



Purebred Sheep Breeders
Association of
Nova Scotia



President's Message

Greetings and best wishes to Association members as many of us come out of our "breeding-cycle" and gear up for winter chore regimes.

First of all I wish to thank all Association members as well as Board members for the support given to the 2010 September Sheep Sale. As you are all aware, a decision had to be made on postponing the sale by one week from Labour Day weekend to the following weekend (11 Sep 2010). Based on potential problems, the Board started contingency planning on the previous weekend. Postponing the sale required a lot of sacrifice, compromise and work on the part of the organizing committee. Shifting it by the one week posed a whole suite of problems. These ranged from personally contacting all the consignors, to generating a communication plan to notify as many potential buyers through a variety of means.... Web-sites, public Service Announcements, personal phone outs and diffusion of notice to departments of Agriculture and other producer associations. As well, the confirmation of availability of space at the Agridome and all the footwork that entailed was a major task. I should point out that Richard Hines had been running at full throttle in his new role of working on the Provincial Exhibition as well as helping to prepare for our sale, then on to the 4-H Pro Show. Our thanks go out to you, and we hope that you have had a chance to re-acquaint yourself with your sheep and them with you. The sale went very smoothly (check summary on the Association web-site). We only had one storm-related consignor cancellation and at peak of the sale, had well over 300 producers, buyers, families and fibre and equipment vendors in the Agridome.... a very positive atmosphere. Based on the number of animals consigned and sold, as well as the prices achieved, the sale was an overall success. The "ladies" who went out of their way to work up the social and warm food on sale day were the icing on the cake. I know that several had taken time off work (booked) for the previous weekend, but still managed to make additional effort to help - my personal thanks to all of you. The behind-the scenes people who managed to swing the sale over successfully should be should be thanked for their efforts. They are Rosemary Wort, Holly Hines, Richard Hines, Wade Sanford, Gillian Fraser, Rhonda McCarron, Bruce and Dianne Sinclair as well as Paul McNutt (allegedly in Retirement). We had additional support to the re-scheduling of the sale and notification etc. from Jonathan Wort of Agrapoint, Jean Lynd of the Nova Scotia Agricultural College and Cathy Vallis, President Sheep Producers Association of Nova Scotia. If you see any of these individuals be sure to thank them for their efforts... they all went way out of their way to make the sale work this year... a major commitment on the part of a volunteer team, as well as Agrapoint and the NSAC. Our appreciation also goes out to the Staff of the Exhibition Grounds for allowing us to not-only reschedule, but leave pens set up for the intervening week between the sales.

As part of the event the Honorable John McDonell, Minister of Agriculture, announced that his department was going to help defray part of the costs of genotyping of sheep for Scrapie resistance as -part of the Department's commitment to our industry. For those who have been genotyping over the last several years, I strongly urge you to keep up with the program. It provides all of us with a powerful management tool and, at the same time, allows us to present critical information for the serious buyer. For those who have not had any genotyping done, I suggest you contact the association, the department or your farm veterinarian for further information on the process. Thank you, again, for your continued support Minister McDonell.



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Finally, as many of you are aware, our Association has offered to host the 2010 Canadian Sheep Classic. You will see further notices of the event and requests for assistance or information. I encourage everyone to start planning for the event, and ask that you look to assisting the organizational team. There will be a new Directory produced by then and we have a need for images of both sheep operations and breeds from our members to help in making promotional materials, so let's all give a helping hand.

All the best

Cheers

Andrew

Although it is too early to officially announce the intention of the Purebred Sheep Breeders Association of Nova Scotia to host the All Canada Classic in 2012 the early planning can begin. I would again encourage you to forward photos to me over the next number of months. These photos can be any random shots of your flock, the scenery around your farm or perhaps your farm dog at work! There was wonderful coverage in Sheep Canada of the spring tour to the islands and photos such as those will be incorporated into a slide show presentation for the banquet at our Classic. This is a good opportunity for you to promote not only our region but your breed to our guests at this national event. Photos can be emailed to brookridgefarm@yahoo.ca

If there is an area of expertise you can lend to the 2012 Classic we would love to hear from you. We will need volunteers in many areas from building gates, setting up and tearing down, decorating, running, etc. As with any successful event it will depend on the amount of effort put in the execution of it. Some volunteers have already come forward and if you would like to help please feel free to contact me. The PSBANS can, and will, once again, put on an exceptional event for 2012!

Rhonda McCarron
Classic 2012 Chairperson

Nova Scotia Sheep Industry Update 2010

Lamb prices have remained strong throughout the year and demand for breeding stock is strong. Everyone I talk to is saying the same thing, "If I had more breeding stock to sell I could sell them" and "I had to stop selling breeding stock so I would have some left". I think this is the case across the country.

