

# Scrapie Flock Certification Program

## USDA Scrapie Programs

Since 1952, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the sheep industry have worked to control and eradicate scrapie; a fatal degenerative disease affecting the central nervous system of sheep and goats. USDA has established two programs—the National Scrapie Eradication Program (NSEP) and the Scrapie Flock Certification Program (SFCP)—that work in concert to eliminate scrapie from the Nation's sheep flocks and goat herds. Both programs are cooperative efforts among producers, allied industry, accredited veterinarians, State animal health officials, and USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

The NSEP is designed to find and eradicate scrapie. The NSEP is mandatory and relies on slaughter surveillance and the reporting of scrapie suspects by producers and veterinarians. Additionally, the program relies on the ability to trace scrapie positive animals back to their flock of origin and/or their flock of birth and the ability to trace exposed animals to the flocks in which they reside. Regulations concerning the movement of sheep and goats—including scrapie-positive and scrapie-exposed animals—are in place to prevent the spread of scrapie.

The SFCP, which began in 1992, is a voluntary program. The program provides participating producers with the opportunity to protect their animals from scrapie and to enhance the marketability of their animals by certifying their origin in scrapie-free flocks. The program was modified in July 2007 to add an export monitored category that meets the current World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) standards for export.

### Program Purpose and Benefits

The intent of the voluntary certification program is to identify flocks that are free of scrapie by monitoring flocks over a period of 5 to 7 years, or more. Because scrapie has a long incubation period, a flock is only considered free of the disease if no animals have been diagnosed with scrapie and there is no clinical evidence for a period of 5 to 7 years. The longer a flock

has been enrolled and followed the program requirements, the more likely it is that the flock is free of the disease.

The economic value of animals in enrolled flocks increases the longer they are in the program, especially after the flock is certified. Animals from certified flocks are a valuable source of replacement breeding animals for other flocks.

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

### Signing Up

Any flock owner may apply to enter the SFCP by contacting an APHIS Veterinary Services area office. The State Scrapie Flock Certification Board reviews applications and approves admissions to the program. Required application materials include:

- A list of animals in the flock, including the animals' breed, gender, and official individual animal identification information for the program;
- An inspection report completed by a State or Federal regulatory official that verifies the flock's official scrapie program identification information and the other information contained in the application. The report must also confirm the absence of any signs of scrapie in the flock.

### Program Requirements

When participating in the certification program, flock owners must:

- Agree to immediately report scrapie-suspect animals to animal health officials.
- Officially identify all animals within a flock that are 1 year of age or older. Animals less than 1 year old must be identified whenever a change of ownership occurs, except for those in slaughter channels.
- Maintain records as required by the program. Owners must account for all acquisitions, departures, births, and deaths. Records must be retained for a minimum of 5 years after an animal dies or is removed from the flock.
- 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.

- Provide the facilities and personnel necessary to assist in inspections, including:
  - checking animals for official identification and signs of scrapie, and
  - checking records for completeness and accuracy.
- Notify APHIS or State veterinary personnel of all found dead stock 14 months of age or older.
- Submit tissues from scrapie-suspect animals and from animals suspected of other neurological or chronic wasting illnesses to an official laboratory.
- Report all sheep or goat acquisitions from flocks with lower status or from flocks not participating in the program to the State Scrapie Flock Certification Board.

### **Program Categories**

Flock owners may elect to participate in one of the program's three different categories.

#### **Complete Monitored Category**

Flocks in this category have either an enrolled or certified status.

**Complete Monitored Enrolled Flock:** When a flock enters the program, it is assigned enrolled status, becoming a "complete monitored enrolled flock." These flocks are assigned an enrollment date (i.e., the date a satisfactorily completed application is received by the APHIS Veterinary Services area office) and a status date. The status date is the best risk indicator for scrapie in an enrolled flock. Initially, the status date is the same as the enrollment date, and it will be maintained if a flock continues to meet program requirements. However, if a flock acquires animals or commingles with animals that do not meet the program standards, the status date changes to reflect the date of this occurrence. The older the date, the longer the flock has met program standards.

Owners can acquire rams or bucks from any flock other than source or infected flocks, including those not enrolled in the program. Currently, there is no scientific evidence confirming male animals as a risk for spreading scrapie. Rams and bucks maintain their own status date and do not affect the status date of the flock.

Female animals have been found to spread scrapie. Therefore, to maintain scrapie-free status, flock owners may not obtain ewes or does from flocks not participating in the program or from flocks of lower scrapie status. Producers who do not comply with this requirement will have their flock's status date adjusted to reflect the addition of the lowest category animal.

**Complete Monitored Certified Flock:** When an enrolled flock has met program standards for 5 consecutive years, it advances to certified status.

Animals from these flocks are unlikely to be infected with scrapie. Female animals may be purchased only from other certified flocks.

Both enrolled and certified flocks must be inspected annually by State or Federal regulatory personnel.

#### **Export Monitored Category**

In 2007, APHIS added a new export category that meets OIE guidelines. In addition to the requirements for the Complete Monitored category, the Export Monitored category requires that animals over 14 months of age found dead must be sampled for scrapie testing, and all cull animals must either undergo veterinary inspection prior to culling or be slaughtered at a State or federally inspected facility. In order to achieve Export Certification status, a minimum of 7 years of monitoring is required (versus 5 years to achieve Complete Monitored certification) and a minimum of 30 mature animals must be tested for scrapie before export certification. Live animal testing may be used to meet this requirement if fewer than 30 mature animals have died or been culled.

#### **Selective Monitored Category**

The Selective Monitored category is open to any flock and is designed for slaughter lamb producers to allow for scrapie surveillance of large production flocks. Only male animals over 1 year of age must be officially identified. Producers agree to submit for scrapie diagnosis animals that are culled from the flock or that die. The number of animals to submit per year depends on the flock size. Selective monitored status is maintained indefinitely, as long as the flock meets the category requirements.

#### **Suspension or Removal of Flock Status**

If an SFCP flock is involved in a scrapie investigation or if its status is under consideration for downgrading due to noncompliance with the program, the flock's SFCP status is suspended. If the investigation does not lead to its designation as a scrapie infected, source, or exposed flock, the flock's previous SFCP status is reinstated.

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 and trace back the source of the disease and to also identify exposed animals. Officials work with the flock owner to develop and implement a flock plan. Flock plans include depopulating high-risk animals, reducing 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 certification program 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, enrolled animals may not commingle with non-enrolled pregnant animals that are within 60 days post lambing or kidding.

### **Additional Information**

For more information about scrapie or the Scrapie Flock Certification Program, please visit APHIS' scrapie Web page at [http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal\\_health/animal\\_diseases/scrapie/](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/animal_diseases/scrapie/).

Additionally, you can contact APHIS at:  
USDA, APHIS, Veterinary Services  
National Animal Health Programs  
4700 River Road, Unit 43  
Riverdale, MD 20737-1231  
Telephone: (301) 851-3569  
Fax: (301) 734-7964

Current information about enrolled and certified flocks is available at <http://scrapietag.aphis.usda.gov/reports/sisstate.php>. Information concerning noncompliant, infected, or source flocks can be found at <http://scrapietag.aphis.usda.gov/reports/noncom.php>. Additionally, information concerning source or infected flocks with inadequate records for tracing exposed animals is available at <http://scrapietag.aphis.usda.gov/reports/notifystate.php>.

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/](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/area_offices/).

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