

ONTARIO

Vol. 42 - Issue 3 **Fall 2024**

SHEEP NEWS

Unlocking Profit Potential

**Rob Flack, Championing Ontario
as an Agri-Food Powerhouse**

OSF Year in Review

**Ontario Lamb International and
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Publications Mail Registration Number:

40033529 ISSN 0844-5303

FALL 2024

Date of Issue: November 2024

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COVER PHOTO: Photograph by Petra Aeberhard

DESIGN & LAYOUT:

Prism Studios Advertising & Design Inc.

DEADLINES FOR SUBMITTING TO ONTARIO SHEEP NEWS:

Spring Issue - February 3rd • Summer Issue - May 4th • Fall Issue - August 3rd • Winter Issue - January 3rd, 2025

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

By Art Alblas, Chair, Ontario Sheep Farmers

Priority Setting for 2024/25

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your chair over the 2023/24 fiscal year. It has been a pleasure to work with the board to set new priorities for the year and accomplish the goals of the organization.

Throughout the year, the OSF board held priority setting sessions twice – once in December with the new board after the AGM, and then again at our two-day July board retreat in Walkerton. In December, we decided to invest in marketing and market development with two new projects – a summer BBQ promotion when lamb prices are typically at their lowest, and an international market research project to help set longer-term marketing priorities focusing on key consumer demographics.

At the meeting in July, the board discussed advocacy and research priorities as well as resources required for established producers through the new Sheep Institute website.

board also discussed the need for new priorities to meet the evolving needs of our members. The highest priority was access to veterinary tools like dewormers, vaccines and medications that are approved for use around the world, but not in Canada. An issue that has come up repeatedly in our districts is a need to improve the provincial Predation Program to address the need for representative commercial breeding stock valuations, long claim timelines and the varying levels of program knowledge at the municipal level. OSF will meet with Ministry representatives this fall to explore options to improve the program. At our July meeting, it was also suggested that OSF consider exploring plastic recycling opportunities and direct-to-processing options for animals not fit for auction.

In research, we have started the process of engaging our sheep researchers and we are hoping to grow the use of the Ponsonby research station. Our researchers have suggested we support sheep research by engaging the University of Guelph, Ridgetown College and the Ontario Veterinary College to raise the profile of sheep and help them attract Master and PhD level students to the field.

When developing educational resources for The Sheep Institute, our board requested more resources for experienced farmers, specifically business tools for established producers. OSF will provide a full suite of education programs for all skill levels in sheep production. The organization is also preparing for the next cohort of Master Shepherd's students to start in January 2025 and a full series of webinars for the fall and winter, starting with a market report in November.

Finally, new for 2024/25 is a Code of Practice review, led by the National Farm Animal Care Council and Canadian Sheep Federation. There will be opportunities throughout the next year to engage in the process of updating the Code of Practice and OSF will include our members at each consultation point.

The OSF board encourages you to attend district meetings and engage in producer surveys to provide feedback to the organization. We are particularly interested in your advocacy and research priorities in 2024/25 and have asked Districts to hold discussions at meetings throughout the year and bring your ideas to the board.

Our theme for 2024/25 is "Unlocking Profit Potential". Member engagement and idea sharing throughout the organization will help us collectively meet our goals. **OSN**



Ponsonby Research Station

When brainstorming advocacy priorities, the board acknowledged that our top priority is still a \$100 million additional investment by the province in the Risk Management Program. However, the

Editorial policy: Ontario Sheep Farmers welcomes and encourages letters to the editor and article suggestions from farmers and industry partners as a means of communicating with the Ontario Sheep Farmers board of directors and other farmers on issues of importance. Letters may be on any sheep industry topic, including Ontario Sheep Farmers' policies, programs and procedure. Letters may address previous articles or letters to the editor, and the editor may comment on the accuracy of the information in letters. Letters should not exceed 300 words and may be edited for style and grammatical errors. When submitting a letter, please include the name of the author, address, phone number and/or email address (for verification purposes). Printed letters will include the author's name. Potentially defamatory or libelous material, or personal attacks on individuals will not be permitted. If an author feels that the editor has inappropriately edited or not print a letter, a written request can be submitted to the board of directors for review to determine if there has been a violation of *Ontario Sheep News'* editorial policy.



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Erin Morgan, Executive Director
emorgan@ontariosheep.org

District Meeting Recap

The last couple of months have been a whirlwind of travel and district meetings as we finalized the 2023/24 financial year. I am grateful to be working with such dedicated producers, in this exciting industry.

The meetings started early this summer with District 6 and District 1 holding their meetings in early August. District 6 had Brad DeWolf as a guest speaker to share pesticide management strategies to minimize dewormer resistance. District 1 toured the Parkhill Meats processing facility and learned about their expansion project then returned to the pavilion in Ailsa Craig for a presentation from the Ontario Ministry of Transportation on trailer safety.

At the end of August, districts 3, 5 and 8 held their meetings and all opted for farm tours. Thank you to the Harper, Martin and Bennett families for opening your barns to our members. All three facilities offered different approaches to sheep farming that started interesting discussions. The Harper family farm has a combination sheep and beef operation in a new barn, the Martin farm has a built a platform over the feed alleys to store straw for an easy and efficient way to bed pens and the Bennett farm has a new biodigester on site to manage deadstock.

District 4 also met at the end of August at the Ancaster Fairgrounds (sharing the facility with an Indian wedding that rivaled our meeting for fun) and won the award for most resolutions.

The beginning of September began the road trip to Norwood, Earlton and Elmwood over three days of perfect late summer weather. District 7's guest speaker was Mike Carter from Agrivoltaics Canada, who shared an overview of solar farm grazing in Ontario and discussed future opportunities for sheep farmers. In the north, District 11 had a presentation from local veterinarian Dr. Amy Gaw who offered a primer on managing parasites. The District 2 presentation offered a new perspective to OSF members on environmental sustainability by inviting guest speaker Alex Hamilton from Dairy Farmers of Ontario to share the success of their quality assurance programs.

The district meeting schedule concluded with Districts 9 and 10 holding their meetings in the second week of September. Congratulations to District 9 for their significant turnout of over 25 producers to hear Dr. Emma Borkowski's presentation on her projects to evaluate sheep for parasite resistance using the CarLA saliva test. District 10 had a guest presentation from Canadian Sheep Federation General Manager, Corlena Patterson, on the Global Sheep Producers' Forum's initiatives to support youth development and their recent trip to Australia's LambEx conference.

Thank you to the committee members who have volunteered their time to organize meetings and educational opportunities for the producers in their districts throughout the year. Thank you especially to the members who have dedicated their time over many years to their districts and who have retired this year from their district committees. **OSN**

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Increasing Profitability with Canadian Software

By Stacey Sage

The sheep industry is experiencing a technological renaissance driven by innovative software to enhance efficiency and productivity. As farmers face increasing pressures from market demands and sustainability, leveraging advanced solutions has become essential.

Among the frontrunners of Canadian software services for sheep farmers are AgSights and EweManage, two tools that streamline operations and empower producers to make informed decisions. These tools are reshaping how sheep farmers manage their flocks, improve yields, and navigate the complexities of modern agriculture.

AgSights

In a recent episode of the Flock Talk podcast, Betty Jo Almond, General Manager of AgSights, shared insights about the organization's offerings for Ontario sheep farmers. AgSights is a not-for-profit member organization that enhances livestock management through innovative tools and technology. They offer a comprehensive farm management software, BioTrack Plus, designed to help farmers easily track and manage their flock's health and productivity. The software integrates with existing systems, provides data transparency, and allows customized data views.

Additionally, AgSights offers long-distance tags for easy livestock monitoring and is developing heat detection technology to optimize breeding management. They also collaborate with industry partners on the "Processor Links" project, which aims to improve processing efficiencies for farmers by streamlining scheduling for livestock processing, much like an "Expedia for abattoirs." This tool allows farmers to easily find processing services, book space, and manage reservations online.



Looking ahead, AgSights focuses on growing its support for sheep farmers through regular webinars, personalized consulting, and continued development of genetic improvement and farm management tools. AgSights remains committed to helping Ontario sheep farmers enhance their operations and achieve long-term success by partnering on research projects and offering innovative solutions.

EweManage

EweManage is a powerful, Canadian-made software solution designed specifically for sheep and lamb producers. It empowers them to optimize operations and provide exceptional care for their flocks.

EweManage enables farmers to track critical metrics that drive profitability by facilitating easy data recording and analysis. With comprehensive reporting features, producers can identify trends and implement strategies that enhance

productivity and animal welfare. Ultimately, this innovative tool supports the health of the flock and helps farmers achieve greater financial success, making it an invaluable asset in the modern sheep industry.

