

## **Bluetongue virus found in Ontario beef herd**

*For immediate release*

**September 3, 2015 (Guelph, ON)** The Ontario Sheep Marketing Agency (OSMA) was informed today that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has confirmed that there has been a positive case of Bluetongue virus in an Ontario cattle herd.

“The threat from Bluetongue is now present and real” says Dennis Fischer, Chairman of OSMA. “The virus is transmitted primarily through biting midges which can be blown by the wind over long distances, so it is difficult to put any biosecurity measures in place to prevent its introduction on-to your farm. We are however, encouraging producers to keep sheep away from wet and low-lying areas and if possible, house in barns at night when the midges are most active.”

The strain of BT found is sero-type 13, which is endemic to North America and has been taken off of the Reportable Disease list. This means that if a producer does have a positive case on their property they are not eligible for CFIA compensation. That being said producers are asked to keep an eye out for the signs and symptoms of the disease in their flocks. Sheep with bluetongue infection have high fevers (> 41 C), and are very ill. They may appear severely lame and muzzle, feet, ears, or other body parts are swollen due to inflammation caused by the virus. The tongue and gums may also be swollen and eroded. Case fatality rates are very high and in an epidemic situation, the disease can cause up to 30% of the flock to die. If you have concerns that this disease may be present in your flock or you wish to know more about protecting your sheep from infection, contact your flock veterinarian. Under the Ontario Animal Health Act, BT is immediate notifiable to the Chief Veterinarian of Ontario.

While no controls measures will be put in place by the CFIA at this time, OSMA will be discussing with the Small Ruminant Surveillance Network what can be done provincially to help better assess the sheep industry’s risk. The biggest impact will be on export certificates for cattle and small ruminants; live, semen and embryos.

The Ontario Sheep Marketing Agency (OSMA) is a producer organization representing all aspects of the sheep industry in Ontario. Established in 1985 under the Ontario Farm Products Marketing Act, OSMA’s mission is to enhance producer returns and provide consumers with premium lamb and sheep products by encouraging Ontario sheep producers to provide quality, year-round product through advocacy, industry capacity, research and development and market development.