

SCRAPIE: ERADICATE IT



The sheep industry's scrapie eradication efforts.

American Sheep
Industry Association

October 2012

The goal of the American Sheep Industry Association (ASI) and the U.S. sheep industry is to eradicate scrapie from our borders by 2017. In addition, it is the objective to have the United States recognized as scrapie free in accordance with the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE). This quarterly 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 judym@sheepusa.org.

How to Eradicate the Remaining Scrapie Cases

"In the past, when I was asked the question about what the top sheep diseases in the United States are, scrapie would have been at the top of the list," says Larry Goelz, DVM, Pipestone Veterinary Clinic, Pipestone, Minn., to the attendees of the South Dakota Sheep Growers Association during its annual meeting. "So much progress has been made in the last 10 years on eradicating this disease that, for me, it is no longer on that list. Foot rot, contagious abortion, parasites and Ovine Progressive Pneumonia would round out my top four."

This matches the statistics obtained from Diane Sutton, DVM, national scrapie program coordinator with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) who states, "There has been a 96-percent decrease in the percentage of positive sheep sampled at slaughter, adjusted for face color, since the start of Regulatory Scrapie Slaughter Surveillance (RSSS) in fiscal year 2003.

"There were only eight newly identified infected and source flocks in fiscal year 2012. A 47-percent decrease from fiscal year 2011," continues Sutton. (The chart below shows the history of infected and source flocks from 1997 to 2012.)

Even with these positive statistics and comments, there is still work to be done. Producers can contribute significantly to finding and eliminating the remaining cases by:

- officially identifying their sheep and goats per federal and state regulations;
- reporting clinical suspect sheep and goats to a state, federal or accredited veterinarian; and
- submitting animals over 18 months of age that die from causes other than normal slaughter for scrapie testing.

Eradication of any disease is most difficult towards the end of the eradication effort; scrapie is no exception. As infected flocks have been cleaned up and disease prevalence has decreased, finding the last pockets of infection is challenging. Slaughter surveillance has been crucial in achieving the goal of scrapie eradication and will continue to be an important part of the program, but without robust on-farm surveillance, complete eradication of scrapie may remain elusive. Now, it is necessary to ramp up on-farm sampling of mature animals found dead and live animals to finish the job. The biggest challenges will be the willingness of the industry, particularly producers, to actively participate in this effort and the availability of resources for sample collection and testing.

Identification

"Identifying sheep and goats that leave a premises or change ownership is required by USDA as well as by state rules," states Jim Logan, DVM, Wyoming state veterinarian.

"It is also important to identify these animals for traceability purposes," he continues. "If an animal is found to have scrapie after it has left a flock, the sooner regulatory officials can trace the disease back to the infected flock, the less likely the disease is to spread in your flock. In many cases, good identification and good records have resulted in ruling out a producer in a trace."

Reporting Suspect Animals

If an owner suspects scrapie in a flock, it is prudent and good management to report the situation and have laboratory diagnostics done to determine if the disease is present. In fact, in most states, it is a legal requirement for veterinarians and animal owners to report suspected cases of scrapie. Rapid reporting and diagnosis will help a producer with an infected flock avoid the spread of the disease.

"Yes, if scrapie is found, there will be a quarantine and some inconvenience," expresses Logan. "However, the inconvenience of quarantine is small compared to the depopulation of an entire flock because of failure to report. It is also good bio-security and disease control to get a veterinarian involved early if scrapie is suspected."

Submitting Animals

USDA initiated an accelerated scrapie eradication program that includes slaughter surveillance. The objective of slaughter surveillance is to find and eliminate infection and to estimate the national prevalence of scrapie in mature sheep by testing them for scrapie. As more of the U.S. sheep inventory is marketed through non-traditional channels, these animals are also bypassing the traditional USDA inspected plants and, thus, scrapie testing. Producers, particularly those who market through non-traditional channels, are asked to submit the heads from mature animals (over 18 months) that die from causes other than normal slaughter for scrapie testing.

