

Canadian Sheep Federation Executive Director’s Report November 2021

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Action Items from the October 2021 Board meeting

Program Updates

Canadian Sheep Identification Program (CSIP) and Traceability

The [Canadian Sheep Identification Program \(CSIP\)](#) is Canada’s mandatory, national sheep identification program. First introduced into regulations in 2004, CSIP was the first step in the development of a traceback system that will lead to a full-scale traceability system. A fulsome traceability system will help mitigate the spread of livestock diseases, support rapid disease response, address producer concerns about sheep health, provide valuable management feedback to producers, and meet consumer expectations for quality assurance and food safety. CSIP requirements for identifying sheep and recording and reporting certain animal data have remain largely unchanged since they were first introduced in 2004. New technologies in animal identification have been introduced into the program over the years as we work to modernize the program, and the next round of traceability regulations have been in consultation since 2013. Incoming traceability regulations will include requirements that track sheep, premises where sheep reside, and vehicles that transport animals as sheep move through the value chain. Not only will these regulations expand the amount of work required of farms to collect and report data, they will also expand the scope of those involved in traceability reporting.

The Canadian Sheep Federation is the national industry lead for traceability. We remain committed to ensuring that CSIP and future traceability

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regulations are affordable, flexible and effective. To stay up to date on CSIP requirements and incoming traceability regulations, be sure to visit our website at www.cansheep.ca and follow our facebook page @cansheep.ca.

Here are your November CSIP and traceability updates:

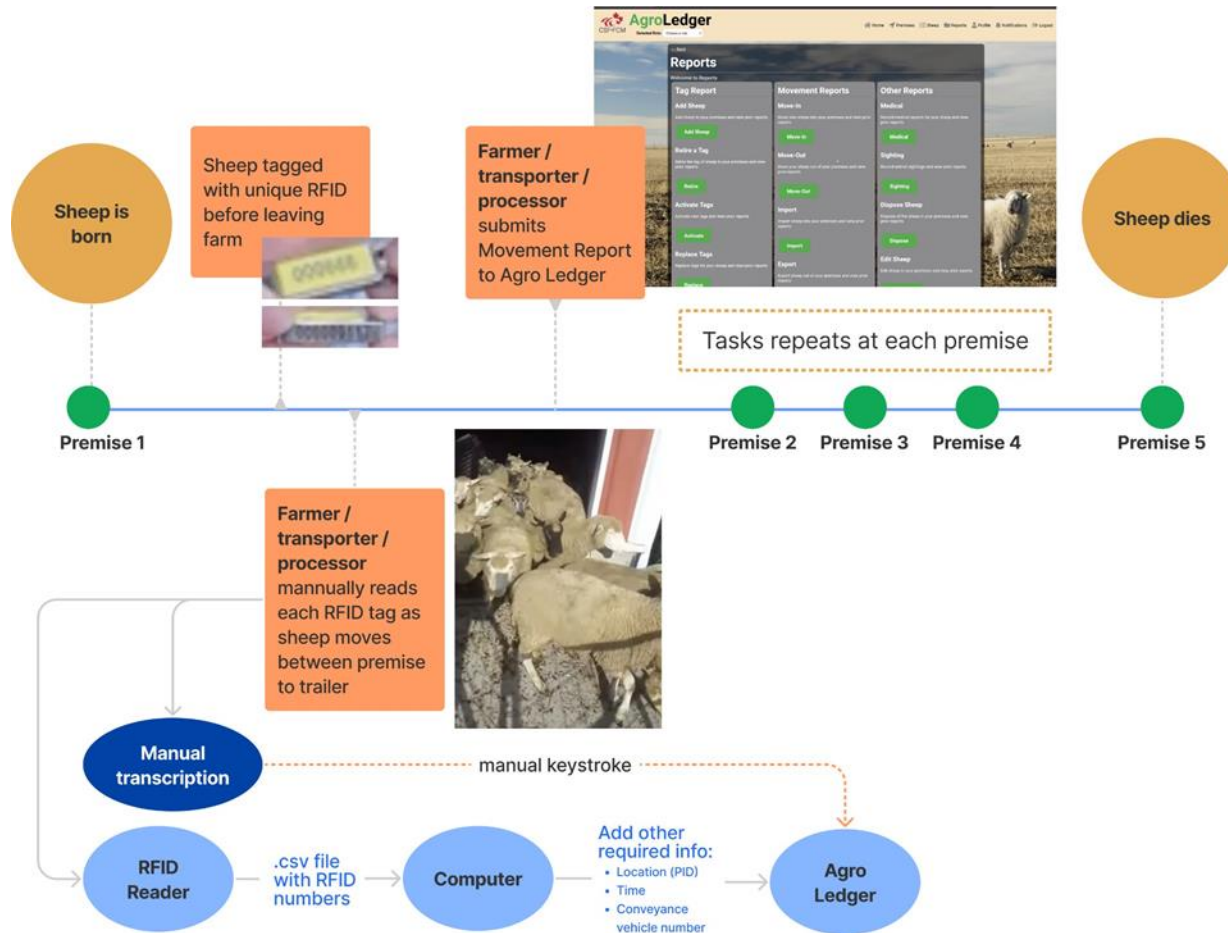
- Allflex is proposing changes to its CSIP tag that could reduce the width and weight of the tag. The changes are significant enough that they will require a tag trial, provided the proposed changes first pass lab testing.

