



Stakeholder Announcement

Overview of the Scrapie Free Flock Certification Program (SFCCP)

Background

Scrapie is a fatal, degenerative disease affecting the central nervous system of sheep and goats. Since 1952 the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has worked to control and eradicate this disease. In 2001, APHIS put into effect an aggressive National Scrapie Eradication Program (NSEP) to eliminate this disease from the United States. The NSEP is a mandatory program with requirements that apply to all sheep and goat producers in the United States; however, within the NSEP is a voluntary program, the Scrapie Free Flock Certification Program (SFCCP), which has additional requirements that apply only to SFCCP participants.

The SFCCP began in 1992 as a partnership between APHIS, the States, sheep and goat producers and allied industry. The SFCCP provides participating producers with the opportunity to protect their animals from scrapie and to enhance the marketability of their animals through monitoring the animals for evidence of scrapie infection and, depending on the category of participation, certifying their animals' origin in flocks or herds of negligible scrapie risk. The program has undergone various changes in the past 20 years, and was most recently revised in 2013.

The program receives individual producer input at Federal and State levels through the National Scrapie Oversight Committee and State Scrapie Flock Certification Boards. These groups are made up of producers, accredited veterinarians, allied industry representatives, State animal health officials, and APHIS officials.

Program Purpose and Benefits

The objective of the SFCCP is monitor participating flocks for evidence of scrapie; additionally, for flocks participating in the Export category, the program provides a way to be recognized as negligible scrapie risk as an "Export Certified" flock. Depending on the level of participation, this monitoring is achieved through animal sampling and/or annual inspections. The longer a flock has continuously met the program requirements, the less likely it is that the flock is infected. Because scrapie has a long incubation period, a flock receives "Export Certified" status after seven years. Throughout those seven years, the following conditions must continuously be met:

- No animals have been diagnosed with scrapie;
- There has been no clinical evidence of scrapie;
- All dead animals found have been reported and tested for scrapie;
- All acquired animals have been from Export flocks with equal or higher status;
- Flock animals have not interacted with animals from nonparticipating flocks or flocks with lower status; and

- An adequate number of animals, either dead or alive, in the flock have been tested, to demonstrate disease freedom.

The value of an animal enrolled in an SFCP flock increases the longer it is in the program, especially after the flock becomes “Export Certified.” Animals from “Export Certified” flocks are a valuable source of replacement breeding animals for other flocks.

Signing Up

Any flock owner may apply to be part of the SFCP by contacting their local APHIS Veterinary Services area office. The State Scrapie Flock Certification Board (or its representative) reviews applications and approves admissions to the program.

Sheep or goat producers applying for the “Select” category are only required to submit the application for enrollment, VS Form 5-22. Sheep and goat producers applying for the “Export” category are required to submit a complete application package, which includes the following:

- An application for enrollment (VS Form 5-22);
- A list of animals in the flock, including the animals’ breed, gender, and official animal identification; and
- An inspection report (VS Form 5-19A) completed by a State or Federal regulatory official or Qualified Accredited Veterinarian that verifies the information contained in the application and inventory. The report must also confirm the absence of any signs of scrapie in the flock.

Program Requirements

The program requirements vary according to the category of participation.

All participants enrolled in both the “Select” and “Export” categories agree to meet the following requirements:

- Immediately report scrapie-suspect animals to animal health officials;
- Submit tissues for scrapie sampling from:
 - All animals over 12 months of age showing clinical signs of scrapie;
 - All animals, at any age, that test suspect, inconclusive or positive for scrapie on a live animal test, or have been designated a scrapie suspect by a State or Federal regulatory official or accredited veterinarian;
- Allow breed associations and registries, livestock markets, and packers to disclose records to APHIS and/or State animal health officials and State Scrapie Flock Certification Board members; and
- Provide the facilities and personnel necessary to assist in inspections.

