

SCRAPIE: ERADICATE IT

The sheep industry's scrapie eradication efforts.



American Sheep
Industry Association

AUGUST 2021

The goal of the American Sheep Industry Association and the American sheep industry is to eradicate scrapie from our borders. In addition, it is ASI's objective to have the United States recognized as scrapie free in accordance with the World Organization for Animal Health. This publication is created specifically for those of you in the field who are also working to achieve this goal.

This newsletter brings together, into one spot, current information from all 50 states, as well as from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and any other organization providing scrapie news, and reports it back to the field. If you have first-hand accounts that you believe would be relevant for others to read or have information that you would like included in this newsletter, please email kyle@sheepusa.org.

United States Closing In On Scrapie Freedom

For years, a top priority of ASI has been to rid the United States of scrapie with the goal that freedom from scrapie would improve the health of our country's sheep and open trade opportunities with countries around the world.

The American sheep industry has done an excellent job of tackling this degenerative neurologic disease that affects both sheep and goats. The National Scrapie Eradication Program, a cooperative eradication program with the United States Department of Agriculture's Animal Health and Plant Inspection Service, leads the way by prioritizing education and testing, and employing both slaughter and live animal surveillance.

An important question for the industry is when can the United States claim scrapie freedom?

The World Organization for Animal Health, or OIE, officially recognizes the disease status for member countries for several diseases, including foot and mouth disease and bovine spongiform encephalopathy. Scrapie is not one of the diseases for which there is an OIE- recognized disease status.

"For scrapie, the OIE describes conditions that the member countries must meet to claim scrapie freedom," said Veterinary Medical Officer Dr. Stephanie Brault of the Sheep and Goat Health Team at USDA/APHIS/Veterinary Services. "They have guidelines in their terrestrial

code, the scrapie chapter, for the determination of the scrapie status of countries. In general, the chapter states that the scrapie status of a country should be determined based on a risk assessment for potential factors for the occurrence of scrapie, whether the country has awareness programs for the stakeholders, and also the robustness of their surveillance and monitoring systems.

"To meet the standards described in the chapter, a country must have systems in place for the previous seven years to mitigate the risk of scrapie introduction, including having appropriate import procedures and banning the feeding of meat and bone meal to sheep and goats. The country must have also performed adequate surveillance to detect scrapie, and not detected any cases of classical scrapie during the seven years. The goals of the NSEP are to eradicate classical scrapie from the country and meet the OIE criteria. Once the United States can claim scrapie freedom, trade negotiation with other countries for sheep and goats and their products will be enhanced.

"Currently, what individual countries do for scrapie is negotiate with each other the stipulations under which live goats and sheep or products from one country will be accepted into another country. If we were to meet the OIE criteria for disease freedom, it will allow us to claim scrapie freedom and strengthen our ability to negotiate.

To view the National Scrapie Eradication Program current Monthly Report, prepared by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's Veterinary Services, go to https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/animal_diseases/scrapie/downloads/monthly_scrapie_report.pdf

That's why it is extremely important to have the support of the industry in following our program."

There is a clear path ahead as the American sheep and goat industries navigate the future.

"It's not anything new to say that the industry needs to support the National Scrapie Eradication Program as much as possible," Brault said. "It's designed to achieve that level described by the OIE to allow the United States to claim scrapie freedom."

Animal identification certainly plays an important role in the process. After all, if an animal is diagnosed with scrapie, it's important for animal health officials to be able to trace that animal's journey from its flock of origin forward.

"We educate livestock producers and veterinarians on the clinical signs of scrapie and what the reporting responsibilities are as well as what the official animal identification requirements are. Those go hand-in-hand with surveillance," said Dr. Dianne Norden, a Veterinary Medical Officer with APHIS. "You can't find the positive cases and not be able to trace it back to its farm of origin without proper identification and records."

Norden works closely with scrapie surveillance and added that the COVID-19 pandemic has created its share of issues when it comes to surveillance.

"We've been under travel limitations due to COVID-19 as well as there has been concern by some slaughter plant managers who have restricted Veterinary Services and state collectors from collecting samples at some surveillance sites. These restrictions have limited us from recruiting any new sites," Norden said. "We have made progress in some states on how to safely collect those samples while keeping our personnel and slaughter plant personnel separated. For example, in one plant, materials to be sampled were placed in a barrel that is kept on the back dock for our personnel to pick up and sample at our site. There are more plants opening up as we try to be creative on how we can collect those samples and still keep everyone safe."

