



Photo by Crystal Fullerton

September 2018 Newsletter

Message from the President



Spring planting season started off very slow and many of us were late with first cut due to cool and wet weather but it turned out to be one of the hottest, driest summers in recent memory. Some areas of the province experienced more severe weather than others, leaving some either feeding early or bring animals in from pasture sooner than usual.

The past number of months have been very busy for SPANS as we have taken on a number of workshops focused on Gwyneth's parasite work as well as lamb survival and ewe nutrition workshops with Jonathan from Perennia.

We have also started the initial stages strategic planning for the industry and have completed our producer survey and have started working on the framework of what the strategy will contain. Once we are a little further down the path we will be reaching out to our fellow producers to ensure we are headed in the right direction.

The future will also be focus of our annual meeting which will be held on November 10th at the Best Western Glengarry in Truro. We will have two speaker panels- the first will focus on why a group of producers have chosen to focus on sheep production in the province and the second will be an outlook from processors on what they see in the future of the sheep industry.

Make sure you check the website and social media for a full listing of upcoming meetings and workshops. As always, if you have any questions/comments or suggestions for workshops, don't hesitate to contact the office at 902-893-7455.

Fred Hamilton, President

2018 SPANS Annual General Meeting Notice

The Annual General Meeting of the Sheep Producers' Association of Nova Scotia will be on Saturday November 10, 2018 at the Best Western Glengarry in Truro. Registration will start at 9:30am and is \$15 which includes morning refreshments and lunch (lamb chili or chicken soup). To register in advance, please contact Jena at 902-897-6742

Wool Handling & Evaluation Course Report



Thank you to the generous support from the Sheep Producers of Nova Scotia and the Canadian Co-operative Woolgrowers Ltd for your sponsorship of the wool events associated with the recent All Canada Sheep Classic in Truro. The Fleece Competition & Sale during the Classic and the Wool Handling & Evaluation course, just prior, were both deemed to be quite successful.

We were happy to have 26 fleeces entered by 15 flock owners, and even accommodated ram fleece entries, for the first time, by opening a new class. The Champion and Reserve Champion fleeces were sold by live auction at the Friday evening banquet; all the others were offered the next day for sale by silent auction, with excellent bidding, likely due to the proximity of a concurrent Fibre Frolic, from which hand spinners came over to bid. Many consignors kindly donated the sale and prize proceeds (totalling \$700) of their fleeces to the charitable funds at the Dalhousie University Agricultural Campus which are in memory of local sheep industry leaders (Bill Mathewson Bursary; Zillig Library fund). This was most gratifying.



The Wool Course had 16 participants, coming from all three Maritime Provinces, mostly with a particular interest in wool for fibre artisan uses. Lisa Surber, PhD, a wool consultant based in western USA, in a series of sessions, gave instruction on techniques for proper handling of wool, right off the sheep, evaluation, classing, through to packing and then described various ways of wool processing and marketing. As learning aids, a comprehensive array of samples was provided by the instructor as well as

Canadian Cooperative Wool Growers. Ms. Surber has a great passion for and knowledge of sheep and wool and all participants really enjoyed the two and half day course. We were fortunate to have Sarah Nettleton involved; she very capably handled the shearing demonstration, with a pen of sheep supplied by a local farmer, from which then practical training in fleece handling and evaluation ensued.



We are most grateful for the generous support these Wool events received from SPANS, CCWG, various businesses and individuals. **By co-ordinators Marg Zillig, Dorset producer and Ruth Mathewson, North Country Cheviot producer.**

Improving Lamb Survival Workshops

Jonathan Wort, Ruminant Specialist, Perennia, will discuss some tips and guidelines to help improve lamb survival rates. These include treating lambs suffering from Hypothermia. The workshops on January 21st in Antigonish and Bridgewater on January 22nd from 6:30pm to 8:30pm will focus on:

- Colostrum Quality
- Warming Boxes
- Stomach Tubing
- Intraperitoneal Injections
- Benchmarking your lambing

Please RSVP to Jena by January 17, 2019 at 902-8897-6742

2018 All Canada Sheep Classic

The 2018 All Canada Sheep Classic was held at the Nova Scotia Provincial Exhibition Complex in Truro, NS from July 5th-7th. The friendly East Coast extended a warm welcome to consignors as they arrived from all across Canada.