AgroLedger

The Canadian Sheep Federation developed AgroLedger to serve as the information management system for the sheep industry traceability program. The message from Canadian sheep farmers and ranchers was clear. If traceability is to become a reality in the sheep industry, it has to give value back to its users. If we think of traceability solely in terms meeting regulations, the systems that manage them are nothing more than black holes into which farmers throw data and dollars. Canada's sheep farmers deserve better. The CSF set out to find a traceability solution that fits both future trace regulations and user needs without breaking the bank. We didn't have a lot of luck finding what we needed so we built a custom system...we built AgroLedger. With the second phase of AgroLedger development complete, we have a system that can support traceability reporting for incoming regulations AND that provides some added value to users. Right now, AgroLedger lets you share animal records like registrations and performance indexing records, as well as vaccination and treatment records, with future animal owners. Want to scan a new animal's tag and know if it has been vaccinated? There's an app for that! And there is a lot more to come as we move to the next phase of development in 2022 and create even more value for AgroLedger users.

Here's some of the work we did with AgroLedger in November:

- Check out AgroLedger's dedicated social media platforms on [facebook](https://www.facebook.com/agroledger) @agroledger and Instagram @agroledger. AgroLedger's website is under construction and coming soon.
- Interested in being an early AgroLedger user? Shoot us an email agroledger@cansheep.ca
- The CSF provided an AgroLedger demonstration to the CFIA's Animal Health Directorate and traceability teams, as well as members of AAFC's trace team, highlighting AgroLedger's capacity to meet traceability reporting needs as well as exploring some of the value-added functionality of the system.
- The AgroLedger team has been asked to contribute to the Standards Council of Canada's work on standardizing blockchain in Canada. The team sat with SCC's consultant in November to discuss some of the key blockchain topics that the SCC will present at its January workshops.
- The CSF's project with the University of Toronto's Institute for Multidisciplinary Design & Innovation is making great strides at developing a new technology that can uniquely identify sheep by way of biometric (facial) recognition. The premise is that reporting required by incoming traceability regulations is going to a burden using the technology currently in place. Here is the problem we are trying to avoid:



Even with the RFID tag technology currently available, regulatory requirements will mean a lot of repetitive data entry. No question, file transfers and uploads are still easier than key stroking in or handwriting 15 numbers per animal ID. What if instead of lots of data entry, you could simply open your cell phone, tablet or mobile device camera and turn this



into a report that individually IDs each animal, date stamps, time stamps and geolocates an event at a rate of 30 animals per second? Its closer than you think! We hope to integrate this new tool with AgroLedger during the summer of 2022.

Scrapie and the Scrapie Flock Certification Program (SFCP)

Scrapie is a fatal, degenerative disease that affects the nervous systems of sheep and goats. It is one of several transmissible spongiform encephalitis (TSEs), which are related to bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE or “mad cow disease”). While the exact cause of scrapie is still debated, the disease is associated with the presence of an abnormal form of a protein called a prion. Scrapie is spread through fluid and tissue from the placentas of infected females. It can be transmitted from an infected female to her offspring at birth, or to other animals exposed to the same birth environment. Males can contract scrapie, but they do not transmit the disease to other animals.

A sheep’s genes affect both its susceptibility to the disease and the length of the incubation period. Blood tests can determine the genetic profile of a sheep. Producers that want to minimize the risk of scrapie in their sheep flock can consider selective breeding for genetic resistance to scrapie. However it should be remembered that even genetic resistant sheep can get scrapie.

Alternatively, sheep producers and goat producers can eliminate or severely restrict the introduction of females and commence scrapie surveillance by having animals over 12 months of age that die on their farm tested for scrapie. Specific efforts towards managing the risk of scrapie on individual premises can be recognized through formal participation in a scrapie flock certification program.

In the absence of adopting specific measures to minimize the risk of scrapie on their farm, a producer is encouraged to implement general good management and biosecurity practices such as individual animal identification, record keeping, prompt isolation of sick animals, separation of females giving birth, increased cleanliness of birthing environment, disinfection of equipment between animals and single use needles for injections.

