

Raising sheep: understanding Scrapies

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Flock owners are the most important people when it comes to completely eradicating scrapie in the United States by 2010, a goal that was set by the government several years ago. There are some key facts that sheep and goat raisers need to know in order to be educated in a disease that can affect their flocks.

There are only two countries that are recognized as totally scrapie-free by the United States, New Zealand and Australia. It is estimated that this disease cost producers \$20-25 million dollars a year. It does exist in the United States but it is not rampant and can be completely eliminated with all producers' cooperation.

Scrapie is a disease that takes a long time to manifest with obvious signs. It can take up to six years for signs to show up and is always fatal. It is a transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (TSE), which is in the same category of diseases as the so-called "mad cow disease". There is no evidence that it can spread to humans, but is subject to the same negative public scrutiny as the disease that affects cows. When the United States' goal was first announced the only test on the disease was on an animal that was not

living. Now there is a test that can be done by using a lymphoid tissue biopsy of the third eyelid of live animal.

An identification program has been put into place to help eliminate this disease from the United States. It is an easy program and unless you choose to buy tags other than those supplied by the USDA, the program is free. A separate and voluntary program, Scrapie Flock Certification Program (SFCP), does provide a source of scrapie-free replacement stock. If a producer is currently enrolled in the SFCP there is no need for additional identification.

To learn more about the disease and guidelines go to Animal Agriculture website. www.animalagriculture.org/scrapie In the next article we will go over 8 easy steps to make sure your flock is in compliance.



Step 1: Determine if your sheep or goats need official ear tags or other official identification to move interstate.

The following need **NO ID** and have NO movement restriction:

- All sheep under 18 months, to be slaughtered.
- All goats to be slaughtered.
- Low-risk commercial goats: raised for fiber/meat, not registered, not exhibited, have not been in contact with sheep, not scrapie positive, high-risk or exposed.
- Wethers for exhibition.
- Any sheep or goat moving for grazing and no change in ownership occurs.

The following **WILL** need ID (ear tags or Tattoos)

- All breeding sheep – any age.
- All sheep over 18 months old.
- All sheep and goats for exhibition other than castrated males.
- All scrapie-exposed, suspect, test-positive and high-risk animals.
- Breeding goats, except low-risk commercial goats.
- Sheep under 18 months old in slaughter channels that are; any female who is pregnant or have aborted, all intact males from a scrapie infected flock.

Step 2: request a premises ID number

- Call 866-USDA-TAG for more information

Step 3: Determine which approved ear tags or other approved ID systems work best for you

- Tags or tattoos – certain options are free of charge

Step 4: Set up a record keeping system, include:

- Premises ID number with serial numbers
- Date applied

(For animals not born in your flock that are not already identified, you must record the individual number applied and their flock origin)

Step 5: Apply official ID before sheep or goats leave your premises:

- If a sheep or goat loses an official ear tag, the person that has possession of that animal should re-tag and record possible flock or herds or origin.

Step 6: Get health certificate before transporting:

- All breeding and intact exhibition animals much have a certificate of health from a licensed Veterinarian.

Step 7: Retain ID records for at least 5 years:

- It is required that a flock owner keep all ID and health records for at least five years even if the animals have died or been slaughtered.

Step 8: Call for help if needed.

- Call toll free 866-USDA-TAG (866—873-2824 or check out their website. www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/scrapie.htm