Participants enrolled in the “Export” category agree to meet the following *additional* requirements:

- Submit tissues from all animals over 18 months of age that are found dead (including euthanized animals);

- Officially identify all animals in the flock that are one year of age or older (animals less than one year old must be identified whenever a change of ownership occurs, except for those in slaughter channels);
- Undergo an annual inspection, at which time animals are reconciled with the flock records, checked for official identification, and examined for evidence of scrapie;
- Maintain required records, such as:
 - Owners must account for all acquisitions, departures, births, and deaths
 - Records must be retained for a minimum of 7 years after an animal dies or is removed from the flock
- Report all sheep or goat acquisitions from flocks with lower status or from nonparticipating flocks; and
- Have all animals undergo veterinary inspection prior to culling or be slaughtered at a State or Federally inspected facility.

Program Categories

Export Category

The objective of the Export category is to monitor and sample participating flocks for evidence of scrapie, leading to “Export Certified” status and recognition of negligible scrapie risk. Flocks in this category have one of two statuses, depending on the amount of time they have continuously met program standards and the number of animals sampled: “Export Monitored” and “Export Certified.”

Export Monitored: When a flock enters the program in the “Export” category, it is assigned “Export Monitored” status. The flock is assigned an enrollment date (i.e., the date of the flock’s initial enrollment inspection) and a status date. The flock will increase the time in status as long as it continues to meet program requirements. However, if a flock acquires or commingles with animals of a lesser status, or does not meet its annual sampling requirements, its status date changes to reflect the date of this occurrence. The older the status date, the longer the flock has continuously met program standards.

Flocks in the “Export” category can acquire or commingle with rams or bucks from any flock other than source or infected flocks, including those not enrolled in the program. Based on current scientific evidence, rams and bucks are not known to be a risk for spreading scrapie. These animals can maintain their own status date and, generally, do not affect the status date of the flock.

Ewes and does, however, are known to transmit scrapie. Therefore, to maintain scrapie-free status, flock owners may not obtain ewes or does from nonparticipating flocks or from flocks with lower status. Flock owners who do not comply with this requirement will have their flock’s status date adjusted to reflect the addition of the lowest category animal.

Export Certified: Animals from “Export Certified” flocks meet the World Organization for Animal Health’s standards to be recognized as free of disease. In order to achieve “Export Certified” status, a flock must gain a minimum of seven years in status and sample 30 mature

animals. This sampling minimum may be achieved through slaughter, necropsy and live animal testing. In addition to this standard sampling protocol, there are two alternative sampling protocols, including testing all genetically susceptible animals sold and testing the foundation flock.

Select Category

The “Select” category is designed for participants who wish to monitor their animals for signs of scrapie through animal sampling and recommended flock management strategies. There are no inspections in this category, although an in-person orientation is offered upon enrollment. Participants agree to sample at least one mature animal every one to three years, depending on flock size. APHIS monitors compliance with the sampling requirement through a national sampling database, and publishes the date on which the last animal was sampled on its public website. “Select” status is maintained indefinitely, as long as the flock continues to meet the category requirements.

Suspension or Removal of Flock Status

A participating flock is suspended when it is either undergoing a scrapie investigation or a noncompliance investigation. Its status will be reinstated, downgraded or the flock will be removed from the program, depending on the outcome of the investigation.

If scrapie is diagnosed in a flock participating in any program category, the flock is removed from the program. Animal health officials conduct an epidemiologic investigation to identify both the source of the disease and any additional exposed animals. Officials work with the flock owner to develop and implement a flock plan, including depopulating animals at high-risk for developing scrapie to reduce the risk of spreading infection and cleaning and disinfecting the facility. Following completion of the flock plan, a producer may apply for readmission to the SFCP.

Exhibition and Transportation Guidelines

The SFCP standards provide guidelines for reducing the risk of scrapie exposure while animals are at shows or in transport. Guidelines include separating enrolled animals from non-enrolled animals by a vacant pen, barn alley, or a solid barrier sufficient to prevent physical contact. Limited contact in show rings minimizes the risk of disease transmission. At exhibits or sales, animals enrolled in the “Export” category may not commingle with non-enrolled pregnant animals or animals that are within 60 days post lambing or kidding.

Additional Information

APHIS’ scrapie web page: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/animal_diseases/scrapie/

Information about the SFCP and enrolled flocks:

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/animal_diseases/scrapie/free-certi.shtml

Flock information is also available by contacting APHIS' Veterinary Services area offices. For a list of area offices, please visit: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/area_offices/

Contact APHIS at:

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