APHIS monitors and inspects commercial venues where sheep might congregate after leaving the farm or ranch.

"Points of concentration such as livestock markets are inspected on a regular basis – at least once a year," Nor-

den said. "In addition to having inspectors, we provide ongoing training for animal ID coordinators to address the recent changes to the scrapie ID requirements. In March 2019 official identification became required for commercial low risk goats which were previously exempt in many states.

"We also added an owner-hauler statement requirement for slaughter animals to the existing owner-hauler statement requirements.

"Also, based on stakeholder input, we are increasing our efforts to have livestock markets and other concentration points submit mature dead, down or disabled animals and for states that aren't meeting their state sampling minimums to collect live animal samples."

Official scrapie identification tags – which come in plastic, metal, or electronic versions – and electronic implants have played and continue to play an instrumental role in the eradication program. At one point, APHIS provided free tags to all sheep and goat producers. As tag use became more prevalent, the program was changed to provide up to 100 free tags to new producers. Free metal tags are still available for livestock markets and dealers.

"We have not seen a significant overall change in the number of tags sold or distributed in the fiscal years 2019 and 2020 compared to the years prior to fiscal year 2018, when policy changes started to be made," Brault said. "What this seems to indicate is that the stakeholders recognize the value of official ID to the sheep and goat industry and have continued to use the ID despite the changes in the policies."

ASI Animal Health Co-Chair Dr. Cindy Wolf of Minnesota said the best way for producers to be compliant with scrapie regulations is to officially identify animals before they leave the flock of birth.

"Producers play such an important role in ID compliance," she said.

While it might seem like there's a long way to go to get to that ultimate seven-year mark, producers should realize that much of the heavy lifting on scrapie freedom has already been done. What remains is a manageable task that can be accomplished by following NSEP guidelines.

"Just keep doing what you're doing," Brault said. "Identify your sheep and support the testing of sheep for scrapie."

Animals Sampled for Scrapie Testing Sheep and Goats

In Fiscal Year 2021, as of June 30, 2021

22,707 animals have been sampled for scrapie testing: 11,569 RSSS and 528 on-farm samples
16,395 sheep and 6,312 goats
1 sheep tested positive for classical scrapie (sample collected in January 2021)

Regulatory Scrapie Slaughter Surveillance (RSSS) Statistics

Since April 1, 2003

690,189 samples collected
474 NVSL* confirmed positives for classical scrapie

*National Veterinary Services Laboratories

In FY 2021 (as of June 30, 2021)

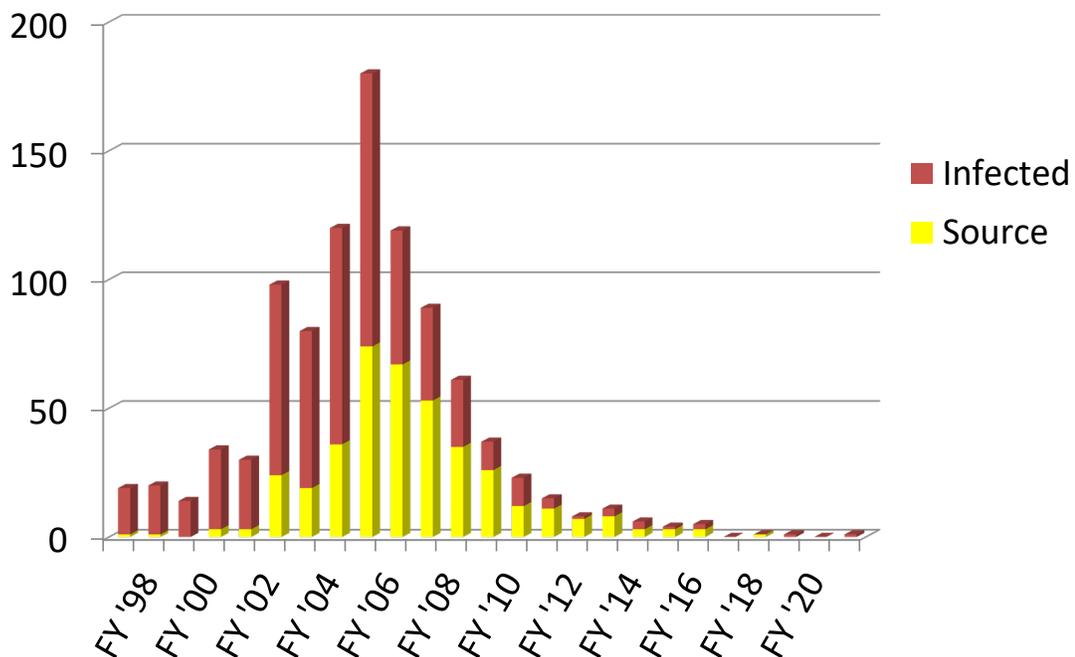
21,568 samples collected (5,782 from goats)
1 NVSL confirmed positive

