

SCRAPIE: ERADICATE IT

The sheep industry's scrapie eradication efforts.



December 2007

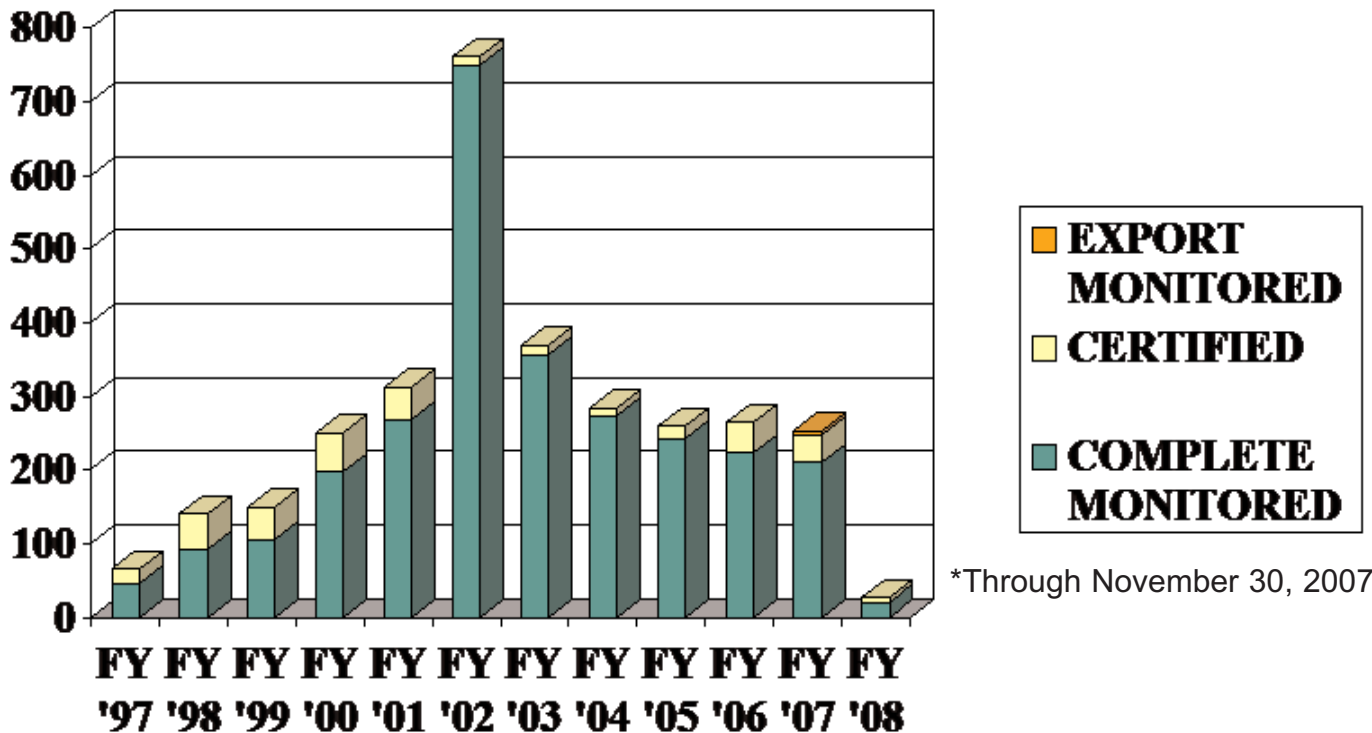
The goal of the American Sheep Industry Association (ASI) and the U.S. sheep industry is to eradicate scrapie from our borders by 2010. In addition, it is the objective to have the World Organization for Animal Health, OIE, declare the United States scrapie free by 2017. This quarterly publication is created specifically for those of you in the field who are also working to achieve this goal.

This newsletter brings together, into one spot, current information from all 50 states, as well as from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and any other organization providing scrapie news, and reports it back to the field.

If you have first-hand accounts that you believe would be relevant for others to read or have information that you would like included in this newsletter, please let us know at becky@sheepusa.org.

Changes in Scrapie Program Make It Consistent with OIE Guidelines

SFCP New Statuses by Year FY 1997 to 2008*



By BECKY TALLEY
Sheep Industry News Writer

In the United States, scrapie eradication is a top priority for the future of the nation's sheep industry, no matter the breed or purpose of the animals produced. In addition to the National Scrapie Eradication Program, the Scrapie Flock Certification Program (SFCP) has been instrumental in ensuring scrapie-free flocks since 1992.

