

SCRAPIE: ERADICATE IT

The sheep industry's scrapie eradication efforts.



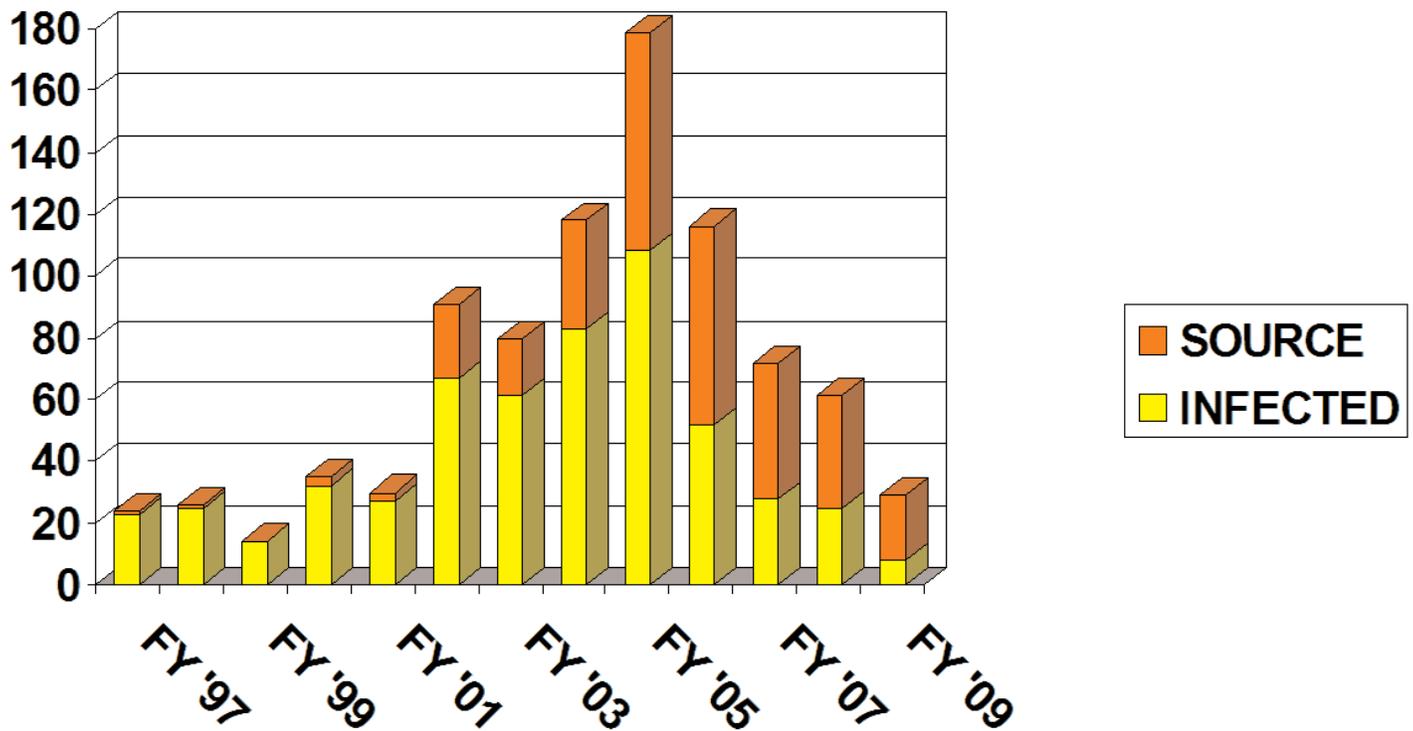
September 2009

The goal of the American Sheep Industry Association (ASI) and the U.S. sheep industry is to eradicate scrapie from our borders. 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.

Infected and Source Flocks New Statuses by Year FY 1997 – 2009*



*Through July 31, 2009

It's Time to Commit: Producers Crucial Part in Scrapie Eradication

At the national and state levels, scrapie continues to be monitored for and regulated in a large-scale effort toward eradication, but producer cooperation and involvement in the process is more important than ever.

While discovering scrapie in a flock is never a welcome experience for producers or officials, monitoring for and reporting the disease is nonetheless a key component to moving national eradication forward.