On-Farm Surveillance

In Fiscal Year 2021, as of June 30, 2021

1,139 animals have been tested on farm – 609 sheep and 530 goats

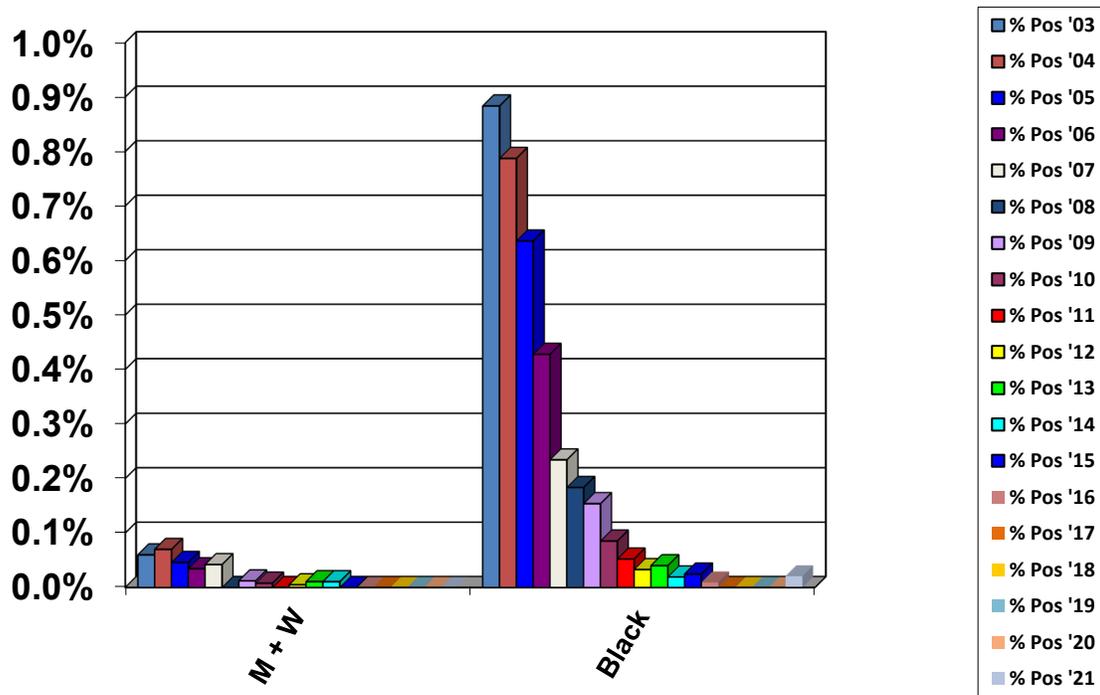
Infected and Source Flocks New Statuses by Year – Fiscal Years 1997 to 2021*



* As of June 30, 2021

Percent of RSSS Sheep Samples that Tested Positive for Classical Scrapie - By Face Color