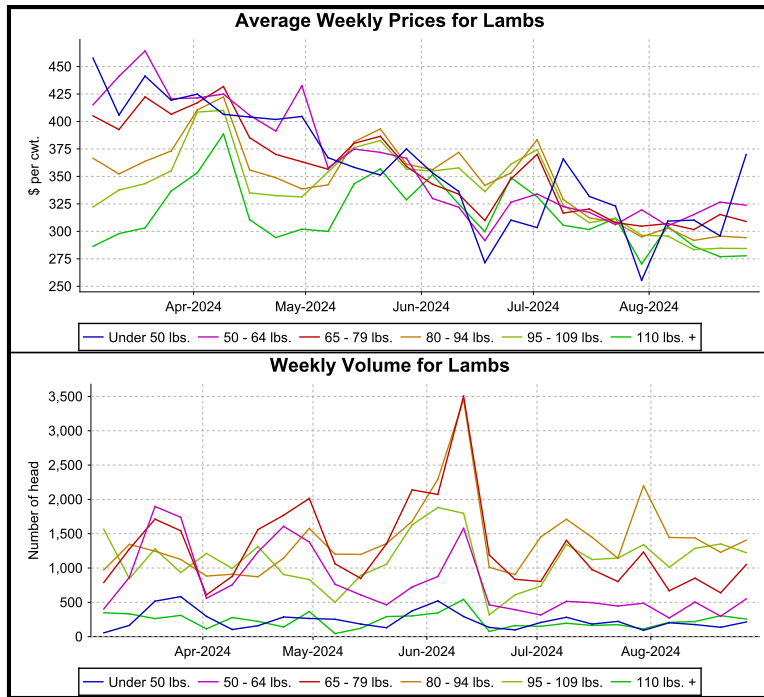
Genovis and EweManage can integrate and communicate through data exchange protocols, allowing farmers to leverage the strengths of both systems. Genovis focuses on genetic improvement and performance data, providing insights into breeding and selection. When integrated with EweManage, which specializes in flock management and operational efficiency, farmers can create a comprehensive view of their sheep's genetics alongside critical management metrics.

By combining genetic insights from Genovis with the operational data from EweManage, producers can optimize breeding strategies, enhance flock productivity, and improve overall farm management, ultimately leading to better outcomes for their operations. In essence, Genovis and EweManage's collaboration empowers sheep farmers to harness data-driven insights, streamline their practices, and achieve greater success in the industry.

As farms continue adapting to modern agriculture's demands, integrating innovative tools like AgSights and EweManage is essential. By embracing these advancements, farmers can improve flock management, boost productivity, and ensure the welfare of their animals. As sheep producers leverage these innovative software tools, they position themselves for greater profitability and long-term success, securing a vibrant future for their farms and the industry. Embracing technology isn't just a trend; it's a necessary evolution for farmers dedicated to thriving in a competitive market. **OSN**

THE ONTARIO MARKET REPORT

Full market information can be found every week in the Ontario Farmer and online at www.OntarioSheep.org under "Market Information". The graphs here show the trends in pricing and volume of the last six months in Ontario. **OSN**



You can also listen to the weekly information by calling 519-836-0043 and press 4 to go to the market line.

Market information for OLEX, the Ontario Stockyards, Brussels and Embrun are recorded every week. You can also find archived weekly summaries on the Market page.

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Forage U-Pick

A Forage Species Selection Tool Now Available Canada-Wide

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A project was initiated to develop a forage selection tool that would meet the needs of producers across Canada. The Beef Cattle Research Council's (BCRC) Forage U-Pick tool was originally created through

the contributions of more than 13 different organizations to help producers select forage species that are a good fit for their fields. However, this interactive selection tool was limited to Western Canada until now.

considerations that can positively or negatively contribute to selecting the ideal forage species. For example, soil pH is a critical consideration for Atlantic growers. Forage U-Pick walks growers through defining the characteristics of each specific field and matches forages that are best suited to those conditions.

Forage U-Pick now includes Eastern Canada, and has a dedicated French site, www.boussolefourragere.ca, making it accessible for more Canadian forage growers. "Good quality information should not be limited. All producers need information they can take onto their farms and help to make the best decisions possible for good forage production," Amy Higgins notes. "Straight forage producers, livestock producers, or crop producers can now take advantage of Forage U-Pick."

Partnerships make projects like this happen. In addition to funding provided by the Beef Cattle Research Council, the expansion of Forage U-Pick was supported by The 2018-2023 Innov'Action agroalimentaire program under the Canada-Quebec Agreement for the Implementation of the Canadian Agricultural Partnership; Conseil Québécois des Plantes Fourragères; Maritime Beef Council; Ontario Forage Council; Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs; and through Pan Atlantic collaboration from the provinces of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island with Canadian Agricultural Partnership support.

For more information about the newly expanded Forage U-Pick tool, contact:

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Rob Flack, Championing Ontario as an Agri-Food Powerhouse

Ontario's agricultural landscape is a dynamic tapestry of innovation, tradition, and economic vitality. At the forefront of this sector stands Rob Flack, the province's newly appointed Minister of Agriculture, Food & Agribusiness and Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) for Elgin-Middlesex-London. Recently, Flack joined us on the Flock Talk podcast to discuss his journey, priorities, and vision for Ontario's agriculture.

How it Began

Although Flack didn't grow up on a farm, agriculture has been a cornerstone of his life since childhood. "I was around my grandfather's farm right from birth and worked on farms," he recalls. This early exposure ignited a passion that led him to the University of Guelph, where he further immersed himself in agricultural studies.

Post-graduation, Flack embarked on a career with Masterfeeds, a subsidiary of Maple Leaf Mills. Starting as a sales trainee, he climbed the ranks to become CEO in 1993. "I helped build the company with a great team," he notes, emphasizing

the collaborative effort behind the company's success.

A Lifelong Commitment to Public Service

Flack's venture into politics was fueled by a desire to serve. "My father and mother always taught that to those whom much has been given, much is expected," he shares. Inspired by the election of William Grenville Davis as Premier when Flack was in grade seven, he became actively involved in political campaigns and party activities throughout his life.

Flack was first elected as MPP for Elgin-Middlesex-London in June 2022 and previously served as Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs. Minister Flack was elected as MPP for Elgin-Middlesex-London in June 2022. "Serving your community first and foremost has been the most gratifying," he says, highlighting his dedication to his constituents in Elgin-Middlesex-London. He currently owns a farm and raises Hereford cattle.

Redefining the Ministry's Focus

One of the significant changes under Flack's leadership is the ministry's rebranding from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to the Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Agribusiness. This shift signals a renewed emphasis on the economic potential of agriculture. "What the premier wants me and our team to do is to put an economic lens on agriculture," Flack explains.

He underscores the magnitude of Ontario's agri-food sector:

- **Economic Impact:** Contributing to almost \$51 billion to Ontario's GDP.
- **Employment:** Providing jobs for approximately 871,000 people, an increase of 30,000 since 2018.
- **Exports:** Achieving \$26.2 billion in exports last year, up 21% since 2021.

"Most people don't understand the magnitude of agri-food from the farm gate to the consumer's plate," Flack notes. His goal is to highlight this impact and create

an environment conducive to growth and investment.

Advancing the Grow Ontario Strategy

Flack reaffirms the government's commitment to the Grow Ontario Strategy, which aims to:

- Increase consumption and production of Ontario-grown food by 30% by 2032.
- Boost the province's food and beverage manufacturing GDP by 10%.
- Expand agri-food exports by 8% annually.

"We're on track with those goals," he states, emphasizing that the ministry's new focus aligns seamlessly with the strategy. Flack believes that by fostering a supportive environment, the sector will continue to thrive.

Supporting Farmers Through the Risk Management Program

Addressing the Risk Management Program

(RMP), Flack recognizes its crucial role in keeping Ontario's farmers competitive. "There's a misconception of what it is," he says. "It's not a handout; it's to make sure that the cost of production in Ontario can compete with our border states."

Flack is committed to continually monitoring and evolving the RMP to meet farmers' needs. "We're anticipating your input along with other commodity groups to continue to put a good program together," he tells podcast listeners, acknowledging the collaborative effort required to sustain the sector.

A Vision for the Future

Flack's optimism for Ontario's agriculture is palpable. "Ontario is an agri-food powerhouse, second largest in North America," he proclaims. He envisions a future where the industry is not just sustained but celebrated and expanded. "We have to not take a step back, but take a step forward, be in the limelight, showcase it, invest in it, create the environment for it to grow, and we will all succeed together."

For sheep farmers and the broader agricultural community, Flack's approach is both encouraging and inspiring. "Farmers are at the top of the food chain because they produce the commodities and the food that goes into what we get to eat every day," he asserts. His recognition of farmers' pivotal role underscores his commitment to supporting them at every level.

Rob Flack brings a wealth of experience and a fresh perspective to his role as Minister of Agriculture, Food & Agribusiness. His dedication to highlighting the economic significance of agriculture and supporting farmers positions Ontario's agri-food sector for a promising future. As he aptly puts it, "Create the environment and get the hell out of the way, and they'll [farmers will] do a great job." For more insights from Minister Flack, listen to his full interview on OSF's Flock Talk podcast. **OSN**



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Agrivoltaics: A New Frontier for Ontario Sheep Farmers

By OSF & Mike Carter, Founding Director at Agrivoltaics Canada

In a recent episode of Flock Talk, Ontario Sheep Farmers had the pleasure of hosting Mike Carter, a founding director of Agrivoltaics Canada, to discuss the innovative concept of agrivoltaics and its potential impact on Ontario's sheep farming community. Agrivoltaics, also known as agri-solar or dual-use solar, is an approach that integrates solar energy production with agricultural practices, allowing both to coexist on the same land. This concept has been gaining traction worldwide as a sustainable solution that optimizes land use and provides economic, environmental, and social benefits.

