

Eradicating Scrapie in Sheep

What Every Farm Flock Owner Needs to Know

? WHAT IS SCRAPIE?

Scrapie is a degenerative and eventually fatal disease affecting the central nervous systems of sheep and goats. Animals may appear incoordinated and weak, become thin, be highly sensitive to noise and sudden movements, have tremors, press their heads against solid objects, stargaze and repeatedly rub, leading to bare spots – therefore the disease commonly became known as “scrapie.”

? HOW CAN THE US BE DECLARED SCRAPIE-FREE?

The US flock is within reach of scrapie-free status and reducing burdens of international trade restrictions, consumer perceptions and other issues. The World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) establishes guidelines for declaring scrapie-freedom. No scrapie cases can be found in sheep or goats for seven years, and an ongoing surveillance and control program must be in place.

The last case of scrapie in the US was found in January 2021, which means that if we don't have another case by 2028, the US can declare freedom from scrapie. It's time to Finish the Fight!

? WHAT IS A SCRAPIE “TAG” AND WHAT ANIMALS MUST HAVE IT?

There is a requirement through the USDA scrapie eradication regulation that most sheep must be identified to their flock of birth when they leave your property for interstate commerce, such as for sale, shows, events or are commingled with other sheep. Sheep that are commingled with other sheep owned by the same producer, such as for grazing, do not have to be tagged. The most common and easiest method is by using an official scrapie program sheep and goat ear tag and maintaining tagging and movement records. Lambs in slaughter channels may move without official ear tags but must be accompanied by an owner/hauler statement.

Your state or USDA-APHIS veterinarian can provide accurate information and alert you to additional state requirements you need to meet. Call 1-866-USDA-TAG to learn about and order tags, and request a flock ID.

? HOW CAN I PROTECT MY FLOCK FROM SCRAPIE?

Test all mature sheep for scrapie, even if they don't have any symptoms. Accredited veterinarians or regulatory personnel can collect samples for on-farm surveillance, aiding in achieving scrapie-free status. If a sheep shows signs of scrapie it is important to report this to your private veterinarian or a state or federal veterinarian.

Maintaining a closed flock or only introducing animals from a flock enrolled in the Scrapie Free Flock Certification Program (SFCP) will help to protect your flock from scrapie.

? ARE THERE ACTIONS I SHOULD TAKE WHEN A SHEEP DIES ON MY PROPERTY?

Even if a mature sheep shows no symptoms of scrapie when it dies, having a veterinarian submit a sample for testing protects your flock and the entire industry. The samples can be collected by an accredited veterinarian, or state or federal regulatory personnel. This on-farm surveillance counts toward helping us achieve scrapie-free status.

? WHAT IS THE SCRAPIE-FREE FLOCK CERTIFICATION PROGRAM?

The Scrapie-free Flock Certification Program (SFCP) is a voluntary program that monitors participating flocks for evidence of scrapie. Flocks that have been free of scrapie for specified time periods have the opportunity for enhanced marketability.

? WHERE DO I GET MORE INFORMATION?

Contact the American Sheep Industry Association.



American Industry Sheep Association

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