

2024 CSBA Ontario Report

By Craig Emke & Laura Mosley

The Ontario Purebred Sheep Industry had 251 members registered with the CSBA in 2024 with 2086 registrations and 1334 transfers completed.

Ontario Sheep Farmers Update 2025

For 2025, the Ontario Sheep Farmers' board has chosen the theme: Building Strength for a Better Future. For the organization, this means a stronger focus on marketing, building on market research and consumer promotions completed in 2024, and creating resources and tools that support business decisions on the farm.

Market Development:

In 2024, Ontario Sheep Farmers, with the help of Michael Keegan & Associates, initiated a market research project looking into ethnic consumer relationships with Ontario lamb. The project's goal was to identify opportunities within ethnic consumer markets to build more or better market relationships. This will be accomplished with insights into ethnic preferences, traditions and culinary cultures from new Canadian's and their country of origin where lamb is a staple of the diet.

The study found, the largest ethnic consumer groups on Ontario with an affinity for lamb are: Pakistan, Iran, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Egypt, Turkey, Iraq, Somalia, Syria, Ethiopia, Morocco and Sudan. Current projections for immigration suggest that these ethnic consumer demographics will continue to make up a large portion of anticipated immigrants to Canada and Ontario – this represents a significant and growing consumer market for Ontario's sheep producers.

This year, OSF's marketing strategy will build upon the insights from this market research and will be targeting consumers in the largest ethnic categories identified in the study.

Also in 2024, OSF invested in a summer lamb BBQ promotion to determine whether engagement with consumers through hyper-targeted social media resulted in an increase in retail sales.



The social media campaign achieved over 1.5 million views over the four weeks of the campaign. The cost per thousand clicks for our campaign was just over \$2, while the industry average is between \$3.50 and \$8. Our YouTube advertisements were viewed to at least three quarters of the way through 92% of the time. The industry average is just over 30%. And the data from stores in the promotion shows a 2% increase in sales compared with previous time periods while stores in nearby neighborhoods experienced a 15% decline in sales in one instance and a 1% decline in another.

In the future, OSF has the video and photography assets to run the campaign again in more stores and will consider combining social media promotion with in-store incentives like coupons and other purchased advertising at retail to get a greater correlation between the promotion and any increases in sales.

Education:

The OSF board of directors has prioritized the development of more business resources for producers.

In January, a new cohort will begin the Master Shepherd's course. Producers interested in taking the course can still apply until the end of March.

There are 12 modules in the course, eleven delivered online through 1.75-hour sessions on Tuesday and Thursday evenings and one in-person, two-day module. There will also be an in-person two-day farm tour in June or September. OSF members are eligible for a 15% course discount. Sheep farmers wanting to improve their management, productivity and profitability should apply.

The course covers a broad range of topics, from industry dynamics and governance to farm management and business planning. However, one of the biggest values of the course is the networking and learning alongside other sheep farmers. To learn more and read testimonials from farmers who have taken the course and loved it, please visit OntarioSheep.org.

Events:

This year, OSF is working with the Large Flock Operators and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness to organize a summer Field Day taking place July 24th at the Orono Fairgrounds. The event is a combination of the LFO's former Sheep Day and OSF's former Sheep Focus event, with a goal of bringing innovative products and ideas to sheep farmers in Ontario.

The day will include large-scale product demonstrations, new product launches, a trade show and networking with fellow producers.

Advocacy:

In 2024, through our advocacy involvement as a sheep industry, OSF prioritized the increase in funding for the Risk Management Program. In January, the Conservative government announced a \$100 million increase in investment to the program that will roll out over the next three years beginning with \$30 million for the 2025 crop year. OSF also worked with the veterinary community

on the modernization of the Veterinarians Act that included adding a clause to allow sheep pregnancy ultrasound without the oversight of a veterinarian and participated in the creation of the new Agricultural Research and Innovation Ontario (ARIO) Act to advance research for sheep in 2024.

For 2025, advocacy priorities include improvements to the predation program to better value breeding stock, both purebred and commercial, using a producer survey approach. Additionally, we are advocating for a more efficient reporting and payment approach utilizing online forms and pictures taken by producers rather than relying on municipal investigators and payment systems.

Producer Engagement

OSF established a new Stakeholder Committee to include organizations working with sheep producers in Ontario in priority setting discussions for the sheep industry. The group currently includes the Large Flock Operators, the Ontario Lamb Producers' Caucus, Western Ontario Lamb Producers' Association, Trillium Lamb, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness, Purebred Sheep Breeders of Ontario, the Dairy Sheep Co-op, and the Next Generation Canadian Lamb Producers' group has been invited.

For more information about upcoming events and new resources and to stay current with OSF, please visit our website at www.ontariosheep.org.

Ontario Flock Fusion & Jr. Sheep Expo 2024

June 29th & 30th, 2024 Erin Fair Grounds, Erin, Ontario

EVENT SUMMARY:

Saturday Started off with a presentation by Megan Jamison, DVM, about giving injections, and what injections which sheep may require, as well as a hands on demo. Each of the participants were given an orange, needle/syringe, along with some blue water, so they could practice given different types of injections.

We then had a quick game of "Sheep Breed ID", where the participants were broken up into groups, and had to ID sheep breeds by a picture, it was a timed relay game!

Other seminars Saturday morning included Basic Sheep Nutrition, as well as Livestock Photography and Ram Selection.

Saturday afternoon was hands on the remainder of the day, including a Judging Competition, which included 3 classes (rams, ewes & market lambs), as well as Fitting & Slick Shearing demo's and hands on clinics. Saturday afternoon also included a Showmanship Demo & Clinic, where all the participants were given a chance to have experience show people give them some tips & tricks for their showmanship skills.

We ended off Saturday with a Quiz, which included questions from each of the seminars throughout the day, as well as Judging of the Marketing Competition entries that the participants brought with them. The Marketing Competition was broken into 3 categories, and participants had to create either 1. Full size ad to promote a breed of sheep or their farm (Sr & Int.), a logo design for the event (Jr's), T-Shirt design to represent Ontario Sheep (Novice).

Saturday evening we all enjoyed dinner prepared by the Erin Agricultural Society, as well as some time to catch up with old friends and make some new ones!

Sunday was show day! It included showmanship classes, along with ewe lamb, yearling ewe and pair of ewe classes, as well as market lamb & market lamb pair classes. The participants were able to show in as many classes as they wished to earn points for the overall points for the weekend. Overall points were calculated using the points earned in the judging competition, marketing competition, quiz (on Saturday), as well as all showing on Sunday. We had a total of 60 Junior participants on Saturday, and 48 returned to show on Sunday, along with many parents, family & friends!

We ended off Sunday, by handing out awards for the top 10 in the various events over the 2 days, along with the top ten in our overall points competition.

This event was made possible by the funds provided to the PSBO through the CSBA provincial levy, along with the following Sponsors who generously donated to our event:

Grober Nutrition

Jim & Wendy Driscoll Polled Dorsets

Green Valley Event Rentals

Floradale Feed Mill

Parkinson's Plumbing

Lush Acres

VanGro Farms

Comfort Sheep

Ontario Southdown Club

McBrien Livestock

Finlay Lincolns

Cowan Acres

The PSBO is already planning for our 3rd annual event which is to take place June 28th & 29th, 2025, at the Rockton Fairgrounds in Rockton, ON.