What is Agrivoltaics?

Agrivoltaics involves the strategic placement of solar panels on agricultural land, allowing for both energy production and agricultural activities to occur simultaneously. Traditionally, solar installations were seen as a binary choice: land could be used either for farming or for solar energy production, but not both. However, agrivoltaics challenges this notion by proving that solar panels can coexist with crops, grazing livestock, and other farming activities in a way that benefits both energy generation and agricultural output.

"The term 'agrivoltaics' is a play on agriculture and photovoltaics," Mike Carter explained. "The idea is to optimize land use by integrating solar panels in a manner that supports ongoing agricultural practices while generating renewable energy. Historically, solar was seen as an either-or option — either you farm, or you produce solar energy. Agrivoltaics makes it possible to do both in a meaningful way."

Benefits of Agrivoltaics for Sheep Farmers

Agrivoltaics offers several potential benefits for sheep farmers:

1. **Optimized Land Use:** Agrivoltaics enables farmers to maximize the utility of their land by producing renewable energy while continuing

their agricultural operations. For example, sheep can graze around and under solar panels, providing natural vegetation management while benefiting from the shade created by the panels. "Shade-tolerant crops grow quite well under solar panels, and even grazing livestock like sheep can see health and productivity benefits from the cooler microclimates," Mike said.

2. **Improved Crop and Pasture Yields:**

Research from around the world, including studies aggregated by Agrivoltaics Canada, has demonstrated that certain crops and pasture grasses thrive in the microclimates created by solar panels. The shading effect can help retain moisture in the soil, reduce stress from direct sunlight, and extend growing seasons. "We've seen positive outcomes with various crops, including those used for grazing," Mike noted. "In drier climates, the cooling effects and moisture retention provided by the panels can significantly benefit the growth of late-summer grasses."

3. **Economic Opportunities:**

Agrivoltaics provides new revenue streams for farmers. Farmers can lease their land to solar developers, invest in their own solar installations, or partner with developers to create a shared profit model. "You can generate profit from leasing the land, owning the solar installation, or providing grazing services to maintain the vegetation around the solar panels," explained Mike. This dual-use approach can enhance farm income stability, particularly in times of fluctuating agricultural markets.

4. **Environmental Benefits:**

The environmental benefits of agrivoltaics are substantial. By integrating renewable energy generation with farming, agrivoltaics contributes to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. It also supports soil health and biodiversity, as the managed landscapes under and around solar panels can promote habitat for pollinators and other beneficial organisms. "There are water benefits as well, particularly in regions where moisture retention is critical," added Mike.

Implementing Agrivoltaics: The Process

Developing an agrivoltaic project involves several key steps, from initial planning to full implementation says Mike, Founding Partner of First Green Energy, a firm seeking to create an opportunity for solar grazing to meet Ontario's newly announced plans to procure 5000 megawatts of new energy meet the provinces growing energy needs. "The process starts with engaging local farming communities to identify suitable sites," Mike explained. "This includes finding lands that are compatible with solar and agricultural use, such as lower-class soils that might benefit from the dual-purpose approach."

The next steps involve assessing the technical feasibility of the site, including proximity to grid power for energy transmission, and understanding any environmental and social impacts. Once a suitable site is identified, the design phase begins, which considers various factors such as solar panel height, spacing, and orientation to optimize both energy production and agricultural productivity. "For example, in sheep farming, fencing, water management, and grazing patterns need to be carefully planned to ensure that the solar panels are protected while allowing sheep to graze freely," Mike elaborated.

Overcoming Barriers and Looking Ahead

Despite its potential, agrivoltaics is still relatively new in Canada, and Ontario lags behind other regions in implementing this technology. Several factors contribute to this, including historical perceptions of solar energy projects as disruptive or incompatible with farming. "Ontario was an early leader in renewable energy adoption, but there was a lot of pushback due to perceived high costs and lack of stakeholder engagement," Mike said. "However, we're seeing that when we engage directly with farmers

and communities with our approach, there's less opposition than we might have thought."

Agrivoltaics Canada is working hard to change these perceptions by demonstrating the viability of agrivoltaics through pilot projects and partnerships with local farmers. "We advocate for 'farm-first solar,' ensuring that agricultural activities remain at the core of our projects," emphasized Mike. "By collaborating with farmers from the start and designing projects that meet their needs, we aim to create models that other regions can replicate."

Opportunities for Ontario Sheep Farmers

For Ontario sheep farmers, agrivoltaics presents a unique opportunity to diversify their income and contribute to sustainable energy production. "There's already a strong tradition of solar grazing in Canada, and sheep farmers are well-positioned to benefit from converting

pre-existing conventional solar sites to grazed operations, and ideally, can service new Ontario projects that are slated to commence being selected next year," Mike noted. The American Solar Grazing Association, is a fast growing group in the US, representing over over 50,000 grazed acres, that have overseen a tripling of the Texas sheep flock and growing. Sheep demand is growing in Canada, and as natural vegetation managers, sheep offer a unique advantage for farmers. This creates an exciting opportunity for sheep farmers to thrive as the agrivoltaics takes off.

Agrivoltaics Canada continues to engage both the farming community and Ontario policymakers to highlight existing sheep farming activities on solar farms, advocating for agrivoltaics as a permitted land-use practice under the upcoming energy procurements. Historically, prime agricultural areas have been protected from solar development, reflecting an outdated view that solar energy and farming could not coexist. As a result,

solar grazing developments are currently not permitted in prime agricultural areas as defined by the Province of Ontario. However, modern agrivoltaics projects prioritize soil and compaction management, incorporating agricultural impact design to ensure that farming can not only take place but thrive on these lands for decades. Alberta has already introduced policy allowing agrivoltaics on prime farmland, setting a precedent Ontario may follow. Farmers interested in exploring agrivoltaics and grazing opportunities can connect with Agrivoltaics Canada for more information and support. "We're here to help farmers and communities understand the potential benefits and navigate the complexities of starting a project," said Mike. "Our goal is to make agrivoltaics accessible and beneficial for farmers, while also contributing to a greener future."

For more information on agrivoltaics and how it can benefit your sheep farming operation, visit Agrivoltaics Canada at agrivoltaicscanada.ca. **OSN**

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Skills Development Workshops

In August Ontario Sheep Farmers held two Skills Development workshops, in Norwood Ontario and Rockwood Ontario. Thank you to Todd and Jennifer Payne of Asphodel Sheep Co. for hosting our Norwood event, and thank you to Glen and Sharon Duff of Duff Farms for hosting our Rockwood event.

Instructors Anita O'Brien and Heather Johnson from Ontario Sheep Farmers and Jillian Craig from OMAFA assisted producers in learning hands on techniques for catch and restraint, drenching, vaccinating, calibration of equipment, breeding soundness evaluation and hoof trimming. **OSN**



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Results From **CANADA'S** Outdoor Farm Show

Ontario Sheep Farmers had a fantastic experience at Canada's Outdoor Farm Show, thanks to the support and dedication of our programming partners, volunteers and staff.

Some of our programming included:

- Handling demo with Brussels Agri Service and Te Pari where producers got to see firsthand how these systems work. We had experts like Delma Kennedy from OMAFA speaking on the dos and don'ts of setting up your system

- Delicious lamb samplers where the OSF team handed out free lamb spiedinis, barbecued right at our booth.
- Market assessment evaluation where producers got a chance to work with the processors and learn to assess the amount of finish a market animal is carrying and whether or not they are ready to market. Attendees received hands-on experience with live lambs.
- Benefits of feeding a TMR - a live demo with Jaylor Mini Mixers. We completed a full ration from start to finish, followed

up with Courtney from Vriens Nutrition who analyzing the feed and performed a shaker box test to verify the quality of feed it produced and the benefits of it.

Ontario Sheep Farmers thanks everyone who volunteered their time or who stopped by our booth and enjoyed our programming at the show! **OSN**





Your Ontario Sheep Farmers board of directors, from left to right are Jenna Wight (D11), Keith Todd (D3), Devon Wensink (D10), Karen Davis (D8), Art Alblas (Chair, D1), Ken Lamb (D7), Grant Cowan (D6), Ryan Schill (D5), Jay Lennox (D2), Wesley Godden (D9) and Marusha Kostuk (D4). Thank you to each director for dedicating their time to represent their districts and making the commitment to improving the industry on behalf of the members of OSF.

Year in Review

The Ontario Sheep Farmers board of directors set the course for the 2023/24 fiscal year with the theme, "Towards a Stronger Future". The board reviewed the strategic plan early in the year and prioritized market development and market research initiatives with a clear return on investment to producers.

