



The Producer

Maine Sheep Breeders Quarterly Newsletter

SPRING 2016



*Gotland sheep:
The Gray Sheep, Windham*

Dear Sheep Breeders,

Welcome to spring! We are already enjoying the season's longer days and the promise of warm weather.

With the new life beginning to appear in our pastures, we are also in search of new life for the Maine Sheep Breeders Association. The Board of Directors is currently operating without a president and the association is in search of new members. Only half of last year's members have renewed their membership for 2016, so we ask that you join us in reaching out to our fellow shepherds to ask them to consider joining MSBA. Our association will be of the greatest benefit to the most people when we have a strong, active community of shepherds taking part.

We are pleased that you find your MSBA membership worthwhile. What else can the association do to support you as a shepherd? How can we better serve the larger community of Maine sheep breeders?

Our next board meeting will be at 6 p.m., Friday, March 18, at the Great Wall Chinese Buffet in Augusta. Board meetings are always open to members, and we hope you will join us and share your ideas. If you are interested in serving as president of the board, please contact MSBA secretary Donna Flint at donna.flint@maine.edu.

We wish you all a productive lambing season.

Dorothee Grimm and Leah Hoenen, editors



Veterinary Feed Directive: FAQ's for Livestock Owners

By Anne Lichtenwalner DVM PhD; reviewed by Michele Walsh DVM and Justin Bergeron BVMS

This year, new regulations will change how farmers use medications in their production animals. For a lot of reasons, mostly relating to protecting human health, the use of selected additives in animal feed is being restricted. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has mandated a new process, the Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD), which will become active in December 2016. The intent of the new process is to limit the use of antibiotics that are important to human health. In livestock feed, these drugs can still be used— but only with veterinary oversight. They will only be used when necessary for the health of the animals, and not to maximize production. As the FDA summarized it, “A VFD drug is intended for use in animal feeds, and such use of the VFD drug is permitted only under the professional supervision of a licensed veterinarian”.

What does this mean for the farmer?

The directive is designed to control the use of long term, continuous feeding of drugs to animals. In agriculture, this practice has long been implemented to prevent disease, or to improve growth rates. When the VFD regulation becomes active in December 2016, it will affect you if you use medicated feed. If you already have a farm vet, and you simply use medications as needed for sick animals (such as occasional treatment for a limited time, in accordance with label directions) then you may not be strongly affected by the VFD. However, if you use either water or feed-delivered medications, you may no longer have those products available to you unless they are ordered by your veterinarian.

Under the VFD, some drugs can still be added to feed, but only on a case-by-case basis, and with the active involvement of a veterinarian who is familiar with the farm. With current knowledge of the case on your farm, your veterinarian will be able to write a VFD that will allow you to have medication added to animal feeds or water. Your vet must have a current veterinarian/client/patient relationship (VCPR) at the time of writing the VFD, and a copy of the VFD must be kept for 2 years. A few drugs that are not considered “medically important” to people (ionophores, coccidiostats and bacitracin) will NOT require a VFD (unless combined with VFD drugs), so some of the most commonly used medicated feeds will still be available without a VFD.

The reclassification of antibiotics by their relevance to human medicine is going to change access by farmers to many over-the-counter medications eventually. For instance, penicillin and tetracycline are being reclassified as requiring a VFD for use. Will this limit how available they will be to the farmer for use by injection? It is possible, but this change is not expected by December 2016.

Should you try to stockpile drugs? Since feed containing drugs has a short expiration date, it really doesn't make sense to do so. Should you ensure that you can find a vet who will help you if there is a future situation when you'll need a medicated feed? Probably a good use of your time. If you need assistance with this, or if you would like to organize a meeting to discuss the impact of the VFD regulation on your industry, please contact our lab (207-581-2788) with contact information for your group.

How does this affect small ruminant producers? Can my vet prescribe a VFD drug in an “extra-label” manner? No, the Extra Label Drug Use rules for minor species such as sheep, goats and camelids do not apply to VFD drugs. This could impact the small ruminant industry, since it may restrict veterinarians from being able to prescribe “off label” use of drugs in feed or water. However, the VFD will not affect veterinarians' ability to prescribe off-label use of drugs delivered directly (injection/direct oral administration) in minor species.