The CFIA, with the support of the small ruminant industry, is working towards eradicating scrapie in Canada. The CFIA, under the National Scrapie Eradication Program, conducts active surveillance for scrapie, takes action to control disease on infected farms, and provides support to the [Scrapie Flock Certification Program \(SFCP\)](#).

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The SFCP is a national flock/herd scrapie risk management program for the Canadian sheep and goat industries and is available to any sheep or goat producer who agrees to meet the requirements of the program. The primary benefit to participating producers is the individual risk protection against scrapie in their flock/herd. Over time, producers will have their flock/herd recognized as being at a much lower risk for scrapie than the rest of the farms in the national flock and herd. This recognition can increase trade opportunities within Canada and in light of the recent announcement about the U.S small ruminant rule, allows SFCP Certified Plus farms to export breeding stock to the United States. The long-term goal of the SFCP is to eradicate scrapie from the national flock and herd and to help open up market access for export. The SFCP's National Standards (rules) are maintained by the CFIA and the program is administered through Scrapie Canada, a division of the Canadian Sheep Federation. You can learn more about scrapie and the SFCP on the Scrapie Canada website, www.scrapiecanada.ca.

Only a few new scrapie-related issues on November's books, including:

- The CFIA made the CSF aware of potential changes to small ruminant import policy, Option 2b for males, where the SFCP is implicated. This option is used primarily by goat producers to import bucks. The option prohibits the movement of bucks off the importing premises without a permit, which is becoming increasingly difficult for CFIA to monitor and enforce. This option could be removed within a year's time.
- The CFIA is evaluating its scrapie surveillance program, addressing covid-related slowdowns in sampling. This re-evaluation of the sampling strategy could see a shift in sampling patterns aimed at finding remaining pockets of scrapie, primarily in under-sampled demographics (by jurisdiction and by species).
- The CFIA is launching a pilot project that will incorporate the use of scrapie-resistant genetics in goats into scrapie programs. More information on this project to come.

Canadian Verified Sheep Program (CVSP)

The Canadian Verified Sheep Program is Canada's quality assurance program for sheep farmers and ranchers. Developed by the Canadian Sheep Federation with support from Canadian farmers and input from veterinarians, industry stakeholders and government this voluntary program helps farmers and ranchers implement, demonstrate and validate exemplary food safety, animal welfare and biosecurity management practices. With the help of the CVSP's **FREE** training, you will have the tools to help reduce on-farm food safety, biosecurity and animal welfare risks.

The steps to implementing the Canadian Verified Sheep Program are simple. The Canadian Verified Sheep Program Manual has everything you need to implement the program on your farm. The steps for implementation are:

1. Participate in a producer training session either online or in person. In person sessions are delivered by trained trainers, usually associated with provincial sheep organizations. You can start your **FREE** online training by visiting the CVSP website at fsfp.cansheep.ca
2. Review the CVSP Producer Manual which contains all of the practices and record keeping requirements for the program.
3. Adapt the material in the manual to suit your particular operation. While there are various "must do" good production practices in the program, they may not all be applicable to your farm.
4. Utilize the good production practices and records on your farm and train workers to follow practices.

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5. Record mishaps when they happen and make notes on how they were corrected.
6. After completing steps 1-5 for one full production cycle, you can apply for an audit to become fully Certified on the program.

Did you know that the CVSP is recognized by the CFIA's Food Safety Recognition Program? The [Food Safety Recognition Program \(FSRP\)](#) is a program led by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), with the participation of provincial and territorial governments, that provides government recognition of on-farm and post-farm food safety systems developed and implemented by national industry organizations.

The FSRP is a multi-step process that consists of a review, an assessment, the recognition and ongoing monitoring of the technical soundness and administrative effectiveness of national industry organizations' implemented food safety system.

- If you haven't taken the CVSP training program yet, you should. The material is really helpful for managing on-farm food safety, biosecurity and animal welfare risks, the record keeping documents help you organize critical information and the training is completely, **100% FREE** courtesy of the Canadian Sheep Federation. Did we mention training is free?

National Maedi Visna Program

- The CSF re-invigorated its National Maedi Visna Working Group, with support from the Canadian Sheep Breeders Association and Canadian National Goat Federation, to pick up with work plans last considered in late 2018. The Working Group met first in early October and again in November. From the last workplan, the WG expects to focus on establishing testing, biosecurity and status assessment protocols, evaluate testing methodologies and standardize testing costs, and propose a future program administration framework.
- The National Maedi Visna Working Group is accepting new members including members from the veterinary community interested in helping improve maedi visna control measures in Canada.