The 2022/23 ended in a budget surplus that was directed toward marketing initiatives and the development of The Sheep Institute – the highest priority in the strategic plan under the Mastery pillar. There are five pillars in the Ontario Sheep Farmers strategic plan:

1. Community - Building public policy and public trust relationships as the trusted authority for the business of sheep farming
2. Prosperity - Building more dynamic market relationships with a focus on supply chain optimization
3. Mastery - Building a more effective business support system with a focus on the professional development for sheep farming
4. Invest - Building a system that identifies and supports the industry leadership we need now and into the future

5. Operations - Building the organizational talent and resources capacities to effectively support Ontario's sheep farmers

Community

This year, we had many opportunities to meet with the Minister of Agriculture, the minister's staff and the team at the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA). In June 2024, the government announced a change of agriculture minister from Lisa Thompson to Rob Flack. Since that date, OSF has had many opportunities to meet with Minister Flack and we will continue to cultivate a strong relationship with the new minister and his staff. OSF worked well with Minister Thompson, and we wish her well in her new role as Minister of Rural Affairs.

The Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition, including Grain Farmers, Beef Farmers, Fruit and Vegetable Growers, and Pork and Veal Farmers, met with the minister several times throughout the year to advocate for a greater provincial investment in the Risk Management Program. OSF is working with our provincial commodity board colleagues to lobby the Finance Committee and Treasury Board in collaboration with the Minister.

There were two agricultural acts modernized in early 2024 – the Veterinarians Act and the ARIO Act. OSF was very happy to see the provision in the Veterinarians Act allowing an exception from veterinary oversight for pregnancy ultrasounds performed on sheep. This was a priority for OSF members when surveyed about the proposed changes to the Act. We thank OSF members for your participation in our survey and in meetings with MPPs in 2023 that led to our collective success.

The Agriculture Research Institutes of Ontario (ARIO) Act was also modernized in 2024. This act oversees the 14 research stations in Ontario including the Ponsonby sheep research station. The modernization of the Act was done so the scope of their research could broaden, and their oversight could be updated. For OSF, this has given us the opportunity to meet with our researchers and partners at the University of Guelph and the Ontario Veterinary College to discuss the future we want for the Ponsonby research station and a path to greater relevance in the agricultural sector.

This year, we became acquainted with a group called Agrivoltaics Canada that is partnered with Western University to develop solar farm grazing opportunities

and improve provincial policies in relation to solar development. We have been working with them and OMAFA on policy development to create more opportunities for sheep grazing solar sites.

Finally, this year there has been some movement on an interprovincial trade project that meat processors have advocated for over 25 years. There are three proposed projects in Ontario. The first is a "Ready to Grow" pilot that will allow identified provincially inspected processors to access Canadian markets outside of Ontario. The second is a project in the Temiskaming Shores region that would give producers access to custom processing capacity in Quebec and allow the producers to bring meat back to Ontario for sale. The third is a future project between Ontario and Manitoba Indigenous farmers in the North that is still in development.

Prosperity

As marketing was the priority of the board of directors this year, we initiated two projects – one with government funding and one utilizing the surplus budget from the 2022/23 fiscal year.

OSF designed and implemented a market research project with the goal to position OSF as an important informational resource within our value chain. We have scanned the globe to learn about the regions of the world that eat lamb and mutton – their main dishes, the cuts they choose and the type of lamb they purchase. Then we took this international information and overlaid it with Ontario immigration demographics to better understand the market opportunity by region through the various ethnic populations. In the third phase of the project, we interviewed industry leaders – auctions, processors, retailers, brokers, consumers and government to better understand where our premium market opportunities lie. This information will be shared with our value chain partners to develop a coordinated marketing effort in 2025.

Another project initiated by OSF this year was a BBQ promotion pilot. The goal of the pilot was to test the efficacy of social media promotion. We picked two weeks in July and August, spanning the August long weekend for the promotion. We developed beautiful videos and product shots for the campaign. Then,

we promoted two delicious Ontario lamb recipes through social media – including Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. The videos and posts were only shown to people in the target demographic that were within a small distance around the two participating Longo's stores. Over the two weeks of the campaign, OSF measured the number of times the ads were served, the number of times the videos were watched all the way through, the number of likes and saves as well as the number of people who clicked through to the OSF website. We also measured lamb volume sold at the two stores compared with two control stores in the same area. The promotion concluded August 12 and OSF will have results to share with our members at our AGM. If the pilot promotion is successful, we hope to partner with our processors and other retailers for future social media campaigns.

Another initiative under this banner is a partnership with the developers of the Farmers Hub app. At the October board meeting, led by a resolution from District 10, directors decided to address issues created by selling livestock over Kijiji. A decision was made to support our producers selling breeding stock by building a classified-type page on the OSF website to advertise livestock for sale. Coincidentally, a week later we were approached by a company called Farmers Hub that wanted to replace Kijiji livestock sales with a more trustworthy gateway. Since this meeting in fall 2023, a committee of purebred sheep producers on the OSF board have been working with Farmers Hub to improve the app for Ontario sheep producers. The app is free to download for Android and Apple phones and supports breeding stock and working dog sales today with the plan for equipment sales soon.

We continue to work with Foodland Ontario to visit our grocery stores across the province twice per year and compare year-over-year price and product availability of Ontario lamb as compared to competing products.

This year, OSF held meetings with our provincial auctions and processors to better understand the opportunities and challenges they face. The information from the exercise of speaking to all stakeholders will lead to greater collaboration in the coming year within our value chain as we explore opportunities to improve our marketplace together.

OSF also worked with Farm & Food Care Ontario to film a virtual farm tour at the van der Veen farm in Grand Valley. The videos take Ontarians on a real-life virtual expedition of farms and food processing facilities from the comfort of their home and through 3D glasses at consumer trade shows. Thank you to the van der Veen family for hosting the film crew and allowing us to showcase the farm.

Mastery

Under the professional development pillar this year was the creation of The Sheep Institute (www.sheepinstitute.ca). This is a place where all the educational assets of OSF live under one banner. There are resources for new producers, intermediate producers, and experienced producers as well as self directed courses.

This year, OSF offered new skills development workshops in four locations (Rockwood, Norwood, Perth and Powassan). They were offered as three concurrent sessions on catch and restraint techniques, drenching and injection techniques, drench and vaccine equipment calibration, hoof trimming and

Continued on page 22.

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breeding soundness evaluation of ewes. We had attendance of over 50 producers and received a 4.4 out of 5 overall satisfaction rating for the workshops.

OSF supports our dairy sheep producers by offering a Dairy Sheep Symposium each March in Floradale, Ontario led by our Dairy Sheep Committee. This past March, sessions included an overview of the cost of production, air quality for optimal health, a milking equipment review and a presentation on a new mastitis vaccine.

The Annual OSF Convention was a big success in 2023. The theme was "Towards a Stronger Future" and the agenda focused on marketing, starting with the results of the provincial carcass competition and highlighting the end-product with experienced butcher, Brent Herrington. Processors shared their knowledge and experience through a grading demonstration, a panel discussion and a presentation on trends and opportunities in the Halal market.

The 2022 Master Shepherds Course wrapped up in February 2024 with

full-time participants presenting key components of their business plans to the class. These producers will be presented with their course completion certificates at the 2024 OSF Banquet. OSF continues to accept applications for the next offering scheduled to start in January 2025.

Invest

Research is a way to consider and prioritize the future needs of our organization.

This year, OSF invested in a study characterizing the CarLA antibody response in sheep under controlled gastrointestinal nematode challenge simulating Canadian grazing conditions with Dr. Emma Borkowski. The study will address the control of gastrointestinal nematodes given the limited drench options available and the rising rates of drench resistance. To date, our results indicate that Ontario sheep with higher carbohydrate larval antigen (CarLA) antibody shed fewer GIN eggs, and that the optimal time to select breeding stock based on CarLA antibody is at the end of their first grazing season. This project will further investigate the CarLA antibody

response, which will further inform efforts to incorporate genetic selection for GIN immunity based on CarLA antibody in the Ontario sheep industry.

OSF has also invested in the Living Lab project led by Ontario Soil and Crop to accelerate the adoption of BMPS that sequester carbon, mitigate GHG emissions and support other environmental benefits through the process of co-development and testing on real farms. OSF will participate in the grazing objectives of the project to:

- Determine the impact of grazing cover crops on subsequent corn crop yield and soil health.
- Complete an economic analysis comparing annual forage grazing to existing methods of feeding beef cattle and sheep in the fall.
- Demonstrate the benefits of integrated crop-livestock systems (and promote awareness).
- Help increase discussion among farmers for opportunities of integrating livestock on annual cropland.

Processor Links

Connecting farmers and processors

Important Update

Attention Farmers!

Don't miss out on free help to book processing services.

Ontario Sheep, AgSights and MPO have partnered with Beef Farmers of Ontario to share availability with farmers and help fill open spots efficiently.

