



# Herd the News

January/February 2020

*The California Wool Growers Association will deliver lasting value to support and grow all segments of the California sheep industry.*

## ASI Calls for Direct Payments to Sheep Producers

The American Sheep Industry Association (ASI) formally requested this month that Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue and U.S. Trade Representative Robert E. Lighthizer consider direct payments to sheep producers as part of any future Market Facilitation Program.

“Our producers overwhelmingly support efforts aimed at strengthening the United States’ position on free and fair trade and are appreciative of the administration’s efforts to rectify long standing disparities in the trading actions of China. To that end, we are optimistic given the recent positive steps taken to sign the first phase of an agreement,” wrote ASI President Benny Cox. “Yet, our understanding is that through this process China will maintain retaliatory tariffs, specifically tariffs on raw wool and sheepskins (pelts). That means that we are preparing to head into a second shearing and marketing season with the effective loss of our largest export market.

“In the first round of the MFP, the USDA identified \$17 million in American lamb purchases. That option has not impacted markets or provided any revenue to sheep producers for sheepskins and certainly not for wool. We ask that the program specific to our industry be reconsidered to focus on wool and sheepskins as the primary targeted products.

“Our wool market is effectively closed, with producers not receiving checks for unsold wool and warehouses sitting on product that cannot be absorbed into the domestic market. Textile capacity in the United States, similar to hide tanning, is a shadow of its former self.”

“Initially, we had hoped that we could help bridge this gap through the use of the existing Wool Marketing Loan Program administered by USDA/FSA. While we have been successful in working with USDA on updated price reporting, unsold wools do not generate a price report and it seems we may be at a standstill to see the repayment rates reflect this wreck in the wool and unshorn sheepskin market.”

“We are hearing clearly from producers across the nation on the impact this is having to their bottom line and profitability. Without the ability to sell their wool, they are completely reliant on the slaughter market, where the loss incurred to sheepskins alone is eliminating their profitability. As we come up on our annual convention at the end of this month, I fully expect this to be a major topic and already our state affiliates have circulated policy directives urging ASI to continue to pursue a pathway to diminish the effect of this trade disruption on our wool and sheepskin market.”

To read the full letter visit the ASI website <https://sheepusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/ASI-MFP-Letter.pdf>.

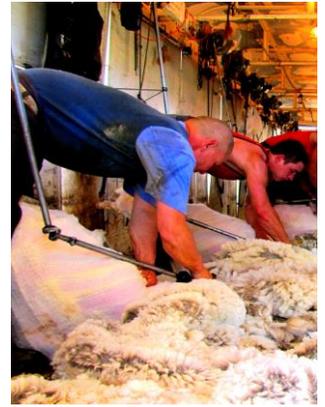
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## Be Prepared – Tips for Shearing Season & Wool Quality

Are you willing to put forth the effort needed to make your wool clip the best that it can be? Even the best shearers in the world can't make the most of shearing day without a little help. That means making sure you're on the same page with your shearer and his crew long before they arrive on site.

Here are some tips to consider as you prepare for one of the most labor-intensive days of the entire season.



- Have facilities ready and prepared for the shearing crew. This includes adequate pen space, working facilities, extra labor to move and sort sheep prior to shearing, as well as processing sheep after shearing. You might need to provide help and assistance moving wool bales or bags away from the shearing site to a storage facility. Sort different wool types prior to shearing to reduce cross contamination. The preferred shearing order remains white face, crossbreds, black face and, lastly, hair sheep.
- Sheep should be held off feed and water overnight prior to shearing. This eliminates fecal and urine contamination on the shearing floor and helps keep wool as clean as possible. It's also easier for shearers to handle the sheep during shearing when this rule is followed.
- Visit with your shearer or shearing crew manager prior to shearing to determine what is to be accomplished at the shearing site: bellies out only, will wool be classed, perhaps skirted? Who is providing the packaging for the wool? What type of packaging is needed? Burlap, film and nylon packs are all approved packaging materials in the U.S. Who will label the bales and keep the wool press record?
- Provide a trash bin on site for disposal of hair type fleeces, bloody wool, skin pieces, heavy tags or contamination items.
- If using a shearing crew, the producer should try to provide electrical outlets for campers, water, restrooms and showers for the crew.
- A hot meal at noon – provided by the grower – is sincerely appreciated by the shearing crew and makes a significant difference in the afternoon work performance of the crew. Mid-shift snacks at break time are also much appreciated by the crew and strengthens the relationship between the producer and his crew.
- Respect for the producer and mutual respect for the shearing crew has to be gained by performance. It continues to be a team effort to make shearing day a positive experience for all involved.
- With fewer shearing crews available, as well as fewer shearers, both domestic and foreign, producers will find it beneficial to do everything possible to complete shearing day with minimal stress on the sheep, working help and shearing crew.
- Shearers also recommend that producers use plastic ear tags and place them in the sheep's left ear, toward the outside edge approximately half way between the base and the tip. Metal ear tags are especially dangerous during shearing.

