



Purebred Sheep Breeders
Association of
Nova Scotia



President's Message

A perspective from the past: In going through some old files, I came across the programme for the 1981 Sheep Fair and Sale. It comprised an Elite Ram Sale followed by a mixed ewe (purebred and commercial) sale. Four of the farms consigning sheep in 1981 had sheep in our Labour Day sale this year, a true commitment to our industry.

An interesting feature was that there were very few Sale Rules in place at that time with a greater onus placed on the individual producers for the health and documentation of their sheep. In examining the suite of rules in our last catalogue, it became evident that the Association has taken the running of this event much more seriously. This includes a much more prominent role in assisting producers and others through vet checks, managing Registration documents, tracking and advertizing than was ever required or even envisioned in those early days. As an Association, we provide a Marketplace for the sale of breeding stock. However, in order to do that, we have to depend on much more work on the part of our members and volunteers in order to make this happen.

I recall the time when Roy Mackenzie, our extension specialist, provided much of the administrative support for this event (as well as the Association), including assistance in production of our mail-outs, printing etc. The organization and running of the sale now means a very substantial commitment on the part of all those who are involved, be it the Association Secretary, Barn organizer, Work Crews and even the ladies who provide the social evening and canteen. The preparation and running of the sale has also clearly underlined the importance of our partnership with our colleagues at the Ruminant Centre at the Nova Scotia Agricultural College.

On behalf of our Association, I wish to express a heart-felt thanks to all those who contributed to making our Labour Day sale a success be it our partners, our volunteers or Association members. Few organizations have managed to stay focused on the goals and broader interests of their organization for over 3 decades and still keep giving without reservation.

As many of us enter the breeding season, it is time to take stock of how this year has played out. For those who are using management programs such as GenOvis please share your opinions on their utility with your colleagues. Support from the NS Department of Agriculture announced earlier in the year for genetic improvement is a relatively inexpensive way of getting useful production and selection information. With the GenOvis program, this also opens the door for a modicum of financial assistance for retention of better performing lambs for future breeding. This and other programs can be found in 2.0 Sheep Genetic Enhancement and Flock Expansion Initiative in the Departmental Programs Guide 2011-12, (http://www.gov.ns.ca/agri/prm/programs/Programs%20Book%202011_12.pdf)

As an additional tool in our sheep tool box, I encourage those who have been thinking about it, but not yet gone ahead, to inquire about the Flock Health Program. If you are not sure as to what it would mean to you as a producer, contact a producer already on it for their opinion.



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For program details, contact your farm veterinarian. As we move forward, in an ever-more complex regulatory environment and marketplace, it becomes evident that awareness and management of a n ever-expanding suite of genetic and sheep health issues is critical, be they Scrapie resistance genotyping or monitoring for important production limiting diseases such as Maedi visna, Johnes etc.

We have been approached by Dr. Dave Barrett of the Nova Scotia Agricultural College for support toward his further research on the practical knowledge of the effects of CIDR[®]-estrogen-Folligon[®] treatment on ovarian function, pregnancy rates, and lambing rates in ewes out of the breeding season. Upon consultation among all our Directors, we have sent Dr Barrett a letter of support and offered \$500 toward this research this year. When we have our AGM, we will invite him to outline his work and discuss what additional support we may wish to offer (if he is successful in his application).

Lastly, I encourage all members and anyone interested in Purebred Sheep in Nova Scotia to check out our web-site <http://www.sheepnovascotia.ns.ca/>. You can find the results of the 2011 NSPE Sheep Show here, along with some great pictures. If you have any information you would like to add to it, or have ideas on how to make it work better, share them with Gillian Fraser gfraser@nsac.ca.

Yours, In Sheep

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Planning for the 2012 All Canada Classic Sheep Show and Sale has begun! The dates have been set, the venues booked and volunteers are already stepping into rolls which will enable the entire event to run smoothly. The Classic will be held at the AgriDome in Bible Hill on June 14, 15 & 16, 2012.

A number of committees are in place. If there is some area of expertise you can lend to the event please let me know. Volunteers are welcomed, either to head up a committee, or work with others in a group. The following items are being worked on....

Hall/Table decorating - Hospitality Bags - Merchandizing - Stabling - Canteen - Awards
We need help in the following areas - Shepherd's Social (wine and cheese), photo area, show-ring decorating, people to move animals, runners for show and sale day. There will be many more positions where help will be needed, especially on move in, show and sale days. Again, give some thought as to where you might be the best fit and your help will be more than welcomed!

Once again our Classic will be an event to remember! At what other time can you invite Canada to your backyard for a show the likes of the All Canada Classic?

