

## **National Sheep Network**

March 30, 2023

The board reviewed the changes to the traceability guidelines proposed by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). The three member boards will review the proposed guidelines for discussion at the next meeting. OSF does not see any issues with the guidelines after first review.

ALP and OSF are also reviewing a possible change in the Responsible Administrator for the Canadian Sheep Identification Program (CSIP). The two boards will follow up with questions and letters to share their position on national traceability. All members of the NSN board believe the traceability system needs to remain strong to avoid trade barriers or issues for exporting commodity groups. ALP and OSF will each write letters requesting more information along with addressing the possible conflicts of interest. It was also discussed that none of the groups have received any CSIP updates in years.

The new marketing platform under development by LEOQ is moving into the design phase. There have been delays to the project outside of LEOQ's control and they plan to apply for a funding extension for the project. The project is expected to be completed in March 2024.

In their provincial update, LEOQ shared they are still searching for a General Manager. They also shared an issue with producers changing feed rations due to higher feed prices to cut protein in favour of higher energy. The result is classification scores three points below last year's numbers. LEOQ is reviewing the penalties for back fat at 16 mm and considering an increase to 20 mm on 25-30 kg carcasses to align with processor requirements. LEOQ is also reviewing prices to producers as they are currently below the Ontario price as well as the price paid by Westfine Meats (formally Sungold) in Alberta.

OSF shared that the provincial budget was released last week. Farmers were hoping for an increase to the provincial Risk Management Program funding envelope but the money wasn't in the budget. There was money to draw veterinarians to northern and rural regions of Ontario.

All three groups discussed the new western Canadian lamb co-operative that has formed. ALP had a meeting with Westfine Meats (formally Sungold) at their request, to explain why they had to refuse some of the offers made by producers. Westfine Meats issued a statement for ALP to circulate to producers to clarify what took place and to also confirm they didn't have firm contracts in place with producers they needed to refuse. They have tried to accommodate as many producers as possible by pushing back the processing of their own animals.

Staff of all three member organizations are working on letters in support of the interprovincial trade pilot for processing of lamb at abattoirs across a provincial border to be returned to the province of origin where processing capacity in their own province is unavailable. Staff are also working on a letter opposing or requiring an amendment to Bill C-293. The Bill has a section on "industrial animal agriculture" as a pandemic risk and calls for a phase-out of commercial activities related to livestock production.

Staff attended the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) meeting in Ottawa at the beginning of March. There were lots of positive initiatives showcased at the meeting to producers. CFA is working on the Sustainable Agriculture Strategy (SAS) and there are no areas of concern at this point. ALP staff are sitting on the CFA's Women in Agriculture Committee to create a strategy for CFA to diversify membership and advance the work of women in agriculture.