The 3-day event was sponsored by the Canadian Sheep Breeders' Association and hosted by the Purebred Sheep Breeders Association of Nova Scotia. A Shepherd's Social of Nova Scotia Wine and Cheese was held for exhibitors and sponsors on Thursday night providing a great opportunity for everyone to catch up after their travel time. A fabulous lamb and lobster banquet followed on Friday at the Holiday Inn, which also included the Good Shepherd and GenOvis Award Presentations as well as an auction. The Classic also included a trade show, a national fleece competition and back fat and loin-eye ultrasound demonstrations.

On Friday, 47 consignors of 14 breeds presented their sheep to judges Jane Palmer and Jennifer Mutch of PEI who provided the show placements for the 198 animals. The Supreme Champion Ewe was a Shropshire (Son Risen 2356E) consigned by Andy Pearson of Son Risen Farms from St Mary's ON. The Supreme Champion Ram was a Texel (Orchardview 922E) consigned by Gordon Walker of Orchardview Farm from Glencoe, ON. The Supreme Champion Flock was awarded to the Texels consigned by Gordon Walker of Orchardview Farm from Glencoe, ON.

On Saturday, buyers from all 10 provinces purchased 188 of the 197 animals offered for sale. Prices averaged \$551 for ewes and \$779 for rams. The top-selling ewe was a Suffolk (Stonehill 10F) consigned by Paul Dick of Stonehill Sheep from Chatsworth ON and was purchased for \$1800 by Ewetopia Farms of Kingston ON. The top selling ram was also a Suffolk (Stonehill 6F), consigned by Paul Dick of Stonehill Sheep from Chatsworth ON and was purchased for \$3500 by Ewetopia Farms of Kingston ON. Breed averages and sale results for every animal can be found on the Canadian Sheep Breeders' Association website at www.sheepbreeders.ca. Photographs of the champion animals are also posted online.

The CSBA is extremely appreciative of the tremendous national support it receives from new and long-time sponsors, exhibitors, consignors and buyers. The Purebred Sheep Breeders Association of Nova Scotia demonstrated a friendly and outgoing experience as they hosted another successful Classic. The Classic is only possible with such an enthusiastic and dedicated group of volunteers.

The 2019 All Canada Sheep Classic will be held in Humboldt, Sk from July 18th -21st. For further information, please contact Linda Brandes, General Manager of the CSBA, at 1-866-956-1116 or at office@sheepbreeders.ca

CCWG 2018 Wool Shipment Date

Canadian Cooperative Wool Growers Ltd, Atlantic Wool Depot Collection will be accepting wool for shipment in October. There will be a tractor trailer on site so please bring large bags or quantities of wool on that day.

Date Saturday October 27, 2018
Time 10:00am to 3:00pm
Where 1700 Highway 311, North River
Contact- Ruth Mathewson Call or text 902-897-7708 to make other drop-off arrangements before the shipment date

Faecal Egg Count Workshops Part 1 and Part 2 with Dr. Gwyneth Jones

Over the summer, SPANS held two series of workshops to teach producers how to conduct their own fecal egg counts (FECs), one in Bible Hill and one in Aylesford. Each involved two evening sessions, a couple of weeks apart. We decided on this format to encourage producers to try out the technique on farm and then come back with any questions or problems they may have encountered, and also to discuss how best to make use of FECs in their situation. In all, about 30 producers participated and a number of them now have microscopes and counting slides, the two essential pieces of equipment.

The principle behind FECs is simply that if we mix a weighed sample of feces in a salt solution of the right specific gravity, worm eggs will float and other debris will mostly sink. If a known volume of this suspension is pipetted into a counting slide, the eggs come to lie just under the cover slip, making it easy to find and count eggs under the microscope. The technique is quite simple – often deceptively so! - because while easy to perform, we need to take care with mixing and pipetting in order to get consistent and accurate results. Hence the two-session workshop. Some producers followed up after the workshops with questions, including sending cell phone shots of eggs taken through the microscope to see if their identifications were accurate.

We also discussed the usefulness of FECs, especially in testing whether wormers are still working effectively. Without counting samples, before dosing and 2 weeks after dosing, it is impossible to tell whether resistance to a wormer is building up until it reaches a point where it is impacting animal performance. Since, now that the research projects at Saint Mary's University are at an end, such fecal egg count reduction tests are not being offered, it would be an advantage for any producer to be able to determine this for him/herself. Routine monitoring can prevent problems of resistance from getting out of hand.

We had interest from goat producers and horse owners as well as sheep producers. If any other producers would like to learn the technique and try counting for themselves, SPANS would be happy to organise similar workshops in the future.

Ewe Nutrition Workshop

Since March, SPANS and Perennia have conducted 5, two hour evening workshops in various locations across the province. The objective of the workshops was to share knowledge and educate producers, with the goal of improving the productivity of the sheep industry in Nova Scotia.