"The United States is going to achieve freedom from scrapie, and at this point, we really need producers' cooperation. It's time for producers to commit to this goal," says Diane Sutton, National Scrapie Program coordinator.

Commitment from producers is needed to ensure that they can recognize the clinical signs of scrapie and to report possible scrapie cases within their own flocks or in sheep or goats they purchase. It might not be the easiest action, but it is crucial to moving forward toward a healthier national flock, as well as being the law.

"Scrapie is a very insidious disease that can be in a flock for a long, long time before it is recognized. If it's suspected, you have a moral and legal obligation to disclose," says Jim Logan, DVM, chair of the American Sheep Industry's Animal Health Committee. "It is no fun, but it has to be done to eradicate the disease."

According to Logan, some producers may fear a loss of markets or reputation if a scrapie case is diagnosed in their flocks, but he reminds people that those scenarios are not the case.

"I would certainly respect the reputation of a producer who brought it to light and dealt with it more than someone who swept it under the rug and jeopardized other flocks," he says. "If I was buying sheep, as a producer, I would feel comfortable buying sheep from a flock where scrapie had been diagnosed and the producer followed federal regulations to clean up the flock, as opposed to a flock that I don't know."

More importantly, legally, scrapie is considered a reportable disease, so it must be disclosed to state and federal animal health officials or penalties may be incurred.

Also, Logan says, producers have an ethical responsibility to report possible cases of scrapie, so the disease does not affect any more animals, causing further hardship on producers and the industry.

"Marketability, both interstate and international, is one reason we have to be so vigilant about it," he says, referring to the loss of markets that come with the presence of scrapie in a flock and in a nation.

It all starts with producers being as educated as possible about scrapie, and taking action quickly if they suspect a case.

"Reporting is actually one of the problems in the sheep and goat industry, as a lot of producers don't often use the services of a veterinarian. The key thing is that producers should be aware of the clinical signs, recognize them and call a practitioner or your state veterinarian or the Veterinary Services Area Office in your area," Logan comments.

If a scrapie case has been confirmed, then an agreement will be reached between the owners, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and the state to work to clear the flock of the disease.

"Instead of whole flock depopulation, we now test for genetic susceptibility in exposed sheep. Scrapie-exposed sheep are tested by USDA and state personnel, and those animals that are genetically susceptible are indemnified and removed by USDA says Logan.

Sutton reassures producers that ample federal funds have been set aside to make sure producers are compensated for any animals removed by USDA including sick animals that have signs consistent with scrapie. USDA also provides genotype testing to affected producers to aid producers in ridding their flock of the disease.

"If you think you have scrapie in your flock, or if you have a suspicious animal in your flock, contact your state veterinarian or the Veterinary Services Area Office in your area. They will assist you in determining whether that animal or your flock should be tested for scrapie. If disease is disclosed, they will help you to eliminate the disease," she says.

Of course, both Sutton and Logan suggest that producers be proactive. Producers, who have at-risk flocks, should work toward breeding genetic resistance into their flocks, as well as participating in the Scrapie Flock Certification Program offered by APHIS.

Wapakoneta, Ohio, Suffolk producers, Sam and Pat Wiford, are producers who have taken the health of their flock into their own hands and volunteered to participate in the Scrapie Flock Certification Program. They started in the program in 1998, and have been certified scrapie-free since 2005.

"We just believe in eradicating the disease, and we felt this was the proper program," Wiford explains. "We also felt that going on the scrapie program was another marketing tool."

And that has proven to be the case.

"We have actually had people purchase sheep because we are certified scrapie free. They would come and buy because they felt they were getting disease-free sheep," he adds.

More importantly, by following the program and adhering to the federal standards, the Wiford's flock has now built up the genetics that are highly sought after to resist the disease.

"To be certified, we provided information of where all of our sheep go and their genetic make up. We have been DNA testing since 1996 and are getting very close to a completely RR flock," he says.

In addition, Wiford adds that following the certification protocols has been a fairly easy process, and the officials that the family has worked with have been nothing but professional and kept all records con-

fidential.

"You keep good records, and it's simple," he says of the program, adding about those he has worked with, "They have a job to do, and they are very professional doing it. We've always had a good report with the veterinarians, and it has never been a problem to work with them."

