

## How will I know if my sheep have scrapie?

Scrapie can be a tough disease to diagnose, and it can take several years for an infected sheep or goat to show signs. However, if an animal shows signs of the disease, it will usually behave differently; rub excessively creating bare areas on both sides of the body, rump or head; or have a hard time moving or walking correctly. You know your sheep the best, so you will be the first to see the signs of the disease.



### The Facts – know the signs

- Early signs include subtle changes in behavior or temperament;
- Scratching or rubbing against fixed objects to relieve itching;
- Loss of coordination;
- Weight loss despite displaying a “normal” appetite;
- Biting at feet and legs;
- Lip smacking;
- Gait abnormalities such as high stepping of forelegs, hopping like a rabbit and swaying of the back end; or
- May appear normal at rest, but if stimulated with sudden noises or excessive movement, the animal may tremble or fall down in convulsion.

If you notice any of these signs in a sheep or goat over 18 months of age that continue for several weeks or if a mature sheep or goat dies after showing these signs, it is **IMPORTANT** that you report it to your veterinarian or the state veterinarian right away or call 1-866-873-2824, a USDA/APHIS/VS contact line that will help you get in touch with people that can assist you in determining whether the animal should be tested for scrapie. Scrapie testing can be done on tissue collected from a live or dead sheep or goat. If the assessment calls for testing, it is available at no cost to you. Also, if the animal is determined to be a scrapie suspect, USDA will offer to purchase the animal.

## What can I do to eradicate scrapie?

All sheep and goat owners in the United States have to comply with the NSEP rules, no matter how many sheep or goats you own or what you do with them. As part of the program, you will have to identify some of your animals and keep good records, in order to be able to trace any infected animal back to its flock of origin.

### The Facts – participating in the NSEP

- Generally, sheep, except those that are going to slaughter as lambs, need to have an official ID tag. Visit [www.eradicatescrapie.com](http://www.eradicatescrapie.com) for more information on ID requirements.
- To get official ID tags, you must request a Flock ID number. This can be done by calling 866-USDA-TAG (1-866-873-2824). This number will put you directly into contact with APHIS/VS or scrapie officials in your state, and they will be more than happy to help you out and will also order free official ID tags for you.
- Make sure to set up a records system that you will use to record ID tags and the date you applied them to each animal. You can benefit yourself and your industry by responsibly recording all ID numbers, when you applied them and any sales or purchases of your sheep or goats (including names and addresses of buyers or flocks of origin). You are required to keep all records for five years after an animal is sold or has died. Your records are so **CRUCIAL**, as they can

help USDA and state animal health officials trace back diseased animals to the flock of origin, preventing others from that flock from further spreading scrapie. By being a leader in this effort, it will help protect your flock's health and reputation, build confidence in the nation's food supply and help reach the goal of eradicating scrapie from the United States.

Be sure to check with your state officials for their regulations, and if you are exhibiting your sheep, always check with the event organizers and state animal health officials for their specific show requirements. Use the following guide for the federal ID requirements for exhibiting sheep.

### The Facts – going to the show

- Ewes and rams must have official ID.
- Wethers, unless required by the specific state or show, generally do not require official ID.
- Anytime sheep cross state lines to go to a show, they must be accompanied by a health certificate (Certificate of Veterinary Inspection), which you can get through your personal veterinarian.
- If you sell a sheep at the show, record the scrapie ID number of the animal, the buyer's name, address and telephone number and keep that record for five years.

## How can I protect my sheep from scrapie?

As the saying goes, the best medicine is prevention, and there are several precautions you can take to minimize the risk of getting scrapie in your flock. Use the following guide to help you in your quest to prevent scrapie in your flock.

### The Facts – scrapie prevention tips

- Close your ewe flock
  - Since scrapie is transmitted primarily by ewes during lambing, keeping the disease out of your ewes is essential. Therefore, if you don't have scrapie in your flock, you are not likely to get it if you don't bring any females into your flock.
- Genetic resistance
  - An RR ram has a high genetic resistance to scrapie and will make all of his offspring resistant or less susceptible to scrapie and help assure that your flock will become or stay scrapie-free.
- Lambing management
  - It has been found that the highest risk period of scrapie transmission is at birth or soon after from exposure to infected placenta or birth fluids. So, always remove placentas from birthing areas right away and remove manure and bedding between **EACH** birthing to keep areas clean and reduce the risk of transmission.

- Flock additions - What if I need to buy ewes?
  - Purchase ewes that have been tested at an official genotyping laboratory and have the AAQR or RR genotype. These ewes are very unlikely to introduce scrapie to your flock, or;
  - Buy ewes and does from flocks that are likely to be scrapie free. The best way to do this is to buy sheep and goats from flocks that have reached the certified level of the National Scrapie Flock Certification Program (SFCP), a program that will certify a flock as scrapie-free after a period of time of close observation, and;
  - Quarantine all new animals that you bring into your flock. This will give you a chance to watch them closely and observe any that may be sick. Keep in mind that while quarantining new animals works well for many diseases, most scrapie-infected sheep look healthy and spread scrapie for years before they start showing signs.