The first three were held in March and April in Brooklyn, River John and Aylesford. These focussed on improving the survival of lambs. Jonathan Wort, livestock specialist from Perennia explained the protocol for reviving hypothermia (chilling) and hypoglycemia (starvation) young lambs. As part of the workshop techniques like stomach tubing, the use of a warming box and intraperitoneal injections were demonstrated.

These workshops were well attended with over 60 producers participating in the three workshops. As part of the workshop evaluation producers were asked what topics they would like to see in future workshops.

As the result of the evaluation it sheep nutrition was identified as a topic of interest. With this in mind two additional workshops on the topic Ewe Nutrition were delivered in September. The first in Brooklyn and the second in River John. There were 30 producers who attended these workshops.

These workshops discussed the basics of ewe and small ruminant nutritional requirements and the importance of a good forage management program. Including the need to test forages in order to ensure that the sheep producer is achieving the optimum value from feeding the forage available and ensuring that the ewes are properly fed. Good nutrition is the foundation of production. A ewe that doesn't receive adequate levels amounts water, and appropriate feed will never perform to her potential. In fact she will be susceptible to any number of problems that will limit her ability to raise her lambs. Ensuring that the ewe flock is properly fed will ensure optimum productivity and lamb survival.

The level of attendance and interest that producers showed was great and plans are underway for future workshops. If you are interested in a specific topic or would like a workshop in your area contact the SPANS office or Jonathan Wort at Perennia. 902 896 0277 ext 232. SPANS and Perennia look forward to having all producers participate in future workshops.

Regulations Related to Access to Antibiotics Changing December 1, 2018

In the last newsletter there was an article reminding everyone that the regulations surrounding the access to Antibiotics for livestock were changing: *As of December 1st this year antibiotics will no longer be available for use on farms unless they are prescribed by a Veterinarian.* As a farmer in Canada you will have to have a working relationship with a Veterinarian in order to get a prescription for an antibiotic, purchase it and administer it to your livestock. You will no longer be able to purchase antibiotics and products containing antibiotics over the counter in feed and farm supply stores.

It is important if you don't have a veterinarian that you currently work with. That you develop a working relationship with a veterinarian before the regulations change on the 1st of December.

These changes are being driven by concerns about the increasing number of bacteria that are no longer controlled by the antibiotics that we have available to combat disease in both the human and animal populations. This is called Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) and it is becoming an increasing problem around the world. You don't need to spend much time in a hospital before you will hear about things like MSRA (Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus). Bacteria like MSRA are already resistant to many of the common antibiotics that we have available.

In response to AMR, governments and industry around the world are responding; there is education and implementation of new regulations that encourage responsible antibiotic use in all sectors. In human medicine we expect our doctor to use a prescription for antibiotics and doctors prescribe antibiotics based on careful diagnosis.

The livestock industry in Canada as of December 1st 2018 will require a veterinarian to prescribe antibiotics also. This will not mean that the vet will have to administer the drugs or depending on the situation see the animal in question. However it will require that the Vet and the farm have a Veterinary-Client-Patient Relationship (VCPR). In an established and working VCPR the vet visits the farm and understands the animals, management, and general health of the livestock on the farm. The vet and the farmer share their knowledge of the livestock, the health status and use this information to develop management plans, including health plans. These plans will help to ensure that the herd (or flock) maximize the productive potential. As part of this process the vet can look at the overall health issues on the farm and work with the farmer to establish protocols to support improved livestock health and treat common problems.

An example of this might be recommendations for vaccination programs for improving the overall health of the animals. Or in the case of a sickness like pink eye the vet could prescribe a treatment protocol or Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to treat the problem.

Effective VCPR's take time and effort to develop and require commitment by both the vet and producers to establish and maintain. Yes! That costs money and time!! However effective VCPR can result in improved herd (flock) health, improved productivity and profitability.

The Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture supports herd and flock health programs to assist Nova Scotian farms to develop health programs. Information on these programs is available at <https://novascotia.ca/agri/programs-and-services/farm-animal-welfare>. If you have any questions contact your veterinarian, commodity association, or livestock specialist.

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Last Mailed SPANS Newsletter Distributed

Please note: **this is the final printed edition of the SPANS Newsletter.** All future newsletters will be emailed to those within our registered producer database. If you do not currently receive emails from SPANS, please ensure we have your email address so you may receive the newsletter when it is electronically sent. The most current SPANS newsletter will also be available for viewing on our website (www.nssheep.ca/current-spans-newsletter/), as well as posted to our social media accounts of Facebook and Twitter.

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