The voluntary SFCP was established to reduce the spread of scrapie, identify those flocks that have been

free of scrapie over a period of time, contribute to the eventual eradication of scrapie and enhance the marketability of enrolled animals.

As of Aug. 31, 2007, 2,035 flocks were participating in the SFCP, with 398 being certified flocks. Certified flock numbers have more than doubled since September 2005, according to information from the National Institute of Animal Agriculture.

On the domestic front, the program is useful for certifying scrapie-free flocks and is beneficial for participants, as it gives them more markets for their sheep and goats; however, some producers want to break into new international markets. Since the SFCP was first designed, international guidelines were developed that differ from the original program.

In an effort to meet these international guidelines for scrapie flock certification programs and thereby facilitate the export of sheep and goats to more countries, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) made changes to the U.S. SFCP standards, which came into effect in June.

These changes were made to meet the current World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) guidelines for international trade, to increase the assurance that certified flocks are free from scrapie and to improve clarity, process and consistency between states. In addition, by adopting these guidelines as requirements, the U.S. sheep industry is provided additional protection from importing foreign animals that may not be scrapie-free.

To address the OIE export guidelines, APHIS added the "export monitored and export certified" categories to the flock certification program. These new categories were created to go one step beyond the program's previous requirements, making more animals eligible for export in more foreign markets. These changes will impact enrolled producers wishing to export to countries that require exporters to meet OIE requirements.

The following is a brief overview of the requirements for this category:

1. All animals over 14 months of age that are found dead must be sampled for scrapie testing.
2. All cull animals must either undergo veterinary inspection prior to culling, or be slaughtered at a state or federally inspected facility.
3. In order to achieve export certification status, seven years of monitoring is required (versus five years to achieve domestic certification).
4. 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 insufficient mature animals die or are culled.
5. Flocks that convert from the complete monitored or certified category to the export monitored category before Oct. 1, 2009, may be grandfathered with up to five years of status.

Bret Marsh, DVM, state veterinarian of Indiana, which has 84 flocks enrolled in SFCP, says that these new requirements were designed to expand the market for U.S. sheep producers.

"Not having these standards has compromised our marketing ability; so overall, it provides an opportunity for producers. The whole purpose was to expand domestic and international markets," he says.

According to Marsh, not only will these requirements make U.S. sheep producers consistent with OIE guidelines, it also will make the export certified flocks more appealing as breeding stock for domestic flocks, as anyone in the program can buy those animals and keep their flock's current status. The purchased animal's status will change to that of the new flock.

Certification program participants are not required to become export certified and can choose to stop at the certified flock status, says Diane Sutton, DVM, National Scrapie Program coordinator for USDA. There are some countries that currently allow the importation of U.S. breeding sheep without export certification.

For example, Canada will allow female sheep from flocks enrolled in the complete monitored category to enter Canadian SFCP flocks at the lowest status level; whereas, flocks in the export category can enter at a higher level. It is important to note that the OIE standards are those accepted for trade purpose by most countries, so producers who wish to get into international markets would be wise to become export certified.

Jim Logan, DVM, chair of the American Sheep Industry Association's Animal Health Committee, agrees that following these requirements is in producers' best interests.

"If, in fact, they are going to do international exportation, that is simply the rule," he relates.

As of Aug. 31, four producers have signed up to take part in the export certification program.

Other SFCP Changes of Note

In addition to adding the export certified program, there have been other clarifications made to the program that participants should be aware of. Some of the more prominent are:

1. The enrollment date definition was changed to be the date on which an acceptable application is received by the Veterinary Services' area office in order to address problems of delayed approval of appli-

cations. This change is not retroactive.

2. A pilot project was implemented to evaluate an alternative certification method for large flocks.

3. Advancement to certified status will no longer require a separate application by the participant. Certification will instead occur once the flock reaches either five years of status in the complete monitored category or seven years of status in the export monitored category following a review by the board of a satisfactory the inspection for certification report.

4. A requirement was added to record scrapie

susceptibility genotype if known and to preferentially sample known susceptible animals.