Antimicrobial Ingredient	Class of Antibiotic
Apramycin	aminoglycoside
Chlortetracycline	tetracycline
Erythromycin	macrolide
Gentamicin	aminoglycoside
Hygromycin B	aminoglycoside
Lincomycin	lincosamide
Neomycin	aminoglycoside
Oleandomycin	macrolide
Oxytetracycline	tetracycline
Penicillin	penicillin
Spectinomycin	aminocyclitol
Sulfachloropyrazine	sulfonamide
Sulfachloropyridazine	sulfonamide
Sulfadimethoxine	sulfonamide
Sulfamerazine	sulfonamide
Sulfamethazine	sulfonamide
Sulfaquinoxoline	sulfonamide
Sulfathiazole	sulfonamide
Tetracycline	tetracycline
Tylosin	macrolide
Virginiamycin	streptogramin

Continued on p. 3

Veterinary Feed Directive - continued from p. 2

What drugs are currently considered VFD drugs? In general, drugs used only for parasite control are not on this list. The FDA list (sorted by manufacturer) is posted at this site:

<http://www.fda.gov/AnimalVeterinary/SafetyHealth/AntimicrobialResistance/JudiciousUseofAntimicrobials/ucm390429.htm>

If you are in doubt about a product you have been using, check the product label carefully to see what additives it contains. Check the FDA site (above) to find out whether the additives are listed as VFD drugs. If you have been using medicated feed or water and you have a valid reason to keep doing so (other than improving weight gain), then contact your veterinarian and discuss getting a VFD form filed. It's still possible to use antibiotics in feed, but it will take planning and must be for a health-related reason.

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MSBA meeting at the Maine Agricultural Trade Show

By Donna Flint

Greetings! I am writing this short article as an update to our January meeting held at the Agricultural Trade Show in Augusta. On the agenda for the evening was 1) Scrapie Board Report, 2) MSBA Meeting, 3) Iceland Sheep Project sharing.

1) The full Scrapie Board discussion will be posted on the MSBA website soon. In summary, Dr. Chip Ridkey gave a history of the board and what has transpired since then. To enhance our economic state and to be able to compete in the world market we need to become scrapie free. How we as producers can push harder; purchase your breeding animals from farms that are in compliance. Every farm should have scrapie ear tags; they are available for free by calling 1-866-USDA-TAG.

2) The Maine Sheep Breeders Association meeting was called to order. Lisa Webster reiterated that she is stepping down as President of MSBA. Lisa had to make a hard decision; she and Phil thought it best for her to narrow down some of her commitments so she could put her energy into supporting us through other venues. Thank you Lisa for your guidance and energy!

We are in the process of switching our treasurer. Sally Farrell will be taking over for Dick Brzozowski as Dick has taken on a new position with the University of Maine Cooperative Extension. Gary Anderson will be taking over the other many jobs Dick has done. Thank you Dick, and we will see you!

We tabled the discussion of the sheep and goat producers becoming one group as we did not get but a handful of responses to our survey. More time will be dedicated to this in the coming months. Due to a shortened time schedule we concluded our meeting.

3) The evening was completed as Drs Jim Weber and Dick Brzozowski entertained us with a PowerPoint presentation of their trip to Iceland. The focus was on the artificial insemination (AI) of the island sheep flocks. Iceland is closed to importing any livestock. The Icelanders cannot move livestock from one province to another. They have a strict breeding regimen; rams are brought into the area in November; semen is collected on the 21st of December. AI is used on a low percentage of animals, but conception rate is high. Lambs are born in May; meat lambs go to market in September; animals are brought back to the farm in November; then the process starts again. Performance data are collected May/June, August/September, and December/January. Ultrasound is used for performance data collection. At slaughter time, the lambs are processed first, before the rams. New Zealand sends 1,200 butchers to handle the animals. One of the interesting pieces I thought was the use of slatted floors, almost eliminating the need for bedding. Properly spaced, the manure pellets drop down between the slats into a pit type collection system.

I do want to tell you that this is a summary of what was discussed. I tried to capture all the main topics as best as I could. If there is any misprints, it is totally on me. Thank you for being a part of MSBA.

Donna Flint
MSBA Secretary

Meet the MSBA Board Members (1)

Cindy Green, Co-Vice President

We are Green Anchor Farm and located in Cary Plantation, ME. We raise Katahdin sheep. Currently have 20, with 12 ewes due soon. We sell breeding stock and meat lambs.

<https://www.facebook.com/GreenAnchorFarm>

My goals are that we follow our by laws and serve our members appropriately by keeping them informed and passing along important info from the sheep industry.



Dorothee Grimm, Co-Editor

I live in Scarborough with my partner and our cats, chickens, and rabbits. I don't have any sheep, but I like sheep and their products. I grew up in Germany in an area that has been landscaped by grazing sheep, and where wool used to play an important economic factor. I worked on a sheep farm in western Montana (1,500 head) and eastern Oregon (3,000 head), helping during heavy work load seasons (shearing, lambing, sorting, shipping).

As co-editor of The Producer, education of MSBA members is most important to me. That includes an up to date calendar of events, promoting events that are sponsored by UMaine Extension (like the annual sheep & goat school and shearing schools), soliciting and publishing articles that will help members raising healthy and profitable sheep, helping at the annual wool pool while educating breeders who bring wool on how it needs to be skirted to be a valuable product.