### To learn more

To learn more about scrapie, NSEP or SFCEP, there are fact sheets, brochures, news releases and even video clips of scrapie-affected sheep and goats located at:

[www.aphis.usda.gov/animal\\_health/animal\\_disease/scrapie](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/animal_disease/scrapie)

[www.eradicatescrapie.org](http://www.eradicatescrapie.org)

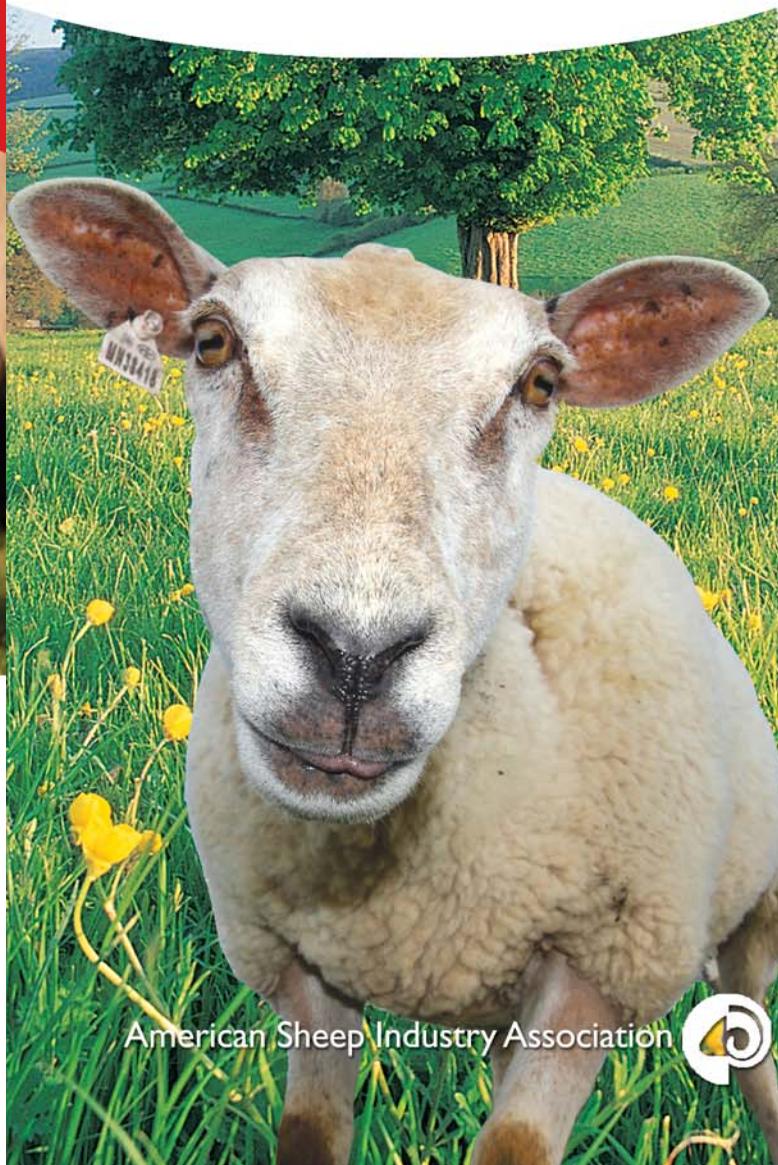
[www.sheepindustrynews.com/scrapie\\_guide/](http://www.sheepindustrynews.com/scrapie_guide/)

[www.sheepusa.org/index.phtml?page=site/text&nav\\_id=7d5be7e434ab6e12b846ece316c5be62](http://www.sheepusa.org/index.phtml?page=site/text&nav_id=7d5be7e434ab6e12b846ece316c5be62)



# SCRAPIE AND YOU

Be a leader  
in the fight  
against scrapie



# scrapie from A to Z

Sheep are truly the all-around livestock to own, producing meat, milk and the most sustainable fiber on earth, wool. With all these qualities, it is no wonder that youth like you have had such success with their sheep projects in FFA, 4-H and their own personal flocks. However, along with being a successful sheep producer, you also have to be a responsible one and take care of your flock's health. A large part of this is joining your fellow sheep producers in eradicating the disease scrapie by complying with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's Veterinary Service's (USDA/APHIS/VS) National Scrapie Eradication Program (NSEP).

### What is scrapie?

Scrapie is a difficult and devastating disease of sheep and goats that is classified as a transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (TSE), which affects the central nervous system of sheep and goats and is always fatal. Scrapie is estimated to cost the U.S. sheep industry over \$20 million a year and can potentially affect your flock, as well.



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