This is important for a couple reasons:

1. In order for a state to maintain its Scrapie Consistent State Status with USDA, it is required to submit and test a certain percentage of 'deads' for tissue sampling. This percentage is calculated by APHIS based on the sheep population in that state. Consistent status is im-

portant to a state's sheep industry as it allows for interstate marketing without additional regulatory requirements.

2. "Producers should want to know why an animal has died so that preventive measures can be taken," said Logan. "When any disease, especially scrapie, is in a flock, the sooner it is discovered, the sooner it can be cleaned up, reducing its spread within the flock. Nobody wants to find scrapie in their flock but, if it is there, the sooner it becomes a priority, the sooner it can be eradicated."

"Statistically, it is extremely important to have a representative sample of sheep tested to show that scrapie is being eliminated in the United States," said Michael L. Thonney, professor of animal science at Cornell University. "The presence of scrapie prevents the export of breeding stock, semen and embryos to many other countries."

Conclusion

Scrapie was first found in the United States in 1947. In order to eradicate it, everyone in the sheep industry has a responsibility to this cause.

"My first scrapie experience was not very positive," remarks Nick Forrest, producer from Ohio. "I purchased a ewe and a ram from a very credible breeder yet received a letter stating that I needed to get rid of these animals due to scrapie.

"At that time, I made the decision to get involved with the sheep industry at the state and national level to learn more about this disease. After 20 years, scrapie is much better controlled but there are still people out there who do not know its details. If an animal dies, they bury it and move forward.

"I would encourage all producers to become proactive in the eradication of scrapie in the United States," resumes Forrest. "In my travels throughout the East, I found that there were many farmers with smaller flocks who have not been fully educated about the programs to eradicate scrapie. I believe they would be interested to know if their animals have scrapie or are susceptible to the disease but they don't know what to look for or how to get them tested."

Information on the scrapie programs is available on the APHIS website at www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/animal_diseases/scrapie. Questions can also be directed to the American Sheep Industry Association at 303-771-3500.

Federal Tagging Requirements

The federal requirements mandate that the following groups of sheep and goats need an official scrapie USDA-approved eartag or other official identification before being moved from an owner's premises regardless if they are being shipped in-state or out-of-state:

- All breeding sheep and goats and potential breeding sheep and goats regardless of age except low-risk commercial goats.
- All sheep 18 months and older.
- All sheep and goats for exhibition except for wethers.
- All scrapie-exposed, suspect, tested-positive and high-risk animals.
- Breeding goats except low-risk commercial goats.
- Sheep under 18 months of age in slaughter channels that are females that are pregnant or have aborted or sexually intact animals from a scrapie-infected flock.

To request free official eartags call toll free 866-873-2824.

While many states have identical requirements to those of USDA, other states have additional regulations regarding intrastate movement and/or interstate movement. To learn about state specific requirements, go to www.eradicatescrapie.org/State%20ID%20Requirements.html.

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 area office for your state. State contact information is available at www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/area_offices. Area offices can also be reached through the toll free number, 866-873-2824.

To view the National Scrapie Eradication Program September 2012 Monthly Report, prepared by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's Veterinary Services, go to http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/animal_diseases/scrapie/downloads/monthly_scrapie_rpt.ppsx.

Animals Sampled for Scrapie Testing Sheep and Goats

As of Sept. 30, 2012

42,211 animals have been sampled for scrapie testing: 40,776 RSSS and 1,435 on-farm samples

Regulatory Scrapie Slaughter Surveillance (RSSS) Statistics

Since April 1, 2003

354,668 samples collected

461 NVSL* confirmed positives

As of Sept. 30, 2012

40,776 samples collected (3,610 from goats)