### Tips for Wool Quality

Another way to enhance wool quality is proper harvesting techniques on shearing day. The goal is to provide your processor with the most uniform product possible. When preparing for shearing day, at a minimum, consider the following first three steps below to optimize effectiveness and financial return. With a fine, white-face wool operation, the last two steps should additionally be considered.

- Minimize wool contamination.
- Sort sheep before shearing and package different types of wool separately.
- Remove belly wool and tags during shearing and package separately.
- Some wools benefit from table skirting to remove inferior wool.
- Class wool in like groups for commercial marketing purposes.

# National Scrapie Eradication Program December 2019 Report

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**Performance Measures** – The percent of cull black-faced sheep found positive at slaughter and the percent of cull sheep found positive at slaughter and adjusted for face color remains at 0 percent. The retrospective 6-month rolling average of the percent positive, black-faced sheep sampled at RSSS collection sites has been 0 since June 2016.

**Scrapie Testing Results** – In October 2019, lymph node tissue collected from a lamb at slaughter had suspect staining on IHC. Genotype of the lamb was AA at codon 136 and RR at codon 171, which is considered to be resistant to classical scrapie. Additional testing, using three alternative antibodies to scrapie, produced mixed results. Due to the unusual staining, results for this animal were reported as ‘inconclusive’ for classical scrapie. Further testing was conducted on the flock which was depopulated for diagnostic purposes and all samples were not detected by IHC. This case has similar staining to an RR lamb tested in April 2018.

**Infected and Source Flocks** - There have been no infected herds identified in FY 2020. One flock in Texas has an open infected status since April 2016, but there are no exposed animals on the premises. Cleaning and disinfection of the premises has to be completed before the status can be closed. The peak in designated infected and source flocks was in 2005 with 180 flocks.

**Scrapie in Goats** –The total number of NVSL confirmed positive cases in goats is 44 since FY 2002. Samples from three of these positive animals were collected through RSSS, one in November 2014, the second in July 2018, and the most recent in June 2019. The remainder of the positive cases have been found through testing of clinical suspects, testing of exposed animals, and trace-out investigations.

**Scrapie Free Flock Certification Program (SFCP)** – As of December 31, 2019, there were 232 flocks participating in the Scrapie Free Flock Certification Program (SFCP). Statuses of these flocks were 45 export monitored, 42 export certified, and 145 select monitored flocks.

## ID Tags

The National Scrapie Eradication Program, is providing up to 100 plastic flock ID tags free-of-charge, to first time participants in the sheep and goat identification program through fiscal year (FY) 2020 or until the available funds are expended. Producers will need to purchase the compatible applicator from the tag manufacturer. APHIS is working with sheep and goat organizations to develop a plan for transitioning toward electronic identification to improve our nation’s ability to quickly trace exposed and diseased animals in the event of an outbreak.

APHIS discontinued the availability of no-cost metal tags for producers on 8/31/19. Dealers and markets may continue to receive metal serial tags at no cost through FY 2020 or until the available funds are expended. Flock ID tag numbers are the producer’s flock ID assigned by APHIS or the State followed by an individual animal number. Metal serial tag numbers have the state postal abbreviation, 2 letters followed by 4 numbers. Plastic serial tags have the state postal abbreviation, a letter and a number in either order, followed by 4 numbers.

