

Scrapie is a degenerative and eventually fatal brain disease of sheep and goats. It is in the same class of diseases as BSE in cattle and Chronic Wasting Disease in elk and deer. Transmission of the disease occurs primarily from an infected dam to her offspring and other lambs or kids exposed to the birth fluids, placenta or bedding soiled by the birth fluids. Scrapie is estimated to cost the U.S. sheep industry over \$20 million a year and can potentially affect your flock. Through the hard work of producers, allied industries, states, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and accredited veterinarians, the prevalence of scrapie in the United States has decreased by 80 percent since 2003.



## Recognize the Signs

Scrapie can be a tough disease to diagnose, and it can take several years for an infected sheep or goat to show signs, which include:

- Subtle changes in behavior or temperament;
- Intense frequent rubbing against fixed objects to relieve itching;
- Gait abnormalities such as incoordination, stumbling, high stepping of forelegs, hopping like a rabbit and swaying of the back end;
- Weight loss despite displaying a “normal” appetite;
- Weakness such as difficulty getting up or falling down;
- Biting at feet and legs;
- Lip smacking; or
- Normal behavior at rest, but if stimulated with sudden noises or excessive movement, the animal may tremble or fall down.

After the onset of clinical signs, death occurs within a few weeks to several months.

# SCRAPIE ERADICATION IS IN SIGHT, YOU ARE THE KEY TO FINDING THE LAST CASES!



American Sheep Industry Association



# PRODUCERS CAN LEAD THE FIGHT AGAINST SCRAPIE

## Correctly Identify Sheep and Goats

The Scrapie Eradication Program is a mandatory program which requires sheep and goat producers, dealers, markets and slaughter plants to officially identify certain sheep and goats. Most sheep and goats must be officially identified prior to selling them or transporting them from their place of birth. Records of tags or other official identification and sale and acquisition records must be kept for five years. Official eartags and applicators are available free of charge from USDA. To get free official eartags, call **866-USDA-TAG (866-873-2824)**.

The following animals need to be identified:

- Most sheep, except those going to slaughter as lambs, need to have an official eartag or other official identification when they leave the farm or change ownership.
- Sexually intact goats before being transported to a show, fair, petting zoo or exhibition (many shows require all goats to be tagged).
- Registered goats, goats used for milk production and any goat housed or pastured with sheep must be officially identified before a change of ownership (many states require official identification for other types of goats).

All states require certain sheep and goats to be officially identified on change of ownership. Some states require all sheep and goats to be officially identified for intrastate movement, and some states exempt certain classes of sheep and/or goats. It is the producer's responsibility to know and adhere to state requirements for your respective state and, if moving out of state, to know and adhere to the federal requirements and those of the states to where animals are being moved.

Learn more about national and specific state's scrapie identification requirements at [www.eradicatescrapie.org](http://www.eradicatescrapie.org).

## Protect Your Flock or Herd

There are several precautions that producers can take to minimize the risk of getting scrapie in their flock or herd.

- Close the flock or herd to female additions. Scrapie is transmitted primarily by females during lambing, so keeping the disease out of the ewes and does is essential.
- Genetic resistance. An RR ram has a high genetic resistance to scrapie and will make all his offspring resistant or less susceptible to scrapie.
- Lambing/kidding management. Remove placentas and bedding soiled by birth fluids from birthing areas right away and thoroughly clean the birthing area between lambings.
- Flock/herd additions. Purchase ewes that have been tested at an official genotyping laboratory and have the AAQR or RR genotype or buy sheep and goats from flocks that have reached the certified level of the National Scrapie Flock Certification Program and quarantine all new animals that are brought into the flock to observe for any signs of scrapie.



Kelly Gorham

## Report Suspect Sheep and Goats

If any signs of scrapie are noticed 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 some signs, it is important for you or your veterinarian to report it to your state veterinarian or to USDA's Veterinary Services. USDA's toll free telephone number is **866-873-2824**. Your state or USDA animal health official will determine if the animal should be further examined and possibly tested for scrapie (at no cost to you the producer). Scrapie testing can be done on tissue collected from a living or dead sheep or goat. If the animal is determined to be a scrapie suspect, USDA will offer to purchase the animal.

**LEARN MORE  
ABOUT SCRAPIE**

**Fact sheets, brochures, news releases and video clips of scrapie-infected sheep and goats are located at:**  
[www.aphis.usda.gov/animal\\_health/animal\\_diseases/scrapie/](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/animal_diseases/scrapie/)  
[http://sheepindustrynews.org/scrapie\\_guide](http://sheepindustrynews.org/scrapie_guide).