Overall, Wiford says that their experience has been positive and encourages other producers to get involved in the certification program if possible to actively work toward eradication of scrapie.

"We believe in the program. We just believe that this is the right thing to do."

However, whether or not a producer enrolls in the certification program, Logan stresses that, again it is so important for each and every person to be aware of what is happening within their flock. It only takes one scrapie-positive animal to undermine the work of many.

"All it takes is one, no matter what everyone else is doing. That's where the weak link is, and if there is more that we can be doing, we need to be doing it."

Producers are the most important defense against scrapie, so it is important to contact your veterinarian if any of the signs of scrapie are noticed. Alternatively, to report a scrapie suspect, you may contact your state veterinarian's office or you may call 1-866-873-2824.

To see videos of these clinical signs in live animals (both sheep and goats), please visit www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/animal_disease/scrapie/.

Scrapie Headlines

Revised Scrapie Vet Guide Available

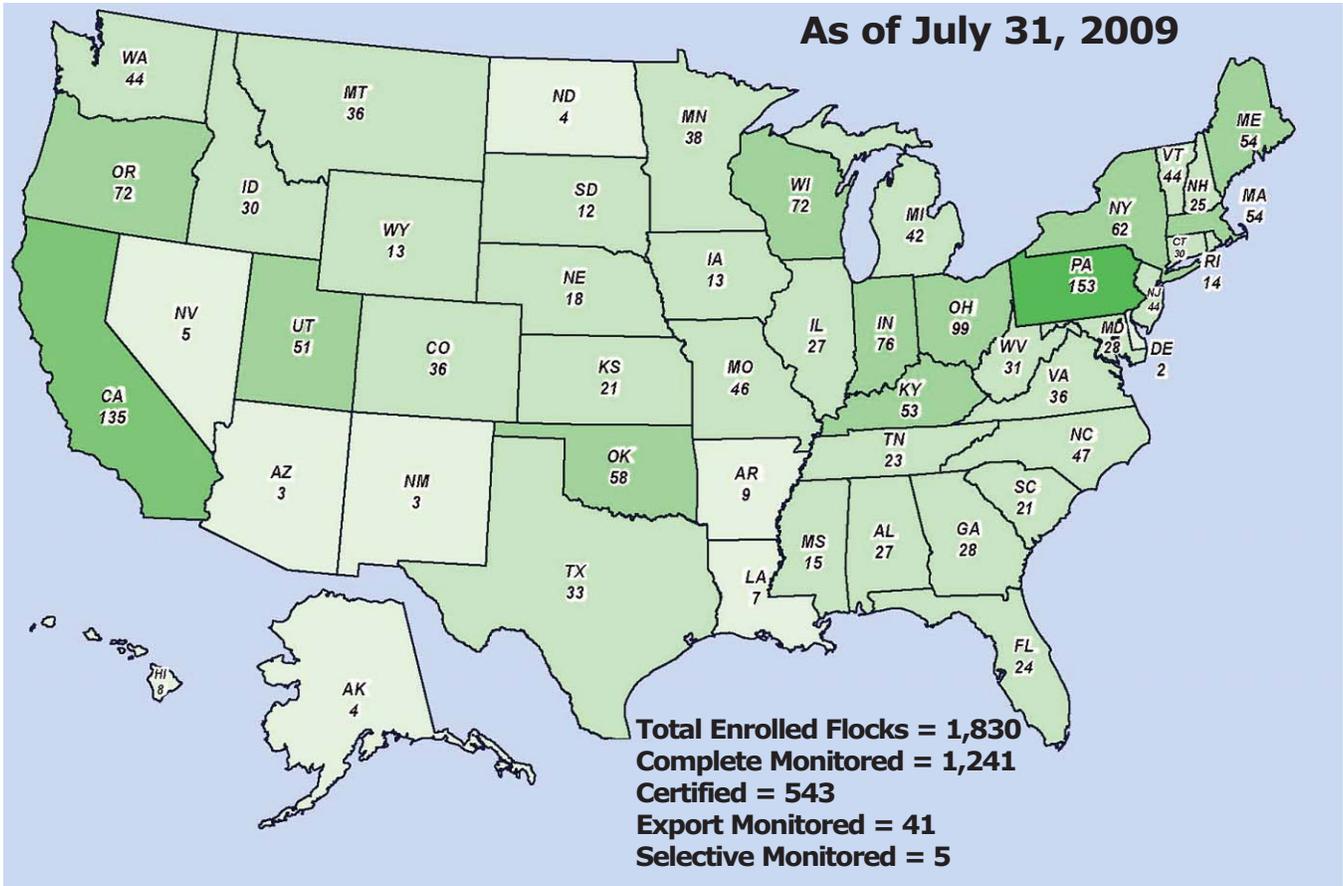
The "A Guide to the National Scrapie Eradication Program for Veterinarians" has been revised, updated and made available in compact disc format as part of the Eradicate Scrapie! information initiative, conducted by the National Institute for Animal Agriculture on behalf of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service/Veterinary Services.