If you need to sign-up to take advantage of this free support, please contact AgSights today. This service is here to find efficiency in managing wait lists and filling space.



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This summer, OSF has been meeting with our researchers about ways to improve the usage of the Ponsonby Sheep research station. This input from our researchers will guide our Research Committee as they set goals for research in 2024/25.

Member engagement is a priority of OSF and this year we surveyed our members to inform the board's summer priority setting exercise. We learned that many producers do not attend OSF events because there are not any events in their area. That led us to develop a heat map to show the concentration of sheep farms across the province and help us identify locations for meetings. This will also help our districts, and our staff locate skills workshops, district meetings and other events in the province in the future.

To meet our members and engage new producers, OSF participates in Canada's Outdoor Farm Show, London Farm Show, Dairy Symposium, Earleton Farm Show, Eastern Sheep Expo, Ottawa Valley Farm Show International Plowing Match, Forage Expo, Elmira Maple Syrup Festival, and the Grey Bruce Farmers Sheep Day, throughout the year. Our districts were also at various fairs and events across the province representing the organization

and we thank all volunteers who attended shows and supported the industry.

OSF conducted interviews with producers this year to better understand the challenges faced in the first 3-5 years of sheep production and how to overcome them. We interviewed new and experienced producers and those who have left the industry to identify opportunities for new educational and other resources. The results of these interviews will be shared with the membership in fall 2024 after they have been aggregated.

There was also an opportunity in 2023 to share an overview of our organization with students in the University of Guelph's Sheep and Goat Club. The club has over 20 members, many of whom are from active sheep farming families.

New this year in communications was the Flock Talk podcast that was launched in fall 2023 to provide short radio-type shows on broad topics of interest to our members. The podcast now has over 48 episodes that include conversations with industry leaders, researchers and subject matter experts on so many different topics. We hope you will check it out through your podcast app or on YouTube.

Operations

To support the ongoing success of our organization, OSF's board of directors holds two annual strategic planning and priority setting meetings. The first is in December following the AGM and Convention and the second is in the summer, on location in a district. This summer, the board had the opportunity to tour two sheep farms in District 2 and gain valuable insights from the local district committee that supported the priority setting exercise at the board meeting. The various organizational committees, including the district chairs' committee and the committee of sheep stakeholders outside of OSF, help guide the board with information from the grassroots and the broader agricultural sector.

The staff work from the direction of the board to develop the annual workplan. Then we all work together – the board, the committees, the districts, and the staff – to deliver value to our members.

It has been a great year at Ontario Sheep Farmers, and we have collectively accomplished a lot as an industry. Thank you to everyone who took the time to share your ideas, volunteer at an event and provide feedback to our board. **OSN**



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Ontario Lamb International and Domestic Market Research Project

By Michael Keegan

This year, Ontario Sheep Farmers (OSF), with the help of Michael Keegan & Associates, initiated a market research project looking into ethnic consumer relationships with Ontario lamb.

The project will help to inform OSF about the kind of things our organization might take on as we work to improve business success.

The project's goal is to identify opportunities within ethnic consumers to capture more or better market relationships. This will be accomplished with insights into ethnic preferences, traditions and culinary cultures from new Canadian's and their country of origin where lamb is a staple of the diet.

Context

Global food trends in regions with a traditional preference for lamb, influence consumption in Ontario, particularly amongst consumers with cultural ties to those regions. Therefore, understanding global food trends is important to expanding the Ontario lamb market.

OSF and our members know a lot about the market for lamb and other sheep products. OSF is comprised of sheep producers who face the market regularly and often have a relationship with processors and, occasionally, retailers. Producers know when lamb will be in demand. But producers could benefit from a deeper relationship with the consumer of their products. Producers are often once or even twice removed from the customer making protein choices at a meat counter.

Market Insights

Of the two main immigrant categories (the Middle East and North Africa), there is a strong correlation between cultural and religious traditions favouring Islamic religious traditions as well as pastoral and nomadic cultural traditions. Underneath these broad similarities are a host of nuanced culinary traditions that are

specific to the regions from the different demographics. Indeed, each region (and beyond) have favoured dishes and culinary traditions that differentiate various cultural demographics. This means that a wide variety of cuts are valued within the myriad of culinary traditions and preferences.

Based on demographic data from Statistics Canada the largest ethnic consumer groups on Ontario with an affinity for lamb are: Pakistan, Iran, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Egypt, Turkey, Iraq, Somalia, Syria, Ethiopia, Morocco and Sudan. Current projections for immigration suggest that these ethnic consumer demographics will continue to make up a large portion of anticipated immigrants to Canada and Ontario – this represents a significant and growing consumer market for Ontario's sheep producers.



Based on the project analysis to date we believe that OSF has a number of potential marketing paths including both Product marketing – focused on market development and expansion – as well as an Industry marketing path.

Product Marketing: Market Development and Expansion

This approach would target different demographic communities based on a prioritization consideration that would include size of market, accessibility and location, along with purchasing power.

For example: OSF would engage with community associations to bring product to important cultural celebrations in order to develop a targeted consumer relationship and learn more about retail opportunities for increased market penetration.

Industry Marketing: Elevating the Awareness and Visibility of Ontario Sheep and Lamb

This approach would seek to develop relationships with key demographic communities in Ontario in order to elevate the industry standing with the broader portfolio of immigrant communities in Ontario.

For example: OSF could partner with immigration agencies and/or the federal government to provide support to Uyghur immigrants and agency settlement partners – providing products and other supports (rather than a direct consumer relationship). This approach would be comparable to other sector efforts such as school food programs and food bank sponsorships.

Immediate term idea?

In the immediate term – based on the plethora of flavours, culinary traditions and cultural traditions – OSF might consider a near term project of developing relationships with cultural, religious or community organizations to develop promotional products (e.g. traditional ethnic recipe book featuring Ontario lamb with specific ethnic and cultural dishes) that would target key ethnic demographics identified above. This could be done directly or in partnership with different retailers.

Next steps in the project will involve extensive value chain outreach to explore

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~Art Alblas, OSF Chair

a number of questions that have emerged through the research to date – particularly in regards to the existing consumer relationships.

Let us know what you think!

Examples of Traditional Lamb Dishes From Around The World



Kuzu Güveç

Kuzu guvec means lamb stew or lamb casserole. Guvec is a special dish from Turkey. It is both the name of the stew and the clay pot it's cooked in.

Recipes use either a shoulder cut or leg chunks.

An authentic lamb guvec recipe uses a combination of shallots, potatoes, Turkish green peppers, carrots, garlic and tomatoes.

Most recipes only add salt and black pepper. Some suggest fresh thyme and sometimes dashes of cumin, paprika or pul biber (red pepper flakes).



Ghormeh Sabzi

Stews and rice are the staples of Iranian cuisine. “Ghormeh” means braised and refers to the meat in the stew while “sabzi” is the Persian word for herbs.

Recipes use either beef or lamb chunks. Chopped cilantro and parsley give it the distinct green colour complimented by the flavours of loomi (dried limes), onions and red kidney beans. Spices include turmeric, fenugreek, salt and pepper.



Lamb Couscous

The Moroccan Couscous is a traditional meal is served every Friday as a ritual for families to gather and pray together. Recipes use lamb shank or shoulder (cut into chunks).

The flavourful broth is comprised of vegetables include carrots, butternut squash, eggplants, turnips and zucchini. Herbs and spices such as parsley, paprika, ground ginger and saffron. **OSN**

Survey to Determine Canadian Sheep Producers' Use of Genetic Improvement Programs

In the summer of 2023, a survey of Canadian sheep and goat producers revealed some interesting insights into Canadian sheep breeders' usage of various genetic improvement programs, including genetic evaluation, registration, performance recording, and on-farm management software.

Since only a small percentage of sheep and goat producers participate in the available genetic improvement programs, this survey provides insight into producers' current activities and potential ways to increase farmer participation.

Of the 252 surveys completed, half were sheep producers (126 surveys), and from those sheep surveys, 43 producers were from Ontario. 86% of producers who completed the survey identified as

sheep breeders, with a significant portion of their income coming from the sale of breeding stock.

The survey aimed to learn more about how sheep farmers make selection decisions and utilize genetic improvement resources. It asked about breed registrations, loin scanning, classification, and participation in genetic evaluations.

The size of the farms that participated in the survey were mostly under 90 ewes, with only 17% of the farms surveyed having over 250 ewes, and the largest 6% having over 500.

Animal Registration

The survey revealed that 78% of the sheep producers surveyed register their animals. Of the producers who answered no, 15% purchased some registered animals. The top reasons for registering animals were "increases the value of breeding stock," "avoids inbreeding," and "ensures proper identification." Some other responses included "searchable in the CLRC database," "preserve purebred genetics to help provide F1 crosses to the commercial industry," and "maintain the integrity of the breed."

When asked why some producers did not register animals, the survey revealed concerns about cost, return

on investment, and the time required to complete registrations.