Leah Hoenen, Co-Editor

My husband, Karl, and I raise Gotland sheep in Windham. We were drawn to this versatile breed for its high-quality fiber, and because of Karl's Swedish heritage. Our flock is now 18 and counting. We sell raw fleeces, roving, yarn, and hand-woven blankets. You can find us on Facebook as The Gray Sheep and on Instagram as gotlandgray. Our website is thegrayssheep.squarespace.com.



As co-editor of The Producer, I hope to offer MSBA members educational material about sheep husbandry as well as information about fellow Maine shepherds and the local sheep industry. I am also looking forward to helping market the association to shepherds who aren't currently members and to helping members keep up with each other's activities.



Cindy Kilgore

I am a non-voting MSBA board member and serve as liaison for MSBA with the Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry. I live in Jay and have 7 Katahdin ewes. I enjoy their personalities. They keep pasture down at secondary farm location via rotational grazing. I sell live lambs for meat and as breeding stock.

My goals for MSBA are to provide leadership in the sheep industry in Maine for education, marketing, and promotion.

Facebook page: Cindy Kilgore

To be continued in the summer issue

Pregnancy Toxemia

By Dr. Kelsey Hilton, VMD

As veterinarians, we begin to brace ourselves this time of year for lambing and kidding season, which brings with it many new bundles of joy, but also many busy days and late nights. There are many things that sheep farmers can do to prepare for this season, which is so critical for the health and productivity of their herds. In this article, I'd like to focus on an understanding and the prevention of a frustrating and sometimes devastating condition that we often see at least several times per lambing season: pregnancy toxemia.

The hallmark of diagnosing pregnancy toxemia is a state of ketosis in the ewe, which occurs as the result of a negative energy balance. The astute sheep breeder will notice lethargy, and later difficulty rising or a decreased appetite. If left unchecked, the ewe may become recumbent and unwilling to eat. If not addressed immediately, some ewes may die before delivering their lambs. Sometimes an emergency C-section is required to save the ewe, as the growing lambs' demand on her energy reserves must be removed immediately in order for her to recover. Sometimes the breeder must make a decision that might favor the survival of the ewe or lambs but not both, in which case it is very helpful to have an accurate due date. Any pregnant ewe that is not eating or willing to stand warrants a call to your veterinarian. Treatment often involves administration of intravenous dextrose, propylene glycol, B-vitamins and other supportive care; however the best medicine, as usual, is prevention.

Animals considered typically at risk include those that are carrying multiple fetuses and those that are too thin coming into their final month of pregnancy, for example older ewes or ewes that are "hard keepers". Ewes that are excessively overweight at lambing can also be at risk of developing pregnancy toxemia. Thus, an important part of prevention of this disease is regular evaluation of body condition and an attention to nutrition, especially in the last two months of gestation. If possible, we recommend performing ultrasounds on ewes ideally at 40-50 days after breeding to count the fetuses and identify animals at higher risk.

As a rule of thumb, bred ewes that weigh 100-150lbs (scale the estimate down for smaller breeds) should be slowly worked up to one pound per ewe per day of grain starting at lambing, then fed 1lb per lamb that they are nursing after delivery. High quality forages such as 2nd or 3rd crop hay are recommended in late stage pregnancy in order to continue to provide adequate calories despite decreased space in the rumen as the fetuses enlarge. Ultimately, the producers should choose a high quality feed designed for pregnant or lactating ewes, and use the feeding recommendations as a starting point. In many cases, grain companies have nutritionists on hand available for consultation. I have made a quick internet search for many feed companies and inquired as to the best feeding recommendations for animals in various life stages. Being comfortable with body condition scoring, regularly putting your hands on the sheep, running your fingers under the wool, is the best way that you can ensure your animal's health.

We have found that the University of Maryland Cooperative Extension is a great resource for many of these topics, including nutrition and lambing. Find them at: www.sheepandgoat.com

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MSBA Board of Directors (BOD)

Elected, re-elected, nominated at the BOD meeting on November 24, 2015.

Vice Presidents: Brant Miller, Bowdoinham, ME; bsmiller99@gmail.com

Cindy Green, Houlton, ME; cindygreen98@gmail.com

Secretary: Donna Flint, Oak Ridge Farm, Sanford, ME; donna.flint@maine.edu

Treasurer: Sally Farrell, Buxton, ME; sarah.s.farrell@maine.edu

Dorothee Grimm, Scarborough, ME; dorothee.grimm@web.de (appointed co-editor of The Producer)

Leah Hoenen, Windham, ME; leah.hoenen@gmail.com (appointed co-editor of The Producer)

