



The Need for Continued Relevant Professional Development

I'm pleased to be able to welcome Lee Brien to the Ontario Sheep Farmers (OSF) board of directors. Lee's extensive experience in the sheep industry will further broaden the perspective of an already diverse board that has the expertise and a desire to move the industry forward. While I write this report for the June edition of OSN, I know that district 4 is also working on a finalizing a recommendation for a provincial director to submit to Farm Products for appointment. It's important that the OSF has a full slate of provincial directors and even more important that the directors have the support of their districts; especially since the board has spent considerable time over the past few months focusing on leadership, how to develop it, and how to ensure governance effectiveness.

Throughout my experience as a farmer and having had the privilege of being around the OSF board table working collaboratively with other sheep farms to grow and support the sector, I have come to appreciate the need for ongoing knowledge transfer, producer education, and professional development. An example of the OSF's commitment to this would be our Master Shepherds Course (see page 28) the foundation of our producer education programs. The course is comprised of 12, two-day modules covering a wide variety of sheep production topics and lots of one on one discussions. Each module in the course consists of one and one-half days of classroom style presentations and discussions, and a half day of farm and industry tours. OSF continues to receive positive feedback and producers asking for the course to continue.

Last year the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) and the OSF had over 50 people participate in the Introduction to Small Ruminant Production Course. This course is designed specifically for

people who have no experience in small ruminant farming but want to get started in the business. With growing interest in the industry, there is enough demand to run the course again this summer (see page 9). Each course provides a comprehensive overview of the sector (meat, fibre and dairy) and helps those attending decide if sheep farming is really for them.

Back by popular demand are the fecal egg count courses. OSF is offering five courses (see page 17) in July. The courses are a combination of lecture, videos and hands-on training on how to do a Modified McMaster Fecal Egg Count.

The OSF has also started to plan another round of on-farm euthanasia courses. The course is designed to teach producers how to recognize when an animal needs to be euthanized and how to properly use a captive bolt to euthanize quickly and humanely. Course participants leave the course with a euthanasia standard operating procedure for their farm and a captive bolt gun. Once the course details are finalized, they will be advertised in the Messenger and through the OSN. If you are interested in taking the course, please contact the office.

Professional development and education programs like these are important part of ensuring that sheep farmers have the tools to they need to keep their farm businesses profitable. If you have any suggestions on other courses that OSF should consider offering, please reach out to your provincial director. **OSN**

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