"The revised version contains the latest information on various new aspects of the National Scrapie Eradication Program (NSEP) so that veterinarians can provide up-to-date, accurate information to their clients," according to Diane Sutton, DVM and NSEP national coordinator.

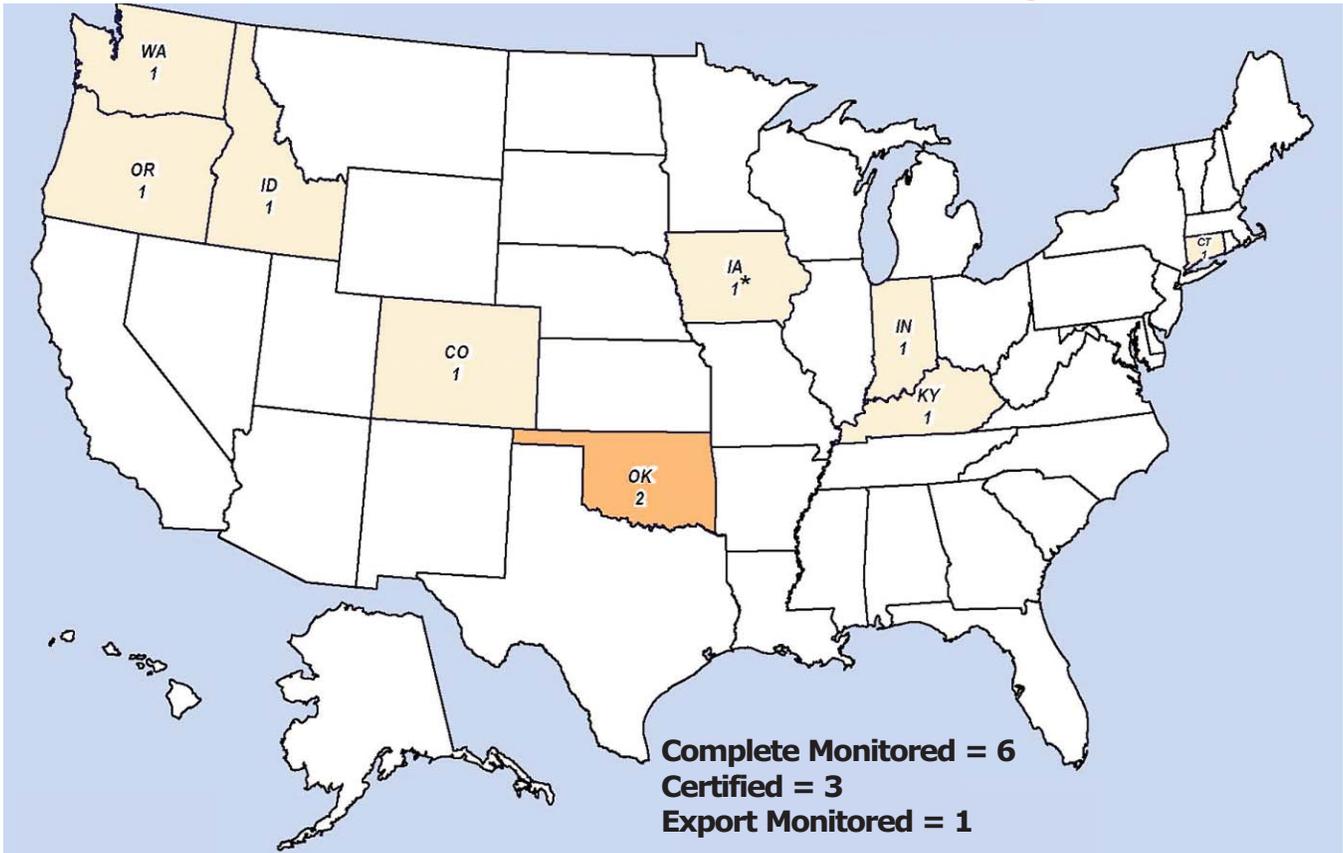
It also contains considerably more information than the original print version, such as procedures for collecting and submitting samples for testing, including collection of the brainstem utilizing the scoop technique, rectal and eyelid biopsies and genotyping.