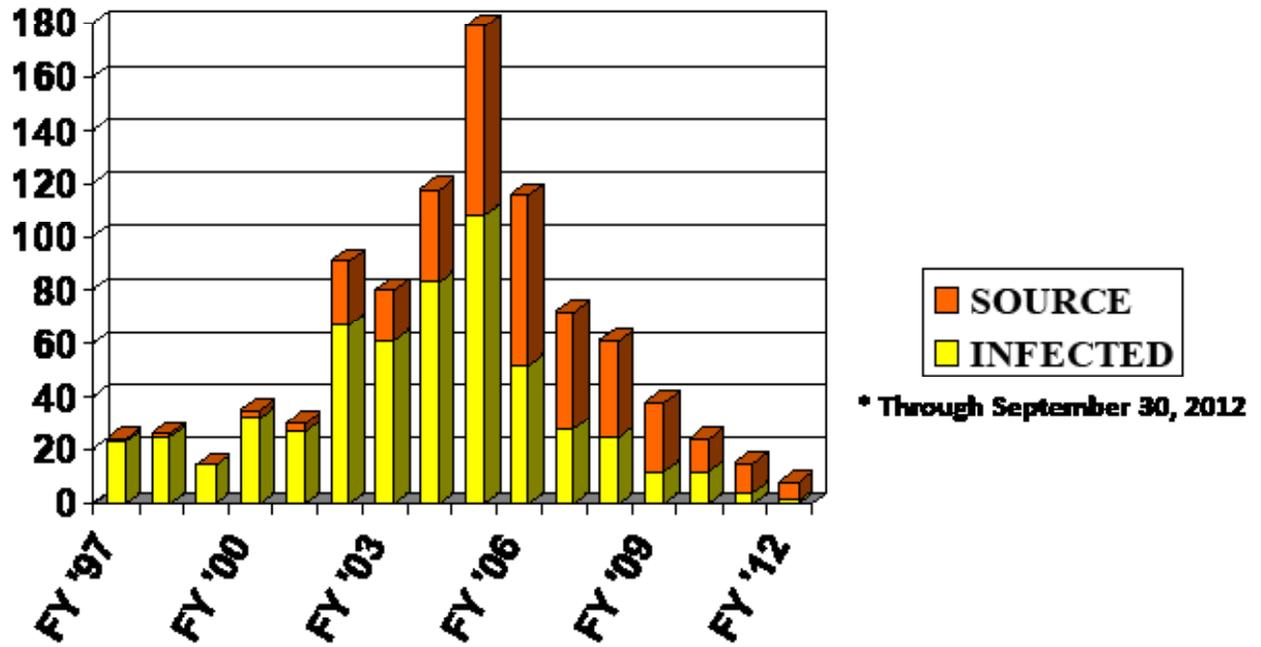
6 NVSL confirmed positives

*National Veterinary Services Laboratories

Infected and Source Flocks

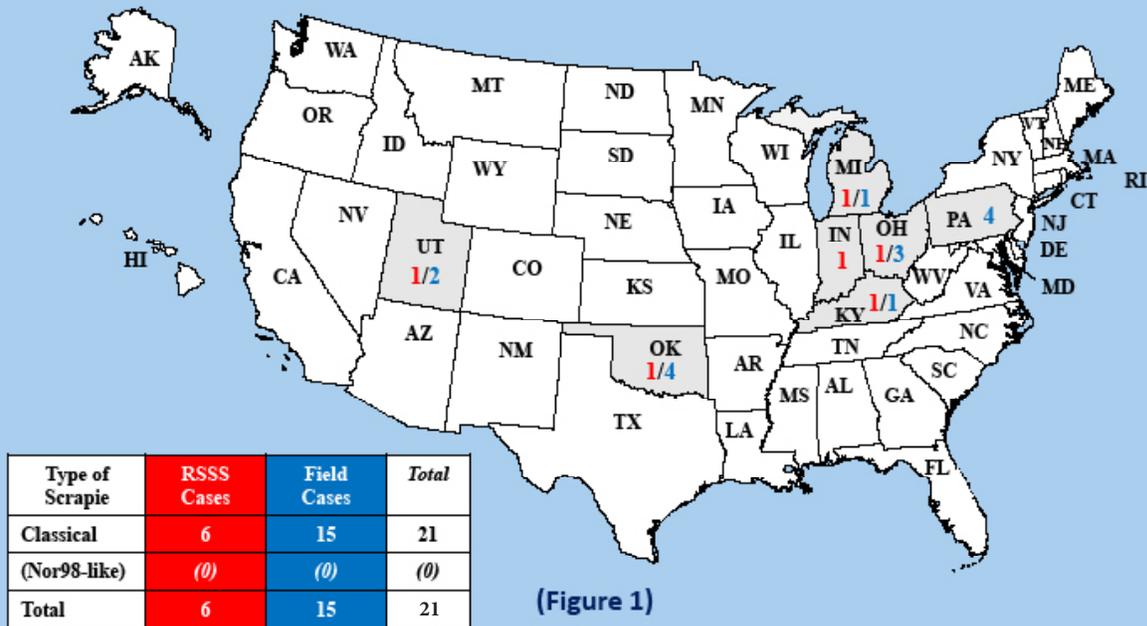
New Statuses by Year

*FY 1997 – FY 2012**



Scrapie Confirmed Cases* in FY 2012

As of September 30, 2012



*Reported by State of ID tag. Collected in FY 2012 and confirmed as of October 15, 2012.
 Note: Field cases include animals removed from infected/source flocks, so state totals often include several animals from the same flock.