5. A provision was added for the suspension of a flock's status while designated as an exposed flock, a flock under investigation or while a downgrade is being considered by the board or is being appealed.

6. Clarification was made to the Scrapie Disinfection Guidelines indicating that potentially contaminated bedding and similar materials were to be buried, incinerated or tilled under.

Strict Enforcement of Standards

According to Sutton, the new modifications as well as those that are still in place will be strictly enforced for all participants. Whereas in past editions of the standard's book, a great deal of latitude was given to State Scrapie Certification Boards in determining when to down grade an enrolled producer's status. The new standards spell out certain areas of non-compliance that will result in downgrades. Area veterinarians in charge (AVICs) have the ultimate responsibility for insuring that the standards are equitably enforced, she relates.

Sutton says it is important for producers to understand that strict enforcement is to ensure the integrity and consistency of the program.

"We have provided specific criteria to increase uniformity between states," she says.

While not a comprehensive list, the first occurrence of the following infractions will result in a status downgrade to the date the flock was brought back into program compliance. If the same infraction occurs on a second occasion, the flock will be removed from the program:

1. failure to report acquisitions that would have resulted in a downgrade of status;

2. failure to officially identify sexually intact animals moved from the premises other than to slaughter or to a terminal feedlot at under 12 months of age;

3. failure to submit required samples;

4. failure to report animals exhibiting clinical signs or found dead at more than 14 months of age; and

5. failure to properly document disposition and acquisitions.

Another strictly enforced rule that producers sometimes forget regards the program status of enrolled animals purchased to form a new flock or when an SFCP flock is moved to a new location. A producer who buys enrolled animals to form a new flock or that moves an enrolled flock and wishes to keep the status of those animals MUST apply to the program within 30 days of purchase or movement. Applications that are made after more than 30 days may be denied by the board.

Participation in SFCP Encouraged

Updating of the standards book and enforcement of current requirements ensures that the SFCP continues to offer the highest level of scrapie protection and market accessibility for producers.

Participants are encouraged to continue to make good decisions in flock management and keep scrapie eradication at the forefront of their flock plans.

"We have taken it very seriously and encourage our producers to do the same. Take steps to evaluate animals for clinical signs and only buy from sources in which scrapie is taken seriously," Marsh encourages.

According to Logan, it is important for them to enroll and continue in the program.

"It would behoove all of us to do everything we can to manage for and prevent scrapie to move toward eradication, which includes genetic testing and flock certification."

For more information on the SFCP standard changes, please visit http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/animal_diseases/scrapie/free-certi.shtml and download the program regulations from the "Scrapie Flock Certification Program Standards" link.