The veterinarian guide is also available at www.eradicatescrapie.org in PDF format for downloading.

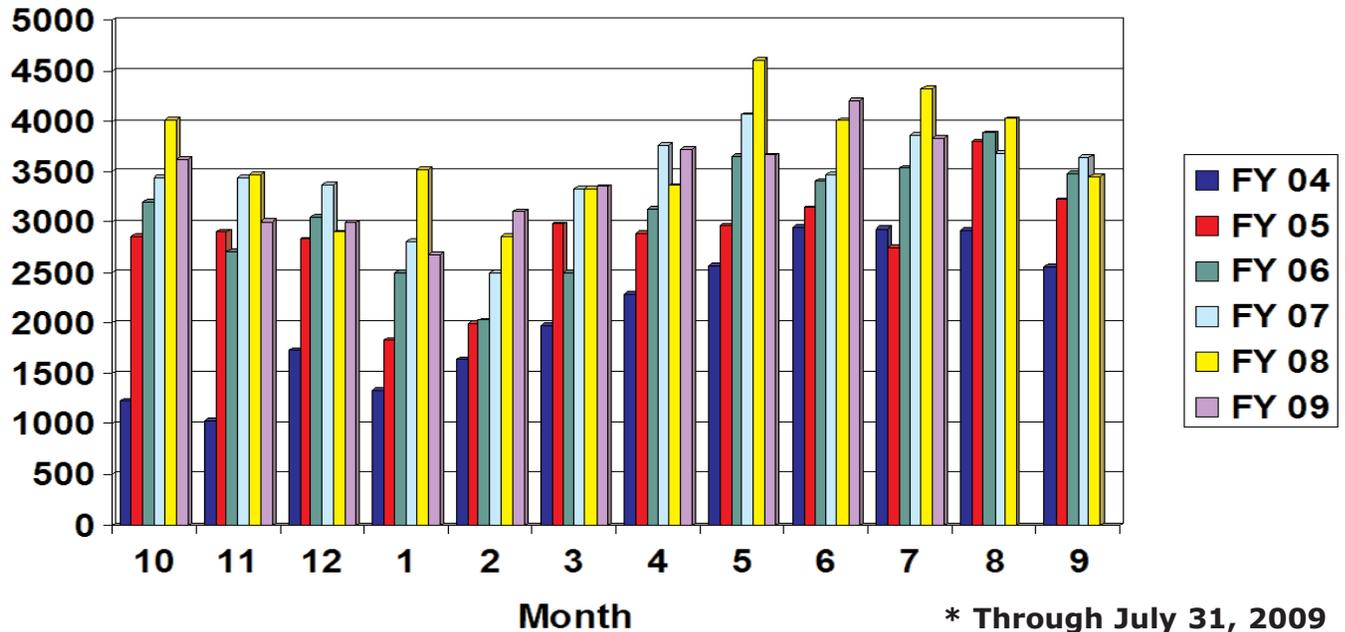
Scrapie Flock Certification Program Participating Flocks



SFCP Flocks Enrolled and Certified in July 2009



Slaughter Surveillance Samples Collected by Month, FY 2004 to FY 2009*



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 July 31, 2009

Since April 1, 2003:	In FY2009:
223,452 samples collected 415 NVSL* confirmed positive	34,193 samples collected 31 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
Earl.T.Thorpe@APHIS.USDA.gov to receive a password.



American Sheep Industry Association
www.sheepusa.org