Classical Scrapie

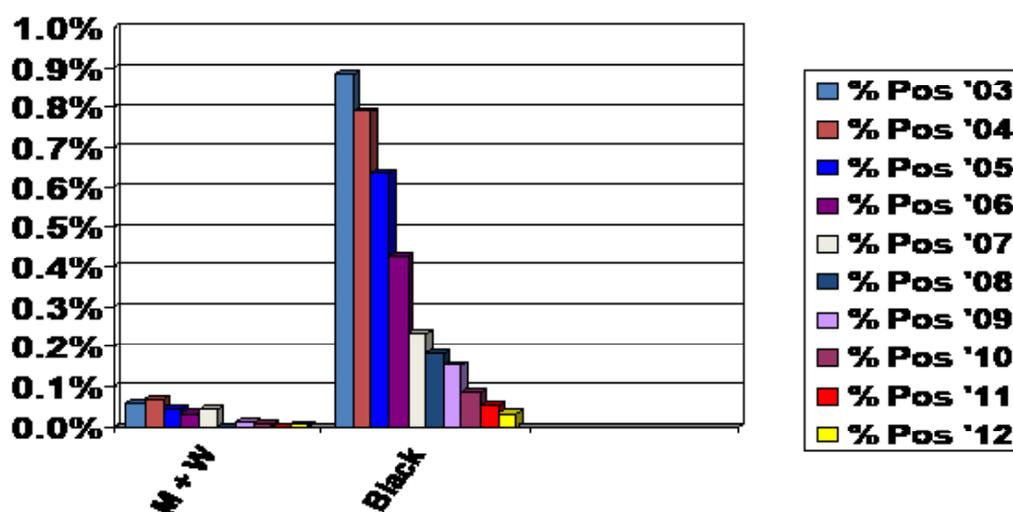
Confirmed Cases in FY 2012

As of September 30, 2012

STATE	SHEEP		GOATS	
	RSSS	On-Farm	RSSS	On-Farm
KY	1	1	0	0
MI	1	1	0	0
IN	1	0	0	0
OH	1	3	0	0
OK	1	4	0	0
PA	0	4	0	0
UT	1	2	0	0
TOTAL ALL STATES	6	15	0	0

No Nor98-like cases reported in FY 2012

Percent of RSSS Samples that Tested Positive for Classical Scrapie by Face Color *Fiscal Year (2003 – 2012*)*