Canada's Small Ruminant Ultrasound Pregnancy Assessment Training and Certification Program

- Canada's small ruminant industries have finalized their Ultrasound Pregnancy Assessment Certification program, which offers two program 'pathways'...Trained and Certified.
 - The Trained pathway requires completion of the theory training unit as outlined below with the option of completing the practical training unit. The practical training unit is not required to be deemed Trained. This pathway is intended for those who's goal is to perform their own on-farm pregnancy ultrasound assessments. Trained individuals who wish to upgrade their program status to Certified will need to demonstrate practical training or experience equivalent to that required of Certified individuals and will be required to successfully complete the examination process outlined in the program's documentation.
 - The *Certified* pathway requires completion of the theory and practical training units as outlined below, as well as an examination to evaluate skill level. This pathway is intended for those who wish to provide commercial ultrasound pregnancy assessment services. *Certified* technicians endorsed by the SRUOC are deemed to be proficient in conducting pregnancy ultrasound assessments in keeping with the expectations of Canada's small ruminant industries. *Certified* program status does not necessarily confer the right to practice.

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- We hope to host the first ultrasound training school in 2022, just as soon as we can coordinate international travel for instructors with provincial gathering restrictions. The intent was to begin training in 2021, but the pandemic got the best of our planning.

Chronic Wasting Disease Herd Certification Program (CWD HCP)

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) is a progressive, fatal nervous system disease that affects cervid species. It is a transmissible spongiform encephalopathy, or prion disease. It is contagious amongst cervids, like scrapie in sheep. Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) belongs to the family of diseases known as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs), or prion disease. Though it shares features with other TSEs, such as bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in cattle and scrapie in sheep and goats, it is a distinct disease only known at this time to naturally affect members of the deer (cervid) family. In 2002, the CFIA established national standards for a Voluntary Herd Certification Program (VHCP) to provide cervid owners with tools to help mitigate the risk of developing CWD and the opportunity to have their herds identified as elite with respect to CWD.

The Canadian Sheep Federation began administering the CWD HCP in Ontario back in 2009, because both its National Standards and the program's administration closely mirrored the Scrapie Flock Certification Program. Now the CSF serves as CWD HCP Regional Administrator and Status Assessor for cervids farms located in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec.

- The annual Chronic Wasting Disease Herd Certification Program National Standards Review that took place through the spring, led to the release of a first draft of the amended National Standards this summer. The 2021 National Standards will come into force December 31, 2021, accompanied by updated Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and program forms.
- CWD HCP enrolled producers are reminded that they are required to submit an annual application for advancement within 3 months of their anniversary quarter as indicated on program certificates. Annual applications must include an inventory report completed by the appropriate party and *ALL* program forms, submitted every year.

Working with Industry Partners

- The CSF met with a group from the Global Burden of Animal Diseases (GBADs) to discuss how Canadian traceability initiatives like AgroLedger could help support GBADs mission to "measure to improve" animal health at a local, national and global level. Animal health researchers from the GBADs programme have secured funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the UK's Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office to explore and measure animal health burdens and their impacts on human lives and economies.
- CAFÉ, the Canadian Association of Fairs and Exhibitions, continues its work on developing an animal care framework for shows and exhibitions in Canada that host animals either for competition or as exhibits. The CSF is a member of CAFÉ's animal care committee tasked with developing the framework.
- Both the Animal Health Canada (AHC) Working Group and National Farmed Animal Health and Welfare Council (NFAHWC) membership continue to work on the transition of the NFAHWC to AHC. Council members agreed by resolution at an earlier members meeting to change the name from NFAHWC to AHC, and for the NFAHWC to adopt AHC's mandate. The transition is, however, more than a name change and will require

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further work to reform the Council's previous governance structure to incorporate a larger stakeholder group of players. This could include expanding membership and revamping the Advisory Board structure. The creation of Animal Health Canada has been a long time in the making, with more than two years worth of work under its belt, and the CSF has been involved since Day 1.

This month's meetings

- CSF Board of Directors
- Canadian Food Inspection Agency – Scrapie programs
- University of Toronto Capstone Team X 2
- University of Cambridge
- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada – AgroLedger and traceability
- Capstone student volunteers
- Perdue University – Global Ag Innovation
- Ontario Ministry of Agriculture
- Animal Health Canada Working Group
- CAHSS Anti-microbial Use Surveillance Network
- AAFC Roundtables – BC Flood Response X 3
- NFAHWC Forum Part 2
- Market Access Secretariat
- CSF Audit & Finance Committee
- Canadian Association of Fairs and Exhibitions Animal Care Committee
- Canadian Agricultural Human Resources Council
- Standards Council of Canada
- Centre for Emerging Zoonotic Disease (CEZD)
- Public Health Agency of Canada
- Global Burden of Animal Disease (GBADs)