To request official sheep and goat tags, a flock or premises ID or both, call 1-866-USDA-Tag (866-873-2824).

## Submitting Mature Heads

USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) provides shipping boxes and labels for the submission of heads for scrapie testing at no cost to producers. Many veterinary diagnostic laboratories also accept heads for scrapie testing. To request a box or more information on sample submission, contact the veterinary services field office for your state. Field offices can be reached through the toll-free number, 866-873-2824. State contact information is available at

[www.aphis.usda.gov/animal\\_health/downloads/sprs\\_contact/field\\_office\\_contact\\_info.pdf](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/downloads/sprs_contact/field_office_contact_info.pdf).

For information on ordering official sheep and goat ear tags/devices visit [www.aphis.usda.gov](http://www.aphis.usda.gov).



## New Year, Same Animal Activist Tactics

It may be new year, but the Animal Agriculture Alliance is expecting business as usual from animal rights activists. They are likely to protest at any venue where they can garner attention and anywhere animals are present – farms, ranches, processing plants, fairs, expos and even truck stops. Here are a few pieces of advice to help those working in animal agriculture prepare.

**Do not engage.** Whether you encounter a protester at an event or on a farm or if an activist approaches a truck transporting animals at a truck stop, it is always best to ignore them and immediately contact law enforcement. Keep your cool and always assume you are being recorded or livestreamed online in your interaction, regardless of what you are told or whether a camera is visible. In one incident, the activists falsely claimed they were not recording the conversation at a poultry plant as they were livestreaming on Facebook.

**Do take photos.** Take photos of operator, license plates and vehicles involved – including the drones if applicable. Any identifying information helps law enforcement and producer trade organizations (i.e. CWGA, Farm Bureau).

**Train Employees.** Make sure employees at every level know how to handle unexpected and unauthorized visitors. Activists often approach farm or plant employees first when arriving at a facility. In one instance, activists entered a dairy processing plant office and demanded the receptionist tell them where the dairy farms producing for that plant are located. In another situation, a woman brought a young child to the gate of a plant and pleaded to be let in for the child to use the restroom. Once they were inside, she began running around taking photos and trying to access secure areas.

**Do not Negotiate.** One group has started demanding for animals to be released to them from farms, emboldened by a police officer who let them take one chicken in protest, and a farm who gave them 100 animals. While it might be tempting to try to get the group to leave by allowing them to take an animal, it is vitally important you do not give in to their demands. Giving the group an animal significantly weakens attempts to convey why their actions are unacceptable. Negotiating with an organization who wants to see animal liberation and the end of animal agriculture will not be productive.

**Build Relationships with Law Enforcement.** Proactively build relationships with law enforcement and first responders in your community. Let your local police department know about the protests targeting animal agriculture across the country and get advice from them on preparing.

Like most things, it's best to be prepared. If you haven't done so already, use the new year as an opportunity to update or create a crisis plan.

### New Resources on Understanding Activism, Farm Security and Consumer Engagement

One of the Animal Agriculture Alliance's newly updated resources is the animal rights activist groups web. The web details how activist groups are connected through funding, project collaboration and flow of staff and volunteers. "The purpose of this web is to show that while some groups publicly represent themselves as moderate and others are more upfront about their radical views, they are all connected with the same agenda of ending animal agriculture," said Kay Johnson Smith, Alliance president and CEO. To view the web, visit <https://animalagalliance.org/initiatives/monitoring-activism>.

The Animal Agriculture Alliance has more in-depth resources and information available to anyone about animal rights activism at [AnimalAgAlliance.org/Protect](https://AnimalAgAlliance.org/Protect).

**CWGA Comment** - *Sonoma and Stanislaus Counties were hot spots for animal activist activity in 2019. Similar activity is expected to continue in 2020. While the focus of the activity is on the dairy and poultry sectors, please be aware of your surroundings and review the information above in the event you experience any activity at your operation.*