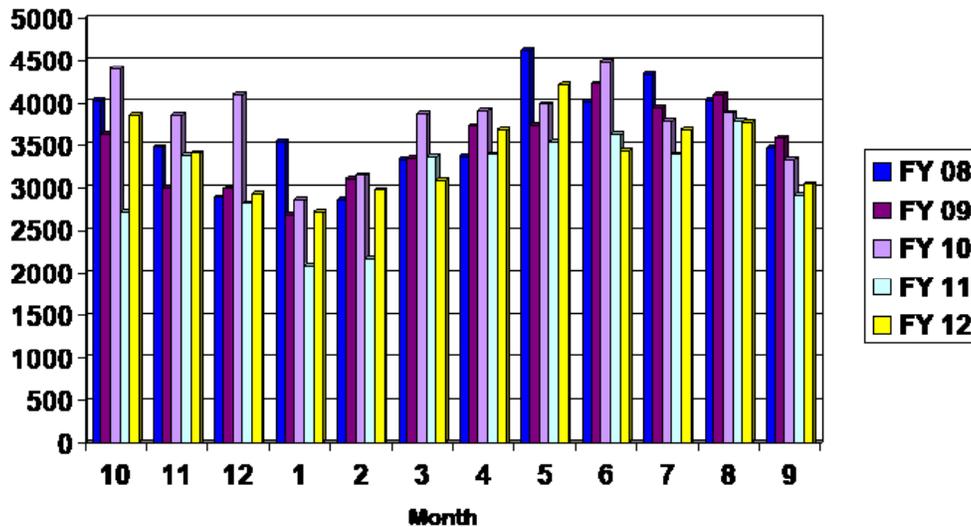


(Chart 3)

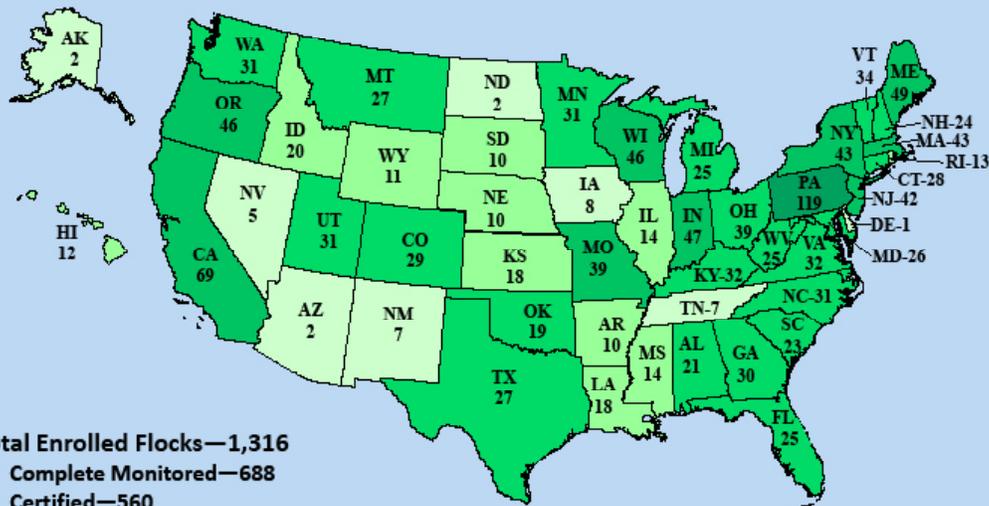
* Through September 30, 2012—Adjusted to exclude multiple positive animals from same flock. Mottled- and white-faced combined. Does not include Nor98-like scrapie cases found through RSSS (2 in FY 2007, 1 in FY 2008, 4 in FY 2010, 1 in FY 2011).

Slaughter Surveillance Samples Collected by Month

Fiscal Year 2008 to 2012



Scrapie Flock Certification Program: Participating Flocks *As of September 30, 2012*



Total Enrolled Flocks—1,316

- Complete Monitored—688
- Certified—560
- Export Monitored—51
- Export Certified—10
- Selective Monitored—7

Websites Dedicated to the Eradication of Scrapie

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service: www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/animal_diseases/scrapie

Maryland Small Ruminant Page: www.sheepandgoat.com/scrapie.html

National Institute of Animal Agriculture: www.animalagriculture.org/scrapie/scrapie.htm

Scrapie SharePoint: <http://animalhealth/scrapie/default.aspx>

(Federal employees can access this password-protected site by emailing earl.t.thorpe@aphis.usda.gov to receive a password.

State employees can request a copy on CD.)