Joe Miller, Rivercroft Farm, Starks, ME; rivercroft99@yahoo.com

Diane Schivera, Appleton, ME; dianes@mofga.org

Clare Thomas-Pino, Dover-Foxcroft, ME; clare_thomas@umit.maine.edu

Lisa Webster, North Star Sheep Farm, Windham, ME; Lisa@northstarsheepfarm.com

Gary Anderson, Orono, ME; garya@maine.edu (UMaine Extension; non-voting)

Cindy Kilgore, ME; Cindy.Kilgore@maine.gov (Maine Dept. of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry; non-voting)

As a paid member of MSBA you receive this newsletter four times per year. Please make sure we have your correct email address/ mailing address on file. You are entitled to participate in the annual cooperative Wool Pool sale of fleece. You receive marketing and political representation at state, regional and national levels. You meet a great group of people who love to share information about their animals, their farm and their products, as well as information about breeding, management, and marketing techniques. Your MSBA membership automatically makes you a member of the American Sheep Industry Association (ASI), and you receive their monthly newsletter 'Sheepnews'.

The MSBA board of directors (BOD) meets 6-8 times per year. We encourage membership involvement at the board of directors meetings, as well as on committees, and volunteering for one of our events and educational programs. Everyone has something to contribute. Please contact Donna Flint and volunteer a few hours for the good of all.

Join the Facebook group at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/331285921205/>

facebook

Maine Sheep Breeders Association

2016 Membership Application

Name _____ Farm Name _____

Mailing Address _____ City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____ Website _____ E-mail _____

Breeds of Sheep _____

MSBA Membership Year Is January 1 - December 31

2016 Membership Dues \$20 per Year/per Farm, Payable by January 31, 2016



Make check payable to: MSBA Treasurer

**Mail to: Sally Farrell
1606 Long Plains Rd
Buxton, ME 04093**

Calendar of Events and MSBA Board of Directors (BOD) Meetings 2016

March 5, 8:30-3pm: Northern Maine Sheep Education Seminar, Presque Isle.

8:30am Registration
 8:45am Justin Bergeron, BVMS: Veterinary Feed Directive
 9:15am Jim Weber, DVM: Common health problems of sheep. Fecal egg counts
 11:30am Cindy Kilgore & Linda Trickey: Biosecurity. Markets
 Noon Lunch
 12:30pm Kevin Ehst: Lambing issues
 1:30pm Donna Coffin: Barns for sheep
 3pm Adjourn

For more information, please contact Cindy Green at cindygreen98@gmail.com.

March 5, 9am-3pm: Beginner Level Shearing School, at Wolfe's Neck Farm, Freeport. So far only six people have signed up. More information and registration at <http://umaine.edu/livestock/sheep/sheep-shearing-schools/>

March 9 (Wednesday), 9am-noon: Ag Day at the Legislature, Augusta.

March 14-16: ASI Spring Legislative Trip to Washington, D.C.

March 18, 6pm: BOD meeting at the Great Wall Chinese Buffet, Augusta. All MSBA members are invited to attend and participate.

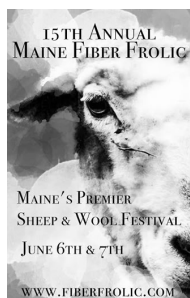
March 19, 8:30am-3:30pm: Maine Grass Farmers Network's Annual Grazing Conference, KVCC, Hinckley. More information at <http://umaine.edu/livestock/mgfn/conference/>

April 15-16 (Friday 1-4pm and Saturday 8am-3pm): Blade Shearing School with Kevin Ford at Sabbathday Lake Shaker Village, New Gloucester. So far, nobody has signed up for this two day class. More information and registration at <http://umaine.edu/livestock/sheep/sheep-shearing-schools/>

May 14-15: New Hampshire Sheep and Wool Festival, Deerfield Fairgrounds, Deerfield, NH.
 Visit www.nhswga.org for more information.

May 20-22: New England Livestock Exhibition (NELE), Windsor Fairgrounds, Windsor.

May 20: Kids Day. More information at <http://www.northeastlivestockexpo.com/>



June 4-5: Maine Fiber Frolic, Windsor Fairgrounds, Windsor. More information at <http://www.fiberfrolic.com/>

June 4, 8am - 12pm: Wool Pool, at the Maine Fiber Frolic. More information to follow.

July 24: Open Farm Day, statewide. More information at www.getrealmaine.com

September 23-25: Common Ground Fair, Unity. More information at mofga.org

October 1-2: Vermont Sheep & Wool Festival, Tunbridge, VT. More information at vtsheepandwoolfest.com

October 15-16: New York State Sheep & Wool Festival, Rhinebeck, NY. More information at www.sheepandwool.com

Please check the MSBA website and Facebook page frequently for updates to the calendar www.mainesheepbreeders.com



MSBA
Maine Sheep Breeders Association

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*Gotland lamb.
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