Rhonda McCarron
Chair for All Canada Classic Sheep Show and Sale 2012



FLEECE AND WOOL COMPETITION, 2011 NSPE

The fourth annual Fleece and Wool competition was held on August 25 at the NS Provincial Exhibition in Truro: fifteen fleeces were entered in four categories, from eight consignors, and thirteen handspun skeins of yarn from four consignors. We are grateful to the judges, Delia Burge and Marilyn Rand, for the time they put in, on a hot and humid day, and congratulate them for their knowledgeable and careful assessment of every entry.

Two Romney fleeces were entered in the Longwool class, and one black Icelandic in the Specialty class. The Shortwool fleeces included Texel, Rideau Arcott, Clun Forest and North Country Cheviot, and the Crossbred fleeces included Romney, Clun Forest, Rideau and Texel crosses as well as a Dorset-East Friesian. The Champion fleece was a two year old Clun-Leicester ewe, entered by Fullerton Farm, Belmont, N.S., and the Reserve Champion a two year old Romney ewe, entered by Marina Myra of Berwick, N.S.

The Champion handspun skein was a single ply Romney, and the Reserve Champion a single ply Shetland; both spun from the fleece, uncarded, by G. Jones

The next opportunity for a fleece competition will be at the Classic in June, 2012. All breeds, and crosses are eligible, any well-grown, uniform, hay-free fleece could be a winner: consider entering!

Gwyneth Jones

AI in Sheep an Opportunity to Improve Your Sheep

Nova Scotia has a long history of bringing new genetics to Canada and raising high quality breeding stock. There are limited opportunities to import live sheep from the US however access to breeding stock from other parts of the world is very hard unless it is through frozen genetics. With sheep using AI presents some challenges that do not exist with cattle. In order to get any degree of success with frozen semen, breeding sheep requires the use of a laparoscope and an experienced vet. At this time we do not have a vet in Nova Scotia who is capable of providing this service. Nova Scotia producers who have used AI in their flocks have worked together and brought a vet in to perform the AI. This has worked well and the cost has been shared between the producers involved. With the implementation of the Nova Scotia Genetic Enhancement Program there is the opportunity for producers to work together and receive assistance to import sheep semen and to help bring a vet in to breed the sheep.

Cost:

Sheep AI is not cheap even with the possible government assistance so you need to give careful consideration to using AI. You need to make sure that you understand the cost and possible benefit. It is vital that you prepare and manage your sheep properly; the final success or failure will be the result of what you do. Based on the experience of the producers who have done AI



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in the past you can expect 50% to 100% of the sheep to breed. The basic cost to AI a group of sheep between 12 to 25 ewes is \$55/ewe plus the semen and the travel expenses for the vet team. (Vet team comes from Alberta) depending on how many producers share the cost of the vet and the semen that you use you will end up spending between \$100.00/ewe to \$200.00/ewe. If we assume that it cost you \$150 per ewe to complete the breeding and you have 80% of the ewes lamb at 1.70% lambing percentage. If you bred 15 ewes you would have spent \$2250.00 and you would have 20 lambs each costing \$112.50 in breeding cost.

Accessing and Buying Semen:

Depending on the breed of sheep you have and the genetics you are looking for to breed with there are a couple of options available to producers to purchase semen. These are buying semen "off the shelf"; OC Flock Management in Alberta has some sheep semen available and they are willing to try to acquire semen for producers. <http://www.ocflock.com>. OC Flock Management list approximately 17 breeds of sheep that they have access to semen from. Some of this is from the United Kingdom (UK). For producers who are looking for specific genetics OC Flock will try to help you find the genetics that you are looking for or you can try yourself. The first step in trying to source new genetics from another country is to check with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) to see if importing from the country is possible. At that point you need to find someone to collect the semen to meet the CFIA's import requirements and get them to contact the owner of the ram and make arrangements to have the ram collected. This can be a very slow and frustrating process. Typically to make it worth collecting the semen you will have to agree to a minimum of 100 straws per ram at a typical price of a minimum of \$50 Canadian. In addition you will have to pay to have the semen shipped to Canada and this costs about \$3000.00 per shipment regardless of the number of straws of semen. With this in mind producer have worked together in the past to acquire and import the genetics they want and share the costs. At this time it is relatively easy to import from the UK, New Zealand, and Australia. (Purebred producers should check that the Canadian Sheep Breeders (CSBA) recognise the registry in the country that you want to import from. If CSBA doesn't recognise the registry that the donor ram is registered in you will not be able to register the offspring of the breeding. Problems arise for producers of breeders that are less common because it is harder to find animals to collect from and the market for the offspring is limited. This could make using AI prohibitively expensive.

Preparing for AI:

In order to prepare for AI it is vital that you prepare your ewes in advance and follow the protocol provided by the vet doing the AI precisely. Failure to do so will result in very poor results and investing a very significant sum of money for nothing. If you are interested in AI more information about synchronising you ewes and access to breeding services is available from Jonathan Wort at AgraPoint 902 896 0277 ext 232.