

Results From Scrapie Program Poll

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — The Pennsylvania Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program polled Pennsylvania sheep producers' perceptions of the Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program.

The poll, one of the first of its kind in the nation, sought feedback from producers to enable the board to be more responsive in addressing the concerns of Pennsylvania shepherds. The board is made up of representatives from producer groups, allied industry, and state and federal regulatory personnel.

Questionnaires were sent to more than 1,300 sheep producers in the state of Pennsylvania last summer. Of the 12 percent responding, 48 percent of the active producers indicated willingness to participate in the program. Of the respondents, 68 percent reported having received information on the Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program from the extension service. Sixty percent received information from magazines, 53 percent from private veterinarians, 39 percent from meetings, 25 percent from the mail, 22 percent from the state and nine percent from the federal government.

A full 82 percent of producers responding considered the scrapie program to be worthwhile, with 48

percent of producers willing to participate in the voluntary program. A little half of the producers (51 percent) thought problems existed in the program. However, 74 percent of this same group thought the program was worthy just the same. Addressing producer perceptions, roughly one third felt one problem area was regulatory involvement and almost half of the producers viewed funding for the program as a problem.

Half of the producers who perceived problems with the voluntary program viewed animal ID as a concern. Approximately one third of the sheep producers felt lack of adequate manpower to be a concern—this same number, about a third, felt oversight of the program to be a problem. Ten percent of the producers were concerned about program delivery.

The success of the Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program is dependent on producer participation. Producers who see problems in the program are less likely to see the program as worthwhile. The results of the Pennsylvania poll showed no specific type of problem predominating. Since the extension service and magazines were cited most frequently as providing producers with information, these avenues should be utilized effectively for transfer of information to producers, rather

than relying on state and federal agencies to disseminate information.

Reasons cited by producers for not participating in the program reflected lack of familiarity with the Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program and lack of understanding of scrapie as a disease process itself. It is not a disease of "black-face sheep" anymore, but is found in white-face sheep as well. One area for the board to serve the state's producers would seem to be in the supplying of basic educational materials on the program and the disease itself. This information is currently available in the form of fact sheets, and is available, free of charge, by contacting Dr. Max Van Buskirk, Pa. Dept. of Agriculture, Harrisburg, (717) 783-5301.

Producers were helpful in supplying feedback to the board in terms of suggestions made. Among the suggestions, two general themes emerged: one, for a stronger leadership role for government (the government should make participation mandatory and government should pay for all costs to the producer participating in the program because documenting healthy sheep is not enough of an incentive). The second theme which evolved was the perceived need for more information on the program itself—what the proto-

cols are for showing sheep, lost ear tags, dead sheep, and more nuts-and-bolts information pertaining to the daily incidents that will occur while participating in the voluntary scrapie program.

The board members will spend the next few months designing strategies to best serve Pennsylvania shepherds, based on impressions and information gathered as

a result of this survey.

For more information on the survey, or information on the Pennsylvania Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program, contact Dr. van Buskirk at the Pa. Dept. of Agriculture in Harrisburg (717) 783-5301, or Dr. Ulysses J. Lance, VS, ASPHIS, USDA, Harrisburg, (717) 782-3442.

Adams Starts Membership Drive

GETTYSBURG (Adams Co.) — A membership campaign kick-off meeting of the Adams County Farm Bureau was held recently at Hoss's Steak and Sea House in Gettysburg.

Louis Sallie, administrative secretary of the state Farm Bureau, was guest speaker. Sallie has served as secretary since 1992 and previously was with the American Farm Bureau as director of field service for the northeast region.

He said, "The importance of staying organized as a farm bureau and active in local legislation are two of the main functions of being members in the Adams County Farm Bureau."

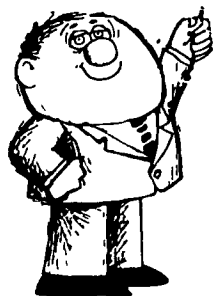
"It is critical to maintain contact with our legislators, since less than 1.6 percent of the population is within the farming industry," he said. "We need to remain a strong voice to be heard."

Sallie, who holds a bachelor's

degree in social science from West Virginia's Bluefield State College, began his career working with the New York Farm Bureau for 10 years before joining the national organization.

Joel Waybright, committee chairperson, said, "Membership is the lifeblood of the organization, the membership of the organization is responsible for the development of local policies which are presented as resolutions to the state association to be used for the lobbying effort on the state and national levels for the farming community's benefit."

The Adams County Farm Bureau has a membership listing of 900 farm family members. While the local bureau began a membership drive in September with a mail campaign, it launched a farmer-to-farmer program with the goal of reaching each eligible person for membership.



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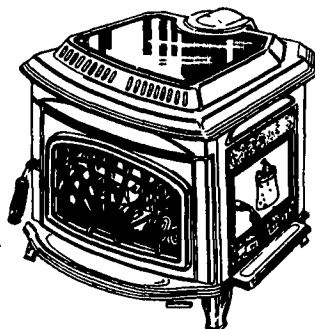
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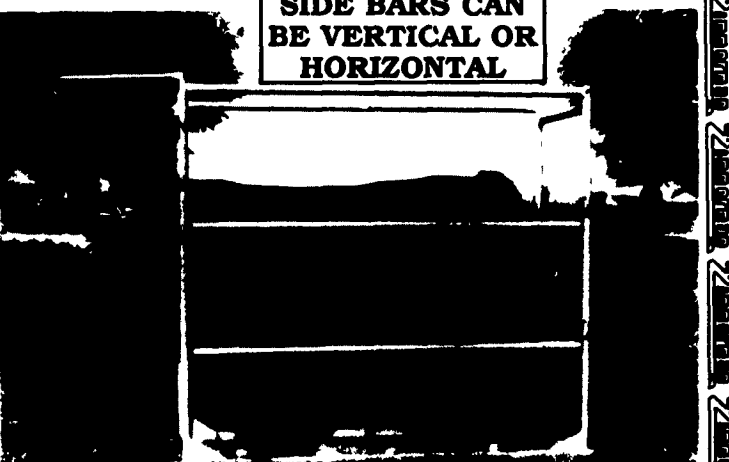


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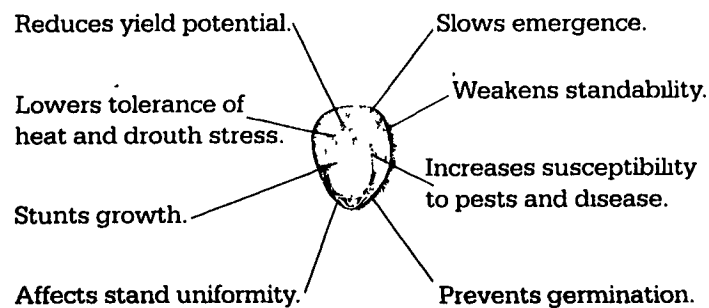
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