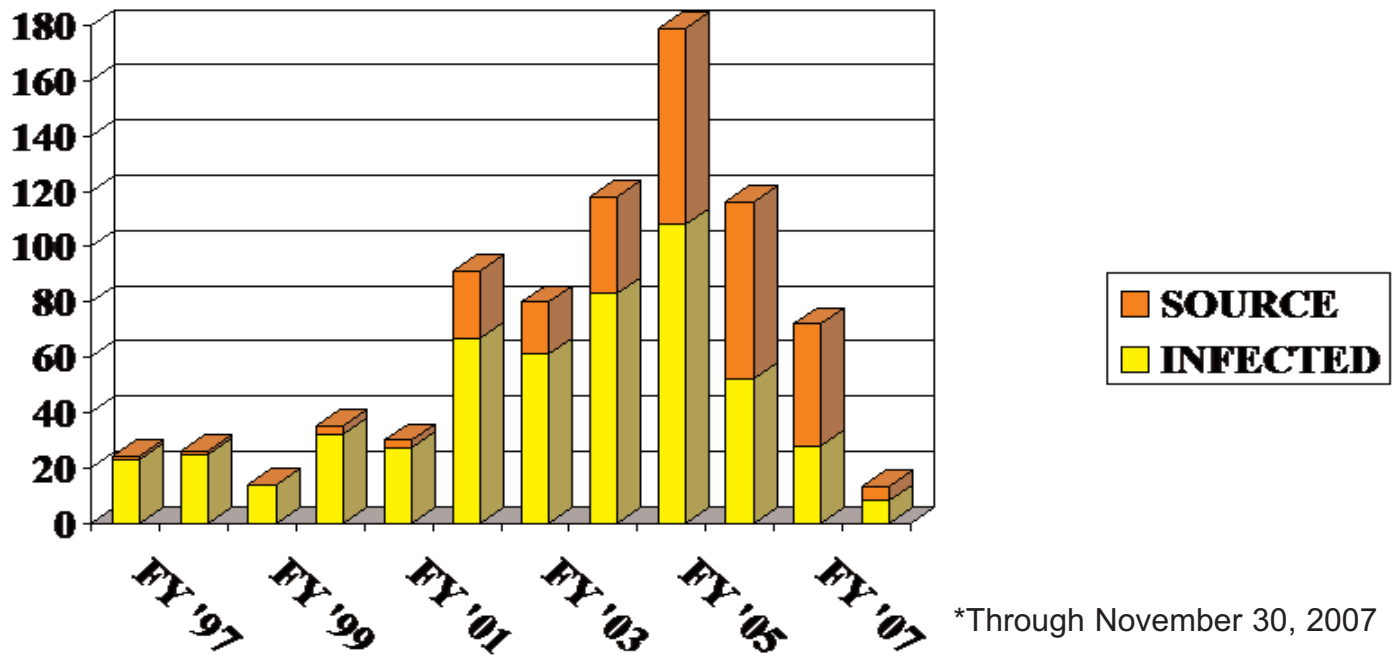
Caprine Scrapie Prevalence Study

To determine national prevalence of scrapie in goats

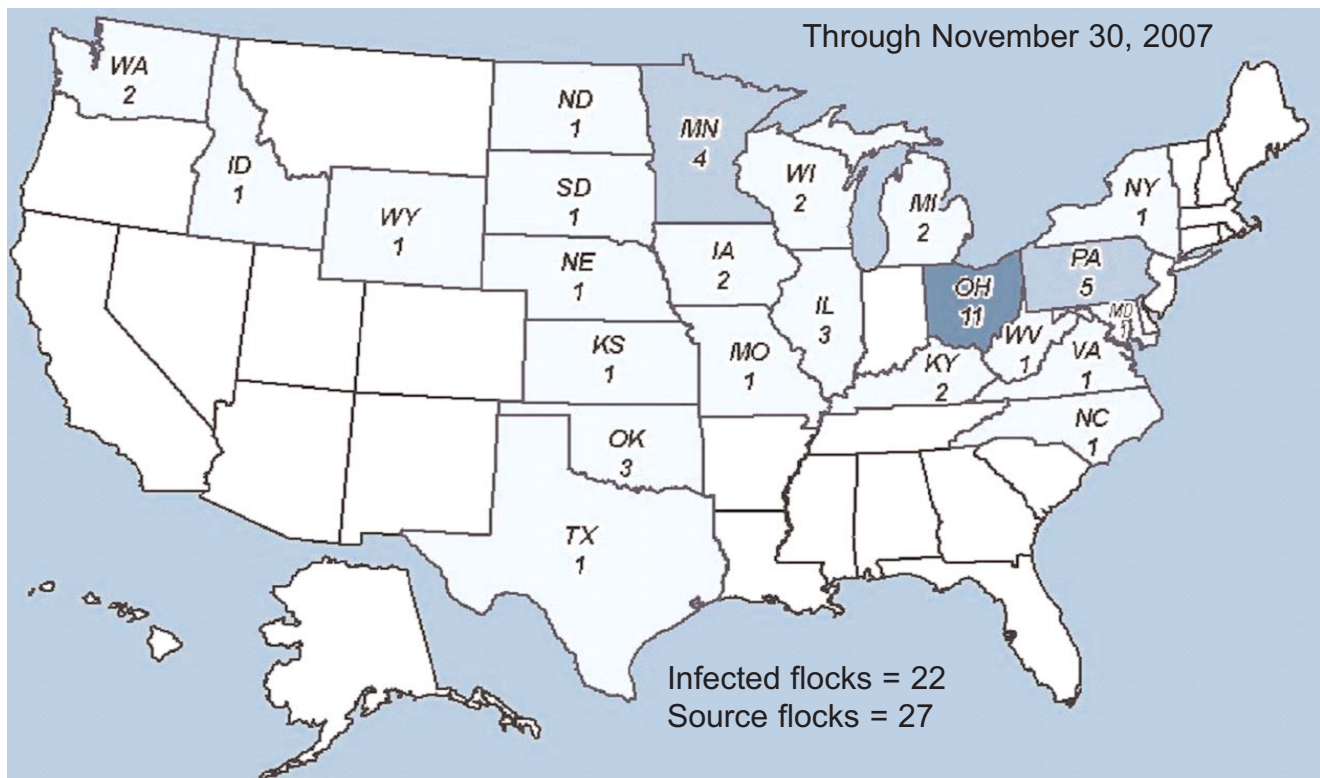
From May 2007 (study start) to November 30, 2007

