

**MEMO TO ONTARIO SHEEP PRODUCERS
REGARDING TAIL DOCKING**

Over the past few months OSMA Board members had been fielding concerns around the length of tails of sheep at sheep shows and this, coupled with increasing public scrutiny around livestock production, led to the OSMA Board deciding that it had to ensure that OSMA's actions were in line with the best management practices that are being promoted.

The result is that OSMA will no longer be supporting events or shows unless it can be assured that the animals in attendance will be compliant with the Codes of Practice in relation to tail docking. The timing for this decision falls in line with OSMA's new Fiscal Year and, as such, is effective immediately.

Given that the sheep that are shown at fairs are the ones that are most susceptible to the public eye, the OSMA Board believes that action needs to be taken in order to minimize any potential threats to the industry. The issue of tail docking has already been flagged by other groups with Farm and Food Care recently releasing a Trend Watch on the issue. Additionally the Canadian Sheep Federation has started work on combining the Codes of Practice with their *Food Safe Farm Practices* program. And, in recent years OSMA has had inquiries from retail outlets wanting to know if Ontario sheep producers underwent welfare audits.

With increasing public awareness, all livestock sectors have been put under intense scrutiny about certain practices which may be impinging on the animal's welfare. This is one of the reasons why Codes of Practice, for the livestock industries (not just for sheep), have been reviewed and updated within the last few years.

The original recommended Code of Practice for sheep, written in 1995 underwent a review process that began in 2012. The process ended in 2014, when the Codes of Practice were ratified by the Canadian sheep industry and some practices were included as requirements.

If you have any questions and/or comments please feel free to contact your District Director or the OSMA office.