research. Much of the presentations were positive regarding the new changes in the National Accelerated Scrapie Eradication Program (NASEP).

Dr. Katherine O'Rourke from USDA-ARS at Pullman WA presented the latest scrapie research findings and discussed how they can be used to further guide scrapie control. Her group's research has focused on diagnostic test development, preventive tools such as genetic selection, and defining key details in scrapie transmission. The USDA continues to assess (and refine) the third eyelid test. The Pullman research group has also been instrumental in developing genotyping and clarifying its potential uses for scrapie prevention, and discovering the protective effects of fetal genotype in scrapie transmission in utero and in the immediate post-lambing period. She cautioned the group about the importance of maintaining some portion of the sheep population as susceptible genotypes to be used as sentinel animals in the eradication effort and post-eradication period.

Dr. Michael J. Gildsorf, Director of the Eradication and Surveillance team, National Center for Animal Health Programs, USDA, APHIS, VS, presented an "Update on National Accelerated Scrapie Eradication Program, including Scrapie Surveillance." He stated that APHIS had received 15.4 million dollars for the National Accelerated Scrapie Eradication and Flock Certification programs for this fiscal year. Dr. Gildsorf presented current summary statistics regarding the number of new scrapie cases and flocks in 2002 and in the first five months of fiscal year 2003. He presented similar statistics for the Scrapie Flock Certification Program. He stated that Phase II of the Slaughter Surveillance study ended on 3/31/03 with just over 10,600 samples collected and those samples are now being tested. Phase III of the surveillance began on 4/1/03 and will include regulatory traceback activity on positive samples.

Mr. Stan Potratz, owner of Premier 1 Sheep Supplies gave a detailed presentation of his company's experience as a supplier of official plastic eartags required by the NASEP beginning September 2001. He described a number of improvements that would be helpful in the NASEP as well as for a national livestock id program. 1. Since full functionality of the GDB is necessary to fill a tag order, APHIS should strive to ensure that the GDB is consistently functional. 2. One site ought to issue premises numbers. 3. ID orders ought to be electronically transmitted rather than utilizing the current system of faxes as the more times an order is required to be entered by humans, the greater the chances for error. There

should be a system in place that verifies the accuracy of the data entry. 4. Allow producers to use the tags that they like/use now with the addition of the necessary numbers. 5. There should be central distribution of tag orders. UPS is a better distributor than USPS because of the former's ability to confirm/track where an order was actually delivered. 6. Limit the producer to a one-year supply as technology of the id device will change. 7. The id needs to contain a premises number so that the producer can be certain he received his order and not someone else's order. 8. There should be a small producer-born cost associated with the id devices to encourage self-rationing.

Dr. Susan Skorupski, AVIC for Ohio and WV discussed eight challenging areas of the NASEP. These were issues related to ID, Diagnostic challenges, Flock Plans/Post-Exposure Monitoring Management Plan (PEMMP), Disposal, Indemnity, Cleaning & Disinfecting, Identification of new infection leading to 'cascading traces' and Disease knowledge. She related her experiences in administering what was an initially confusing, evolving program. Due to feedback, she thought the program's current direction was better defined thus relieving many of its prior inconsistencies. Some of the issue that remain include the difficulty in explaining to a producer the regulatory meaning of a tonsil positive, brain negative scrapie infected sheep, the concerns over disposal options, the challenges of settling on indemnity amounts, and new OSHA requirements affecting the cleaning and disinfection preparations.

Mr. Tim Barnes, a purebred sheep producer from Ohio shared his recent experiences with finding scrapie in his flock. He was quarantined from 4/02 to 1/03. He stated that the flock investigation and depopulation was handled well by the regulatory veterinarians involved. The fact that he kept good records assisted the flock investigation. He detailed the many steps involved in the process of his flock investigation and cleanup plan. His plans for the future include: closing his ewe flock, continuing the use of genetic selection as a tool to prevent scrapie (now that the flock has been genotyped through the NASEP), improve his biosecurity practices, use RR rams but noted that they are not readily available in his primary breed, do not bring in outside ewes for breeding or lambing. He suggested that the ramifications of this disease will shift the purebred show-ring oriented and club lamb industry toward primarily ram movements/sales instead of both sexes as presently exists.

The committee acted on the resolutions as well as made 2 recommendations to the NIAA BOD. The first recommendation was to expand the charge and name of the Sheep Health Committee to the Sheep and Goat Health Committee. The second recommendation was to encourage the NIAA BOD to join the MUMS coalition. The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

## **In attendance**

### NIAA Members:

LaRue Johnson  
Cindy Wolf  
Camille Armijo  
David Schmitt  
Wendell Peden  
Jewell Plumley  
Max E. Coats  
Joe Haas, Jr.  
Gale Johnson  
Howard Lehmkuhl  
Phyllis Menden  
Glenn Fisher  
Jodi Black  
Paul Rodgers  
Eileen Kuhlman

American Assoc. of Small Ruminant Practitioners  
University of Minnesota  
Bio-Rad  
Iowa Dept. of Ag  
Individual Member  
West Virginia Dept. of Ag  
Texas Animal Health Commission  
National Band & Tag  
NIAA/Scrapie Eradication Educational Program  
NADC, ARS-USDA  
North American Deer Farmers Association  
Allflex USA  
Ohio State University  
American Sheep Industry Association  
University of Minnesota

Non-Members:

Susan Skorupski

Mike Gilsdorf

Randy Berrier

Stan Potratz

Tim Barnes

Katherine O'Rourke

USDA, APHIS, VS - OH/WV

APHIS/VS

Colorado Serum Company

Premier

Ohio Sheep Producer

USDA