2,378 goats have been sampled for scrapie testing (1,477 in FY2007, 901 in FY 2008). To date, none of the sampled goats have tested positive for scrapie as part of this surveillance program.

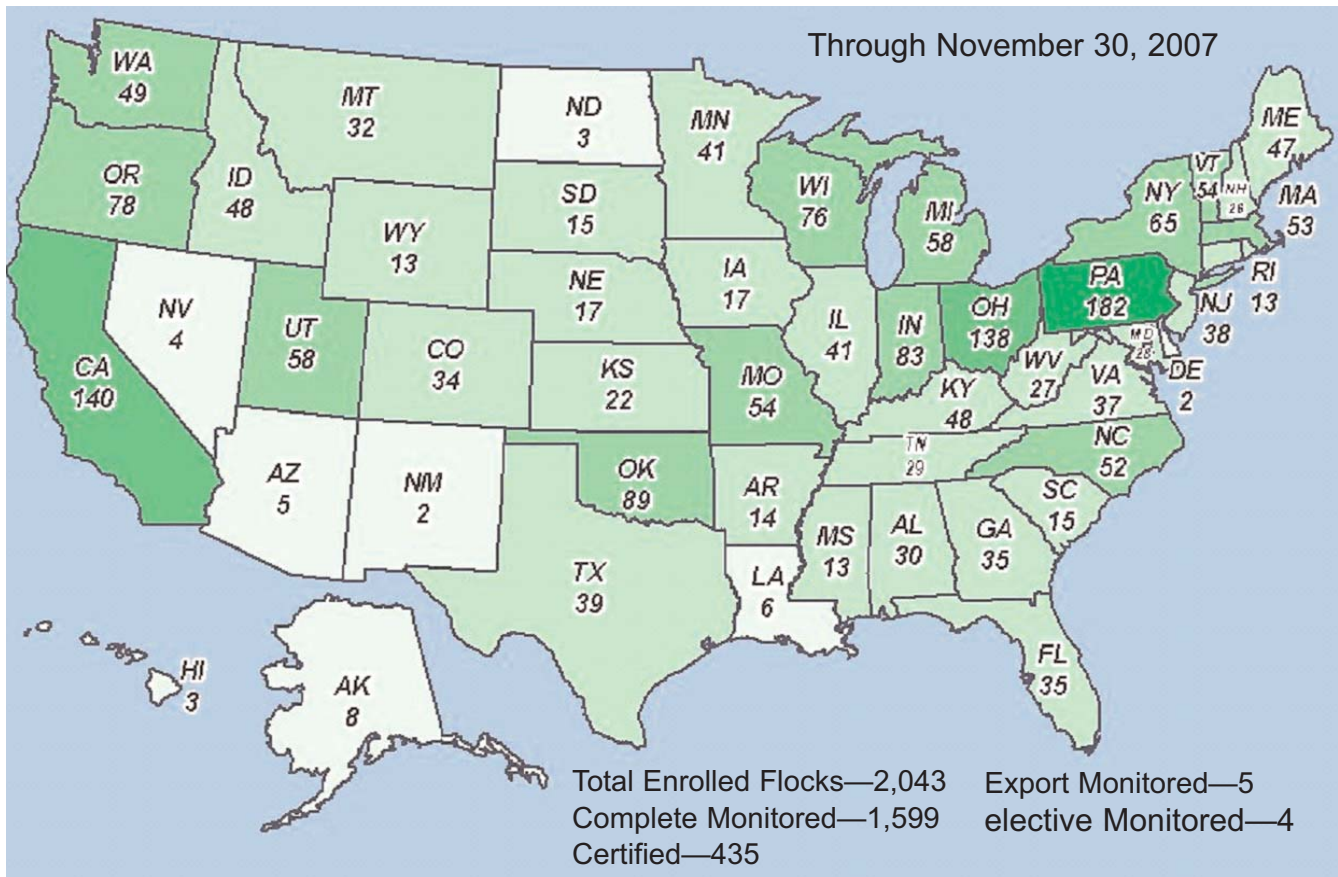
Infected and Source Flocks New Statuses by Year FY 1997 – 2008*



