



Wyoming Livestock Board

"Safeguarding Wyoming's Livestock Industry Today and for the Future"

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Assistant State Veterinarian

Memorandum

To: Wyoming Sheep Producers
From: Dr. Walter Cook, DVM, Assistant State Veterinarian
Date: August 21, 2008
Ref: WEC-09-045
Subject: 2009 Scrapie Cooperative Agreement Program

A cooperative agreement between the Wyoming Livestock Board (WLSB) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has been developed in order to control and eradicate scrapie from Wyoming. The WLSB is the state regulatory agency charged with regulating animal health in the state and ensuring animals imported into the state are free of disease.

Scrapie is a disease of sheep and goats characterized by neurological deterioration, behavioral changes, tremors, wool loss and death. Scrapie is a transmissible spongiform encephalopathy related to, but distinct from, Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy of cattle and Chronic Wasting Disease of cervids; like these diseases, it is invariably fatal. Certain genes can render sheep susceptible to, or resistant against scrapie. It has been shown that the use of genetic information is valuable in preventing and eradicating the disease. Genetic testing for susceptibility/resistance is as simple as having a veterinarian take a blood sample and send it to the appropriate laboratory. To test for the actual disease, a sample can be taken from the third eyelid and sent to an appropriate laboratory.

Over the years, the WLSB has worked cooperatively with USDA personnel to diagnose, control and prevent Scrapie in the state's sheep and goat populations. Together we have been quite successful. Our Black-faced sheep testing requirement on imports successfully prevented scrapie introduction. The 2009 Scrapie Cooperative Agreement is a disease control program that will occur state-wide and will include sheep on rangelands and farms under a variety of terrain and field conditions. There are funds available to help sheep producers prevent this disease. Interested sheep producers should contact the WLSB at (307) 777-7515.

Project objectives include:

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1- Genetic and Disease Testing of Black-faced Sheep Entering Wyoming- The Wyoming Livestock Board has adopted rules requiring that all black-faced sheep entering the state for reproductive purposes be genetically tested for susceptibility to scrapie. Sheep that test QQ (susceptible) at codon 171 will be:

- a. refused import, or
- b. be tested using the third eyelid (or other ante-mortem test when approved) for scrapie (sheep not yet 14 months of age are quarantined until reaching 14 months and subsequently tested).

The cooperative agreement has funding available to offset some of the costs associated with the genetic testing for black-faced sheep imported into Wyoming.

2- Genetic and Ante-mortem Testing for Surveillance Purposes- State and Federal animal health and regulatory personnel are working in conjunction with sheep producers, the University of Wyoming and County Extension Agents to improve genetic resistance and scrapie surveillance in Wyoming's flock through education, the use of ram genetics and lid testing. Using these funds, the Wyoming Livestock Board will reimburse veterinarians up to \$15/ blood sample that they take and send to an approved laboratory for codon 171 testing. Under certain conditions, up to 75 ewes or rams can be tested under this program, this is in addition to ram testing offered below.

3- Cost Recovery for Exchanging Susceptible with Resistant Sires- This project will provide a limited monetary cost recovery to producers that cull, for slaughter only, QQ breeding stock sires and replace them with scrapie resistant RR/QR breeding stock sires. The purpose is to encourage and augment the use of scrapie resistant genetics in flocks not presently using resistance genetics. The amount available depends on the age of the QQ ram being replaced and the genetic composition of the ram replacing it (more funding is available for young rams and those that are RR).

4- Genetic Testing for Producers and Ram Sales/Tests- Agreement would unconditionally reimburse expenses up to \$15.00/ sample, for codon 171 genetic testing of up to 40 breeding stock sires per operation based on one (1) ram per 50 breeding ewes.

This program is very important to the Wyoming sheep industry. The WLSB and USDA are eager to help eradicate scrapie from Wyoming. Each objective has been budgeted from a total of \$30,000. This includes field and lab supplies, veterinary expenses, sire exchange, travel costs, etc. To learn more about this project or to apply for funding please contact the Wyoming Livestock Board at (307) 777-7515.

Thank you for your support and cooperation,



Dr. Walter Cook, DVM,
Assistant State Veterinarian

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