Genetic Evaluation

Genetic evaluations were second in popularity among genetic tools used by producers after registration. 40% of the producers surveyed invested in genetic evaluations of their breeding stock.

When asked what information producers use for selection and culling decisions, there was a wide variety of answers. Weaning weight records, the number of lambs, and visual conformation data were valued highest when selecting breeding stock from within the flock. Culling decisions were most often based on age, health, and visual size. When selecting breeding stock to purchase from another flock, most used a pedigree, while visual conformation and size also factored into the decision.

Producers also mentioned additional ways to select breeding stock by using GenOvis data, Carcass Plus data, and using health status data on programs like Scrapie and Maedi Visna.

When producers sell breeding stock, they are mostly asked for pedigree and health information, followed by soundness information, performance records and breeding values.

Loin Scanning and Classification

Just under half the producers surveyed indicated an interest in participating in loin scanning and classification, but only 17% scanned their breeding stock and 15% utilized classification tools. The comments on the survey indicate producers are interested in loin scanning, but challenges include the lack of scanners in Canada and the expense. Sheep farmers in Ontario enrolled in the GenOvis program are fortunate to have six accredited technicians providing loin scan services." For more

Working Together To Support Ontario Sheep Producers

WFS
WALLENSTEIN FEED & SUPPLY LTD.
Feeding Success
Wallenstein, ON
1-800-265-8858 | www.wfs.ca

B.L.
FARM SERVICES LTD.
Chesley, ON
1-800-269-2561

Sunderland Co-operative Inc.
Sunderland, ON
705-357-3491

Walters Falls
Walters Falls, ON
519-794-2747

Contact WFS or one of our dealers near you for an on-farm appointment to discuss your sheep nutrition needs.

information visit <https://genovis.ca/en/accredited-technicians/>. Farmers surveyed mentioned conformation classification as a consideration when purchasing breeding stock. There was also a request for a breed standard classification system for sheep.

Performance Recording

One question in the survey asked whether producers would use a website listing performance-tested rams if it allowed them to select the traits they value. 78% of respondents said they would use a website with this information but with some caveats. The site must be user-friendly, with easily accessible performance records, and performance data must be third-party verified. Others commented that this is already provided through GenOvis.

On-Farm Management Software

90% of the farms surveyed collect data on their animals for flock management purposes. 96% of the farms collecting data use a computer or mobile

phone, and 52% use paper. Of the farms capturing digital data, 32% use commercial software, while 28% use self-made spreadsheets. Those who don't collect flock management data said it was too expensive and time-consuming and didn't see the value.

Most traits tracked for flock management collect reproductive and growth information. Other information collected includes milk production, fibre quality, prolificacy, soundness, and lamb survivability. 61% of producers collecting flock management data use it to obtain genetic evaluations on their animals.

Next Steps

Most producers surveyed requested more information on genetic improvement programs and performance testing programs and to learn more about the benefits of breeding values and data collection. Producers indicated they prefer to learn online through websites, social media, and webinars. Newsletters and producer meetings were also identified as possible opportunities to learn more.

This survey was done as part of a project to integrate genetic services

across multiple species. OSF is a partner in a three-year project entitled "National Integrated Genetic Services for Breeders Across Multiple Species in Canada" that ends this fall. Participants in the project include the Canadian Sheep Breeders Association, the Canadian Goat Society, the Canadian Meat Goat Association, the Centre for Genetic Improvement of Livestock (CGIL) at the University of Guelph, the Canadian Centre for Swine Improvement (CCSI), Le Centre d'expertise en production ovine du Québec (CEPOQ), the Canadian Livestock Records Corporation (CLRC), AgSights, EweManage, Lactanet and Ontario Sheep Farmers. The Government of Canada partly funded this project under Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Canadian Agricultural Strategic Priorities Program.

The project partners have agreed to create a permanent Genetic Services Network that will build on what was learned from this survey and other activities achieved during the project. An action plan has been developed, and the partners are currently exploring options for additional funding to implement it. **OSN**

PRODUCER/SHEEP OWNER LICENCE FEE REMITTANCE FORM (PRIVATE TREATY SALES)

Ontario's 3,000 sheep producers are represented by the Ontario Sheep Farmers organization. With a focus on profitability and sustainability, the organization works in the areas of advocacy, industry capacity, research and market development. The organization is funded through a check off (or licence fee) on lamb and sheep marketed in Ontario. Representing the sheep, lamb and wool industries, it was established in 1985 under the Ontario Farm Products Marketing Act. A compulsory check off (licence fee) of \$2.20 per head sold or slaughtered in Ontario is payable to the Ontario Sheep Farmers to fund projects and operations supporting the Ontario sheep marketplace. Visit our website (www.OntarioSheep.org) to see your licence fees at work.

Auction markets, livestock agents, and processors are to deduct the check off fee from the proceeds payable to a seller, and processors must also assess the licence fee in addition to the slaughter fee. This fee is applicable to each sale or slaughter transaction.

Private sales (i.e. a sheep owner to sheep owner sale, sales not done at an auction market, nor to an agent or processor) require licence fee self-assessment and reporting through this remittance form.

Ontario Sheep Farmers 130 Malcolm Road, Guelph, Ontario N1K 1B1

SHEEP/LAMB: FEE IS \$2.20 PER HEAD PLUS 13% HST

Producer # _____ Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Prov.: _____ Postal Code: _____

Date of Sale: _____ Date Remitted: _____

of sheep/lamb sold: _____ Lic. Fees (x \$2.20=) \$ _____

PAY BY PHONE USING VISA OR MASTERCARD

519-836-0043

HST# 107800823

Plus 13% HST \$ _____

TOTAL REMITTED \$ _____

GENETIC AND HEALTH PROGRAM ENROLLMENT LISTING

If you have questions, concerns, or would like more information about these programs please contact the Ontario Sheep office at (519) 836-0043 or email admin@ontariosheep.org.

CURRENT PRODUCERS ENROLLED IN THE GENOVIS PROGRAM (AS OF OCTOBER 2024)

4S Maple Lane Farm • Kimberly Schneider • (905) 404-7811	John & Holly Wallace • (519) 368-6540
5-Star Livestock and Farm Services Jen & Chris Vervoort • (519) 993-6413	Keiton Moffat • Keiton Moffat • (705) 295-4354
Allinbrook Farms • Neil Allin • (905) 983-5791	Kettle Crest Farm • Art & Sandra Alblas • (519) 637-0050
Asphodel Sheep Co • Todd Payne • (705) 875-5904	Kolgie Ltd • Maria Stock • (519) 275-4988
Breezy Ridge Farm • Philip & Elizabeth Smith • (905) 478-4280	Lamb Lady Farm • Shelagh Finn • (647) 932-7102
Brubacher Ovine • Earl Brubacher • (519) 321-8016	Lush Acres • Jenean & Jason Lush • (519) 538-2753
Burtwistle Sheep • Benjamin Burtwistle • (519) 280-0093	Maple Meadow Farms Colleen Acres & Dwayne Bazinet • (613) 826-2330
Cedar Creek Charollais • Ted & Joanne Skinner • (905) 263-2102	Parker Agriculture Ltd. • Jeanne Parker • (204) 730-0597
Cedar Grove Farm • Quintin Mc Ewen • (519) 949-4130	Q Farm • Vinod Gorantla • (416) 605-2469
Century Lane Farm • Robert & Shirley Graves • (613) 791-2656	Rising Oak Farm • Laura Mosley • (705) 305-9275
Circle R Livestock • Ryan & Romy Schill • (519) 669-4146	Rocky Lane Farm • Allison Brown • (705) 308-3284
Codan Suffolks • Bill & Lynne Duffield • (519) 899-2663	Shadow Ridge Acres • Zabrina Bielaskie • (613) 433-6199
Cowan Acres • Grant Cowan • (705) 796-2236	Schuyler Farms Ltd. • Brett Schuyler • (519) 427-9696
Craigmore Farm • Wayne Kreklewich • (416) 892-0664	Shepherd's Grove • Harv & Christine Breman • (519) 879-6579
Cursio Farms & Arkell Valley Frank & Ned Cursio • (519) 766-3378	Shillalah Farm • Florence Pullen • (519) 233-7896
Emke Livestock • Craig Emke • (519) 901-2519	Southgate Sheep Inc. • Jesse Bauman • (226) 752-7170
Ewenique Farm • Nathalie Labelle • (613) 290-5405	Stonehill Sheep • Paul Dick • (519) 794-3732
Fare Vewe Acres • Mark & Betty Bearinger • (519) 323-1760	Todd Sheep Company Inc. • Keith Todd • (519) 528-2650
Jim & Wendy Driscoll • (519) 638-5703	Tome Charollais • Nelson Tome • (416) 677-1862
G & L Brien • Gary & Luanne Brien • (519) 674-3846	Tulach Ard Farm • Sean McKenzie • (905) 786-2476
Gimlet Hill • Rob & Tracey Werry • (289) 385-6804	Twin Shores Farm • Brian Voith • (343) 364-4095
Greendale Farms • Tyler Jackson • (905) 655-4469	Wigmana Farms Ltd. • Dorothy Frankland • (519) 923-5974
Halfway Farms • Hiske MacKay • (519) 281-3725	Wooldrift Farm Chris Buschbeck & Axel Meister • (519) 538-2844
J & J Farms • Ross & Clementine Savasi • (705) 652-7477	