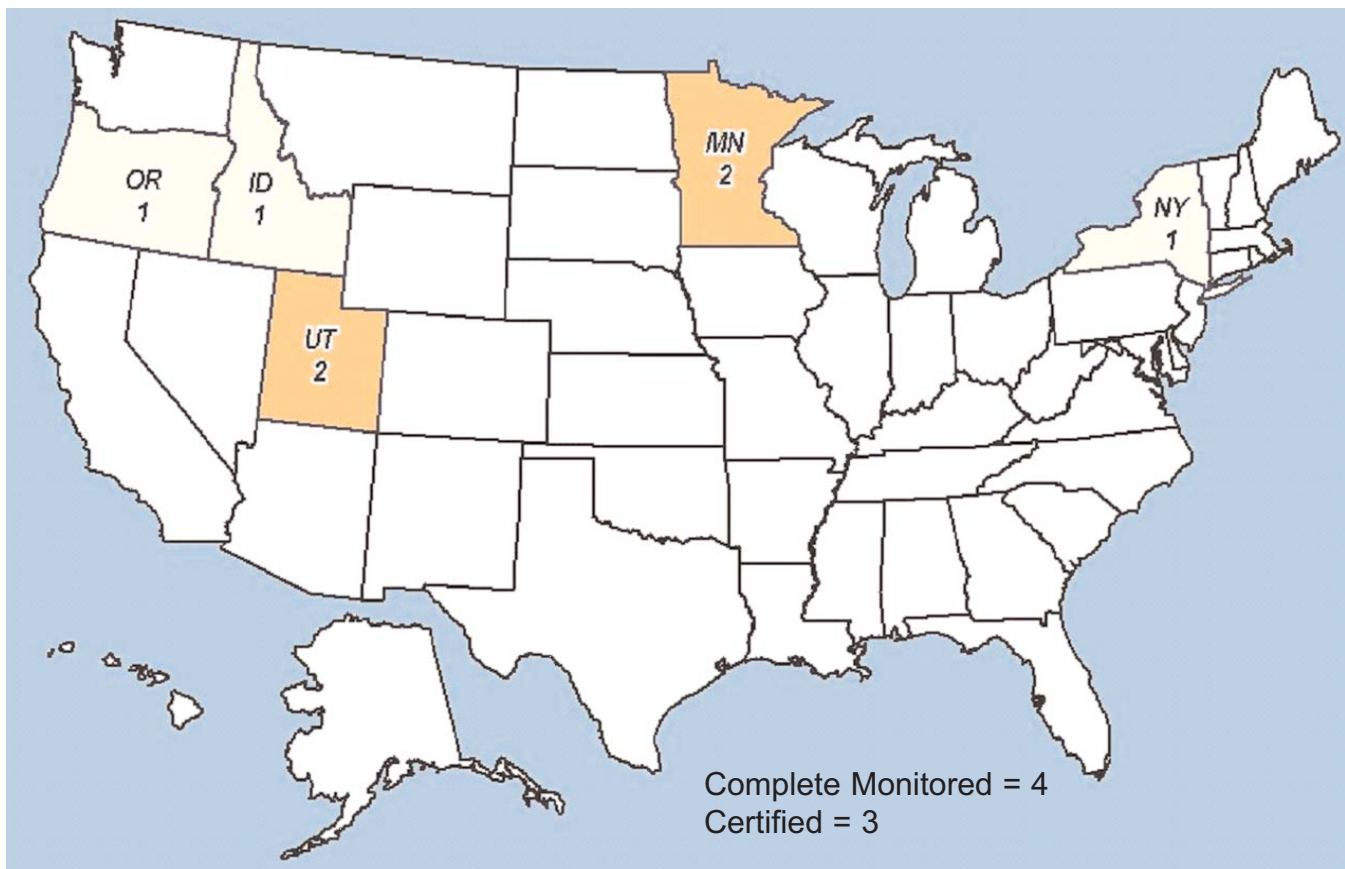
Scrapie Infected and Source Flocks



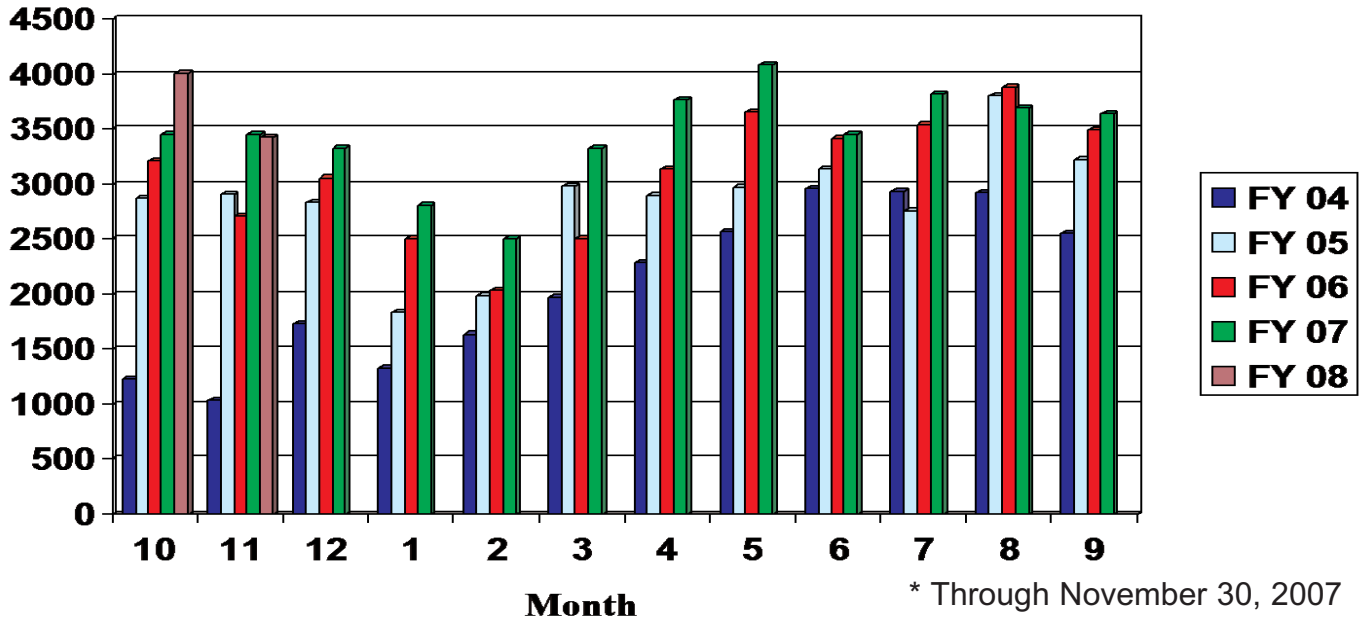
Scrapie Flock Certification Program Participating Flocks



SFCP Flocks Enrolled and Certified in November 2007



Slaughter Surveillance Samples Collected by Month, FY 2004 to FY 2008*



The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's goal is to collect 4,000 slaughter surveillance samples each month from around the United States.

Regulatory Scrapie Slaughter Surveillance (RSSS) Statistics through November 30, 2007

Since April 1, 2003:	In FY2008:
152,585 samples collected 346 NVSL* confirmed positive	7,439 samples collected 5 NVSL confirmed positive

*National Veterinary Services Laboratories

Web Sites Dedicated to the Eradication of Scrapie

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/naahps/scrapie

Maryland Small Ruminant Page
www.sheepandgoat.com/scrapie.html

National Institute of Animal Agriculture
<http://www.animalagriculture.org/scrapie/Scrapie.htm>

Scrapie QuickPlace

<https://qp01.aphis.usda.gov/QuickPlace/scrapie/Main.nsf?OpenDatabase>
*State and federal employees can access this password-protected site by e-mailing
 Susan.E.Ledford@APHIS.USDA.gov to receive a password.*



American Sheep Industry Association
www.sheepusa.org