

April 27, 2011

Freda Horton and Peter Stockdale: Scrapie

Freda Horton from Keremeos BC represented BCPSPA

Freda gave us a brief history of the Scrapie program, its purpose, and testing both for Scrapie as a cause of death in sheep and for resistance in live animals.

- A national database was put together from the original program in 2004/2005, in which 1500 purebred sheep were tested. The current program started in 2009 and runs to 2012 in an effort to decrease the incidence of Scrapie
- Scrapie is a reportable disease, with no reliable live test. Tests are done on brain tissue collected from slaughter houses. There has never been a positive test in BC
- Resistance levels in live sheep can be done by blood testing or by special tags, which punch a small piece of tissue from the ear. Levels from best to worst are: RR, RQ, and QQ. Farms in which scrapie has been found have all QQs destroyed, and RQs “depopulated”
- Freda stressed the importance of record keeping for trace back. Tests cost \$31.50 each, and the BC program pays back \$20 per test.

Peter Stockdale continued the scrapie discussion with a description of the causative organism, diagnosis, and clinical signs of the disease.

- The Scrapie organism is an infectious protein or PRION, unlike other RNA or DNA based viral organisms. In the past, stained slides of the brain were used to diagnose this disease, but now the use of prion adherent dyes make this method much more accurate.
- Clinical signs of scrapie include:
 - ✚ Death for no apparent reason
 - ✚ Wasting away
 - ✚ Behaviours such as wool biting or rubbing due to intense itching
 - ✚ Weakness in the back
 - ✚ Tremors
 - ✚ Making peculiar noises