FLOCKS WHO HAVE ACHIEVED "A" STATUS ON THE MAEDI VISNA PROGRAM (AS OF OCTOBER 2024)

Allinbrook Farms • Neil Allin • (905) 983-5791	Robert Pennie • (705) 859-2671
Anchor A Farms • Tim Thomsen & Allison Lange • (506) 538-2835	Rider Ridge Ranch • Jill & Tim DeClark • (519) 644-0766
Cedar Creek Charollais • Ted & Joanne Skinner • (905) 263-2102	Rocky Lane Farm • Allison & Luke de Vos • (705) 308-3284
Cursio Farms and Arkell Valley Frank & Caitlin Cursio, Ned Curiso • (519) 766-3012	Shadow Ridge Acres • Zabrina Bielaskie • (613) 433-6199
Kettle Crest Farm • Art & Sandra Alblas • (519) 637-0050	Stonehill Sheep • Paul Dick • (519) 794-3732
Knollbrook Farms • James Masters • (519) 362-6444	Trailblaze Farm Perry, Sharon & Valerie Robinson • (519) 794-4837
Mark Martin Dairy Sheep • Mark & Rosena Martin • (519) 638 3644	

FLOCKS WHO HAVE ACHIEVED "B" STATUS ON THE MAEDI VISNA PROGRAM (AS OF OCTOBER 2024)

Century Lane Farm • Robert & Shirley Graves • (613) 831-2656	Stitch and Steel Homestead Sam Sheehan & Andrew Sheehan • (647) 546-8906
Crow Hill Corriedales • Leslie Dymont • (705) 359-1376	

FLOCKS WHO HAVE ACHIEVED "ENROLLED NEG" STATUS ON THE MAEDI VISNA PROGRAM (AS OF OCTOBER 2024)

Huron Grove Farms • Michael & Fraser Hodgson • (519) 918-4159	Rainbow Woods • Eleanor & Sarah Reed • (705) 454-3167
Lakeside Sheep Company • Frank Jongert • (519) 854-6258	

SHEEP PRODUCERS ON THE SCRAPIE PROGRAM (AS OF OCTOBER 2024)

Century Lane Farm • Robert & Shirley Graves • 1 Certified	Parker Agriculture Ltd. • Jeanne & Rob Parker • 1 Certified
Lamb Lady Farm • Shelagh Finn • 1 Certified	WoolDrift Farm • Axel Meister • 1 Certified

For more information visit scrapiecanada.ca/vsfc/vsfc-enrolled-producers/.

THE 2025 ONTARIO LAMB MARKET CALENDAR

Date	Holiday	Consumption Preferences	Market Processor Needs	Public Auction Market Impact
January 6	Feast of the Epiphany (Christian)	Lamb is featured in many celebration meals.	Recently weaned and milk-fed lambs are preferred.	Lower market volumes generally.
January 7	Orthodox Christmas	Lamb is featured in many celebration meals.	Recently weaned and milk-fed lambs are preferred.	
January 29	Chinese New Year	Both mutton and lamb are used in a variety of dishes and is a favorite ingredient in hot pots.		Lower market volumes.
March			Easter holiday inventory buildup.	Growth in supply following winter, with Easter demand increase.
March 1 - 29	Ramadan (Islam) (daylight fasting)	Some celebrations will occur prior to start of Ramadan.	Weaned market lambs (60 – 90 lbs live weight)	A moderate market factor for week leading into Ramadan.
March 30-31	Eid al-Fitr (Islam) Festival of Fast-breaking	Celebrations occur during the fast break period which will feature lamb products.	Weaned market lambs 60 – 90 lbs liveweight. Lower demand for heavy lambs.	A moderate market factor for the week leading into Ramadan.
April 12-20	Passover (Pesach) Jewish	Traditionally must be processed under Kosher laws.	Healthy finished lambs. (up to 64 lbs live weight; ideally milk-fed and fat)	Steady market. A limited influence.
April 20	Western Easter	Roast lamb is a main dish in festival meals for Mediterranean (Italian, Portuguese, and Greek) heritages	Healthy young lambs. (under 60 pounds live weight; ideally milk-fed and fat). Number of lambs under 65 pounds begins to increase in the 3 weeks prior to Easter, and often peaks during the week before Easter. Number of 65-to-79-pound lambs will also increase during this time.	Higher market demand in the 2-to-3-week period preceding holiday. Check local auction schedules for "special" Easter sale dates. A peak sale period in the year.
April 20	Orthodox Easter	Roast lamb is a main dish in festival meals for Mediterranean (Italian, Portuguese, and Greek) heritages	Healthy young lambs. (under 60 pounds live weight; ideally milk-fed and fat). Number of lambs under 65 pounds begins to increase in the 3 weeks prior to Easter, and often peaks during the week before Easter. Volume of 65-to-79-pound lambs will also increase during this time.	Higher market demand in the 2-to-3-week period preceding holiday. Check local auction schedules for "special" Easter sale dates. A peak sale period in the year.
May		Start of barbeque season which more frequently featuring Ontario lamb.	Moderate demand. Processors see an increase in BBQ lamb demand from May to August.	Commonly higher supply and slightly higher but still moderate demand.
June 4 - 6	The Hajj (Islam)			
June 6 - 8	Eid al Adha (Festival of Sacrifice, Eid)	Eid, the festival of sacrifice, is one of the most important observances in the Islamic faith. (This may be referred to as Qurbani, though this refers to the actual act of animal processing.)	Lambs (70 – 110 lbs live weight) Desired weight differs across different communities. Lambs should be under a year of age and be unblemished. Some prefer lambs older than six months. Blemishes may include wounds, torn ears, or any physical unsoundness. Wethers and lambs with docked tails may not be acceptable to some buyers.	High market demand in period leading up to holiday. Peak demand is in week preceding holiday. Note: There is a high activity level of private holiday sales sought by families for this important celebration.
June 26	Muharram (Islamic New Year)	The Islamic New Year is the first day of the Muslim calendar. Mutton is often served as the main course for this holiday meal.	There is no preferred weight for this holiday, although animals should appear healthy.	Steady market. A limited influencer.
September 6	Mawlid al-Nabi (Birthday of the Prophet Muhammad)			
September 22 – 24	Rosh Hashanah Jewish New Year	Lamb is a tradition or symbol of a new beginning.	Forequarters from weaned market lambs (60 – 109 lbs live weight)	Steady market. A limited influencer.
October 13	Thanksgiving	Lamb is an alternative to turkey.	Steady demand with slow year over year consumer demand increase.	Steady market. A limited influencer.
November		Stew/casserole are growing in seasonal popularity.	Lower but steady demand during transition from Thanksgiving into Christmas period.	Lower market volumes.
December 14 -22	Hanukkah (Festival of Rededication) Jewish	Traditionally meats must be processed according to Kosher law.	Healthy heavy lambs. (up to 100 lbs live weight)	Usually occurs close to Christian Christmas which leads to high demand.
December 25	Christmas Day to New Year (Christian)	Lamb is a feature at Christmas parties (lamb-pops, spiedini, roasts). Leg of lamb, stews and curries are food staples.	Lambs should be freshly weaned (milk fed), up to 80 lbs, and not older than 3 months of age. Out-of-season breeding is required to produce the favoured type of lamb for this market. Cull sheep are popular for stew and curry.	Higher market demand in 2 to 3-week period preceding holiday. A peak sale period of the year.

This calendar and the 5 year calendar is also available on the OSF website at www.ontariosheep.org/religious-ethnic-market-calendar.

District Contacts

Look for your district news and events in the Messenger or on the website.