There is a great deal of interest in the sheep industry and there are several new producers who have started to establish new flocks in the province. The most recent Statistics Canada Reports indicate that Nova Scotia Sheep numbers have remained stable and there have been increases in breeding numbers in New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. In contrast the rest of Canada has mostly continued to show decline. I feel that the sheep numbers in Nova Scotia are increasing but Stats Canada has not been able to identify the new sheep yet. In PEI, where there have been very significant increases, a number of established producers are buying sheep. I think that Stats Can has picked them up because these producers are already known to them.



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There has been a lot happening in the industry. Following a very successful spring tour attended by several producers to McNutt's Island, AgraPoint hosted three Integrated Parasite Management workshops presented by Susan Schoenian of the University of Maryland. These were well attended with 45 producers attending. The workshops were very timely since this year seems to have been a bad year for parasites. I would like to thank the CARD program for funding assistance for these workshops. If there is enough interest we could probably get Susan to return again next summer to do some more workshops. I would encourage as many of you to participate as possible so we are able to repeat the workshops, as I strongly believe that we are going to see an increase in problems in the next few years, especially if we continue to have warm winters and wet summers.

As the result of continued interest, the Continuing Education Department of the NSAC is offering the Modern Shepherd course again this year. The first module was in September and the second in November. The remaining two modules will be in January and April. Response has been excellent and at this time it is quite likely that the course will be offered again next year. If you are interested in attending, contact the NSAC and get your name on the waiting list. The feedback from the participating students has been very good. Of the 20 participants, the majority were new producers who are showing a great deal of interest in sheep production. It is exciting to see so many people interested in learning more about sheep production.

The NSAC also offered a Sheep Production course for the first time in several years as part of their degree curriculum. There were over 20 students in the class and it was great to see the interest from both the students and the college. Dr. Dave Barrett took the lead on the course with Gwyneth Jones and myself assisting. We are anticipating that we will offer the course again in the winter session.

I have also been working with an economist from the NSDA to try and establish some base line cost of production numbers for the sheep industry in Nova Scotia. It is my hope that we can encourage some of you to share your production cost information with us so that we can continue to improve the information and perhaps calculate cost of production on an annual basis, including comparisons of some different production systems. The initial work that we have done is based on lambing in the spring once a year. I would like to be able to also look at the cost associated with other lambing times and accelerated lambing.

In the past year, the College has also hired a new shepherd, Holly Hines. Holly is a graduate of the NSAC and known to some of you as the daughter of Richard Hines, a long time sheep producer and member of the Purebred Sheep Breeders Association. It is great to have Holly at the college and participating in activities in the industry. She has already become very active in the industry participating in several events and helping out with them all. This newsletter is a product of her efforts and we would like to thank her for her hard work. She is continuing the history of the college being actively involved in the sheep industry and supporting our activities and projects. This should be recognized by the industry because it is invaluable to our small industry.



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Four producers participated in AI on their farms this fall. OC Flock Management came here from Alberta and conducted the Laparoscopic AI on the farms in October. There were several other producers who were interested but we were unable to access suitable semen for their flocks. We hope that it will be possible to organize an importation of other breeds in the near future and perhaps conduct another round of AI. If you are interested please let me know as soon as possible. The more people that participate, the more we can reduce the cost for everyone. I hope to be able to gather the cost information from the participants this year so that we can clearly identify the cost per ewe.

We have also seen this year what appears to be the beginning of a sheep milk industry in Nova Scotia. In previous years we have seen several people milk a few sheep or try to get started. We now have two producers in the province with flocks of dairy sheep; one in Cape Breton and one in mainland NS. Both plan to milk in the spring and produce cheese on farm. This is an exciting development and it will be interesting to follow their progress. This is a growing industry in Canada, with several large flocks in Quebec and Ontario. Once they get established it will provide opportunities for other producers to diversify their production.

This summer the start of a multiyear cooperative research project at Nappan looking at the effect of using different pasture species and feeds on the maturation of lambs and the fat profile of the finished lambs. It is a very large project and it will be interesting to see the results. Some of you were able to attend the field day at Nappan in August where this project was discussed. I hope that we will be able to host another field day again this year and more of you will be able to attend.

I would like to see a greater interest in performance recording of our sheep. I would like to remind you that Marg Zillig is still representing GenOvis in the province and that access to the program is available. Genetic evaluation is vital to the improvement of our sheep and is the best way to advance our industry. There is a need for good performance evaluated breeding stock to expand production.

While we don't know for sure what the new year will bring in terms of programs, several programs are available to help you. Nova Scotia Crop and Livestock Commission continues to administer the Predator compensation program and thanks to the efforts of SPANS we have seen very significant increases in the compensation rates for sheep and lambs. There is also assistance for Scrapie Genotyping in place again through the NSDA and access to the Sheep Flock Health Program is still available. Through the Farm Investment Fund there was also assistance for handling equipment and limited opportunity for fencing assistance.

I am available at the Truro Office of AgraPoint and I encourage you to contact me if you have questions or ideas for projects or workshops. I look forward to seeing you at the upcoming annual meetings.

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