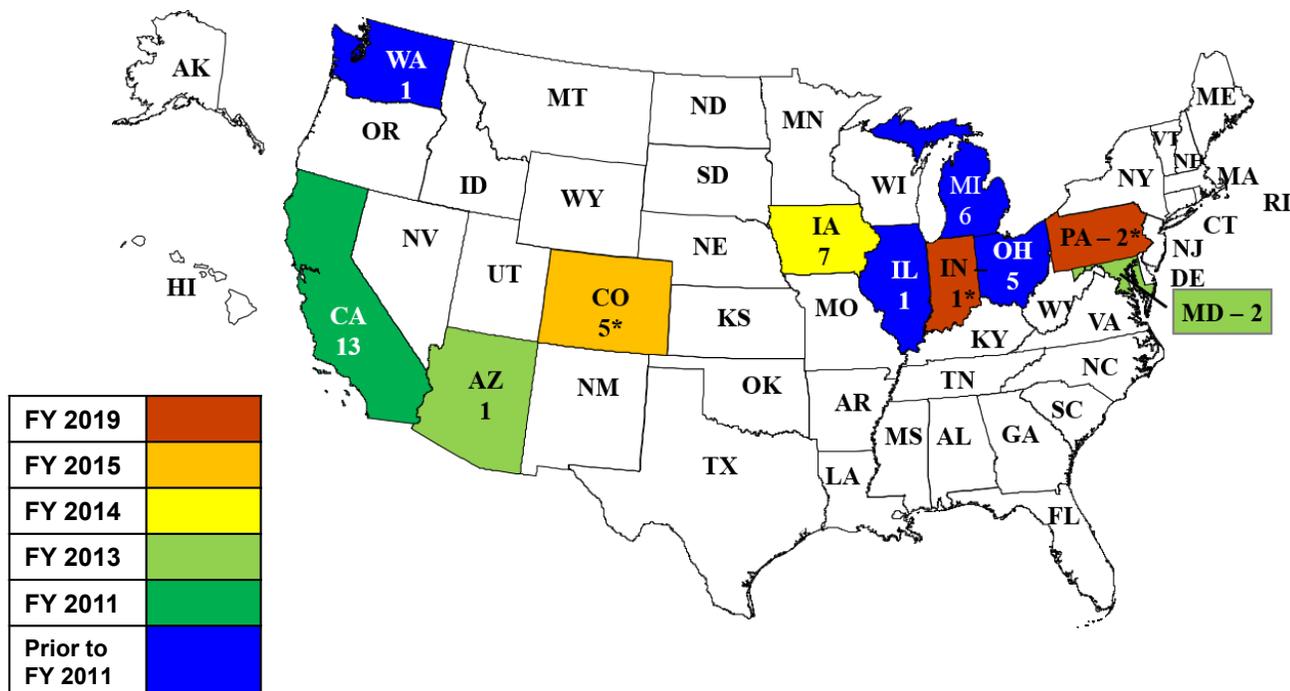
FY 2003 – FY 2021*



* As of June 30, 2021. Adjusted to exclude multiple positive animals from same flock. Mottled- and white-faced combined. Does not include Nor98-like scrapie cases found through RSSS.

Scrapie Cases in Goats

FY 2002 – FY 2021



Color code indicates fiscal year of last case by State. 44 NVSL confirmed cases.

* States with 1 RSSS positive goat; samples collected November 2014, July 2018, and June 2019

RSSS and On-Farm Surveillance Testing by Species

FY 2021* Age Group

Species.. Type	< 2 Yrs	2 to < 6 Yrs	6+ Yrs	Grand Total	
Goats	Dairy	37	2,047	60	2,144
	Fiber		31	4	35
	Meat	256	2,090	145	2,491
	Multipurpose	69	1,034	104	1,207
	Unknown	8	414	13	435
	Total	370	5,616	326	6,312
Sheep	Black Face	319	4,165	741	5,225
	Mottled <1% Black	7	750	4	761
	Mottled >1% Black	102	1,779	314	2,195
	White Face	233	5,728	405	6,366
	Other Sheep	224	1,425	169	1,818
	Unknown Sheep	9	21		30
	Total	894	13,868	1,633	16,395
Grand Total	1,264	19,484	1,959	22,707	

(Table 1)

Number of Records
4  5,728

* As of June 30, 2021. Darker shading represents greater number of animals tested that met targeting criteria.

Submitting Mature Heads

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. State contact information is available at https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/contacts/field-operations-districts.pdf. VS field offices can also be reached through the toll-free number at 866-873-2824.

Free ID For Producers

The National Scrapie Eradication Program provides up to 100 plastic tags free of charge to producers who have not received the free tags in the past (call 866-USDA-TAG to get tags). Markets are still being provided with free metal tags. Contact your state or local VS office for more information.

Websites Dedicated to the Eradication of Scrapie

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service: <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal-health/scrapie>

Scrapie SharePoint: <https://share.aphis.usda.gov/sites/vs-sgh/>

(Federal and State employees can access this password-protected site by emailing sandra.j.wallace@usda.gov if you need assistance.)