District 1

Counties of Essex, Kent, Lambton, Middlesex, and Elgin

Director	Art Alblas	519.637.0050
Chair	Andrew Pearson	519.301.6875
Vice Chair	Jeff Swain	519.466.0984
Secretary	Kacey Wilson	519.521.6742
Treasurer	Jennifer Van Hooydork	519.520.7970

District 2

Counties of Grey and Bruce

Director	Jay Lennox	519.374.4055
Chair	Jason Emke	519.379.8778
Vice Chair	Petra Aeberhard	519.655.2017
Secretary	Dennis Thompson	519.881.3174
Treasurer	Steve Ernewein	519.392.8624

District 3

Counties of Huron, Perth, Waterloo and Oxford

Director	Keith Todd	519.528.2650
Chair	Susan Martin	519.669.8066
Vice Chair	Ron Follings	519.625.8809
Secretary	Cynthia Kretschmann	519.272.3907
Treasurer	Rick Zimak	519.284.0533

District 4

County of Brant, Regional Municipalities of Hamilton-Wentworth, Haldimand-Norfolk and Niagara

Director	Rafael Lara	226.622.8097
Chair	Jay Mycroft	905.957.1114
Secretary	Vacant	
Treasurer	Monica Roberts	519.755.7487

District 5

Counties of Wellington and Dufferin and the Regional Municipalities of Halton and Peel

Director	Ryan Schill	519.669.4146
Chair	Mike Swidersky	519-370-8586
Vice Chair	Heather Little	519.939.0408
Secretary	Romy Schill	519.699.4146
Treasurer	Bill McCutcheon	519.766.7905

District 6

County of Simcoe, District Municipality of Muskoka and the District of Parry Sound

Director	Grant Cowan	705.436.2236
Chair	Rachel Brooks	705.828.0059
Vice Chair	Dean Keranovic	647.889.6785

District 7

City of Toronto, Regional Municipalities of York and Durham, City of Kawartha Lakes, and Counties of Peterborough and Northumberland

Director	Ken Lamb	905.985.4247
Chair	Kim Schneider	905.404.7811
Vice Chair	Allison de Vos	705.308.3284
Secretary	Tracey Werry	289.385.6804
Treasurer	Jenny Carnaghan	905.261.1658

District 8

Counties of Lennox and Addington, Hastings, Prince Edward, Frontenac and Leeds

Director	Karen Davis	613.532.3347
Chair	Phil Botden	613.358.2676
Vice Chair	Brad Davis	613.561.7731
Secretary	Kayleigh Graham	289.355.9947
Treasurer	Krystyna Dallaire	613.312.7905

District 9

Counties of Renfrew and Lanark, and the Township of West Carleton and the City of Kanata in the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton

Director	Wesley Godden	647.244.4768
Chair	Kim Groskleg	613.717.3795
Vice-Chair	Shanna Armstrong	613.433.8255
Secretary	Charlotte MacKay	613.281.7570
Treasurer	Zabrina Bielaski	613.433.6199

District 10

Counties of Russell, Prescott, Glengarry Stormont, Dundas and Grenville, and the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton, except the Township of West Carleton and the City of Kanata

Director	Devon Wensink	613.330.8014
Chair	Colleen Acres	613.826.2330
Vice Chair	Fred Baker	613.327.8508
Secretary	Yvonne Seeley	613.330.0272
Treasurer	Sarah Jean Campbell	613.330.8014

District 11

Districts of Kenora, Rainy River, Thunder Bay, Cochrane, Algoma, Sudbury, Temiskaming, Nipissing and Manitoulin

Director	Jenna Wight	705.622.1774
Chair	Colleen Alloi	705.248.3287
Vice Chair	Ryan Klapwyk	705.563.2966
Secretary	Trudy Reid	613.433.6199
Treasurer	Jim Johnston	705.647.7160

Auction Markets and Abattoirs

ABATTOIRS		
NAME	CITY	PHONE NO
Abattoir LeFavre Inc.	Lefavre	(613) 679-4698
Afghan Halal Meat Suppliers	Schomberg	(416) 894-1802
Agram 2005 Meats Inc.	Georgetown	(905) 877-6082
Almarwa Halal Meat Packers	St. Ann's	(365) 777-4932
Al Madina Halal Meat Packers	Brinston	(613) 652-1301
Aman's Abattoir	Wellington	(613) 399-2173
Bachert Meats	Walton	(519) 887-9328
Belle Vallee Meats & Abattoir	Belle Vallee	(705) 647-7419
Bentnick Packers Ltd.	Hanover	(519) 364-3538
Beverly Creek Farm	Hamilton	(905) 690-8111
*Bilal Farms Inc.	Clarence Creek	(613) 488-2268
Birch Lake Abattoir	Massey	(705) 865-3395
Brian Quinn's Meats Ltd.	Yarker	(613) 377-6430
Burt Farm Country Meats	Gore Bay	(705) 282-0328
Caledon Halal Meat Packers	Bolton	(416) 999-9999
Charles Quality Meats Ltd.	St. Agatha	(519) 886-7931
Cloverbelt Country Meats Co-operative	Oxdrift	(807) 937-6716
Cole Bros. Meat Processing	Picton	(613) 476-6955
Country Fresh Packers	Tilbury	(519) 682-2222
Creative Meats	Warren	(705) 967-2006
Desormeaux Slaughter-house & Meats Inc.	Crysler	(613) 987-2148
Dresden Meat Packers Ltd.	Dresden	(519) 683-2585
Dufferin County Meats	Amaranth	(519) 939-8068
Elora Road Meats	Mildmay	(519) 367-2261
Ewe Dell Family Farm	Woodslee	(519) 723-4456
Farmersville Community Abattoir	Athens	(613) 924-0400
Gord's Abattoir Ltd.	Leamington	(519) 326-2503
Green's Meat Market & Abattoir Ltd.	Wingham	(519) 357-2912
Grey County Meats	Maxwell	(519) 922-2400
Hank De Koning Ltd.	Port Dover	(519) 583-0115
Harriston Packing Company Ltd.	Harriston	(519) 338-3330
Hastings Meat Market	Stirling	(613) 395-0505
Hay's Custom Cutting Ltd.	Campbellford	(705) 653-3388
Henderson Meats	Chesterville	(613) 448-3471
Highgate Tender Meats Ltd.	Highgate	(519) 678-3383
Highland Packers Ltd.	Stoney Creek	(905) 662-8396
Hilts Butcher Shop Ltd.	Norwood	(705) 696-2172
J.J. Meat Distributing Inc.	Schomberg	(905) 859-1540
Joe Savage & Fils Abattoir Inc.	St. Albert	(613) 987-2070
Johnson Meats	Aylmer	(519) 773-9208
L & M Meat Distributing Inc.	Beeton	(905) 729-2771
L & M Meat Distributing Inc.	Gilford	(905) 775-6775
Matar Meats	Osgoode	(613) 821-7929
Country Meats	Exeter	(519) 235-4978
Miedema's Country Meats	Embro	(519) 475-4010
Millgrove Packers Ltd.	Waterdown	(905) 689-6184
Mr. Beef Inc.	Pakenham	(613) 624-5222
Mount Brydges Abattoir Ltd.	Mount Brydges	(519) 264-1873
Newmarket Meat Packers Ltd.	Newmarket	(416) 364-2671

ABATTOIRS		
NAME	CITY	PHONE NO
Ontario Halal Meat Packers Inc.	Milton	(905) 875-0270
Otonabee Meat Packers Ltd.	Peterborough	(705) 743-8547
Palmateer's Abattoir Ltd.	Tweed	(613) 478-3801
Parkhill Meats	Parkhill	(519) 293-3000
Peel Meat Packers	Drayton	(519) 638-3446
Penokean Hills Farms	Bruce Mines	(705) 782-4224
Pine Ridge Meat Packer	Little Britain	705-786-9970
Rainy River District Regional Abattoir Inc.	Emo	(807) 482-3028
Reiche Meat Products Ltd.	Pembroke	(613) 732-3773
Rua Meats Ltd.	Foxboro	(613) 962-7915
Simcoe Street Meat Packers	Oakwood	(705) 821-3151
Smelser Meats	Cayuga	(905) 772-5053
St. Helen's Meat Packers Ltd.	Toronto	(416) 769-1788
Stayner Meat Packers Ltd.	Stayner	(705) 428-3006
Taylor's Custom Meats	Roseneath	(905) 352-2367
Teals Pure Pork Sausage	Waterford	(519) 443-8844
The Beefway	Kincardine	(519) 396-2257
Thunder Bay Meat Processing Co. (1986) Ltd.	Murillo	(807) 935-2911
Townsend Butchers	Simcoe	(519) 426-6750
Vanessa Meats & Deli	Vanessa	(519) 446-3897
VG Packers	Simcoe	(519) 426-2000
Wall's Pork Shop	Oxdrift	(807) 937-4357
Weiland Meats Ltd.	Petrolia	(519) 882-1215
Willie's Meats Ltd.	Troy	(519) 647-3160
Windcrest Meat Packers Ltd.	Port Perry	(800) 750-2542
Zehr's Country Market	Dashwood	(519) 237-3668

AUCTION MARKETS			
Aylmer Stockyards Inc.	8933 Walker Road, RR 1	Aylmer	(519) 765-2672
Brussels Livestock Exchange	42857 Newry Road, RR 3	Brussels	(519) 887-6461
D.H. Hickson Ltd.	2508 County Road 8, RR 5	Campbellford	(705) 653-3660
Denfield Livestock Exchange Inc.	12952 Sixteen Mile Road, RR 2	Denfield	(519) 666-1140
Embrun Livestock Exchange Ltd.	1643 Salebarn Road,	Greely	(613) 821-2634
Hagersville Auction Centre	97 First Line, RR 6	Hagersville	(905) 768-5601
Kawartha Lakes Community Sale Barn Inc.	580 Woodville Road, RR 3	Woodville	(705) 439-4444
Keady Livestock Market Ltd.	117012 Grey Road 3, RR 4	Tara	(519) 934-2339
Ontario Livestock Exchange Inc.	856 Weber Street N,	Waterloo	(519) 884-2082
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