

Manitoba Sheep Association Report

Hello from Friendly Manitoba!

As you may or may not know, Manitoba does not have a Purebred Sheep Association like many of the other provinces. However, The Manitoba Sheep Association has had a very busy year with a voluntary board of Directors along with a part-time Office Manager and Executive Director who have worked hard to promote the sheep industry, organize educational seminars, and represent our producers on a Provincial and National level with involvement on the CCWG, CSF, and CSBA board associations.

The Manitoba Sheep Industry is growing! We have added 240+ new members since January 2018. It has been specifically targeted as a commodity with further growth potential by our Provincial Government. As such, there are significant dollars and programming available to encourage sheep flock expansion and stimulate investment in processing capacity. Also, with 4 major plant product processing facilities, (Potatoes, Peas, and Oats) there is a massive increase in available co-products to feed livestock.

MSA launched a new Website this year which was long overdue as our old site lacked the ability to perform certain tasks that our producers had been requesting. This was funded in part by a Government of Manitoba Grant and revenue collected from check-off dollars. The Manitoba Sheep website has been very well received by producers and content will continue to be added on an ongoing basis.

The Royal Manitoba Winter Fair is a week-long event at the end of March during spring break which has been an event that we have attended for several years. A display including live sheep, televised shearing videos, information on the Sheep Industry, along with many answers to many questions are provided. It is always a star attraction as many people, especially from urban areas, don't get the opportunity to see sheep very often.

Lambing Workshops were held in Brookdale in February, and Elm Creek in October where DVM Reuben Neumier provided a full day of information on anything and everything related to lambing. Being a producer himself, Reuben always offers both practiced and practical knowledge which is greatly appreciated by our producers.

The MSA holds a yearly Show & Sale where we promote Purebred sheep along with commercial females, and a Junior show. Unfortunately, due to a lack of entries, the difficult decision was made to cancel our 2019 Show & Sale this past year. With the current uncertainty revolving around Covid-19 in our world today, it is hard to say at this point if we will be able to host the 2020 Show & Sale.

Our Annual AGM & Symposium was held in Portage la Prairie on November 15 & 16. A very well attended Seminar on Friday with Mr. Dale Engstrom from Lake Isle, Alberta, along with our Manitoba Gov't Sheep Team consisting of Dr. Rob Berry, Linda Fox, and Wray Whitmore provided producers with direction on how to use the Sheep Bytes software to help manage nutrition on their sheep operations. Saturday was a full day with Linda Fox giving a presentation on Selecting Stock, Dr. Rob Berry speaking about Opportunities in the Sheep Dairy Industry, Canadian Sheep Federation Chair Allan Ribbink speaking to the importance of Traceability in the Sheep Industry, CSF Executive Director Corlena Patterson giving us an overview of the recent Blockchain project and CSF activities, and Dale Engstrom speaking about Sheep Nutrition.

As in many other Provinces, MSA operates as a Not-for-Profit association on mandatory, but refundable check-off dollars from our producers. Our activities and programming for 2020 have already been sharply affected by a large decrease in checkoff dollars. These funds are largely in part what gives us the ability to organize and run workshops and seminars for our producers. We have also found ourselves without an Executive Director due to lack of funds. Our ED played a large role in keeping us organized and planning for the many events that we held throughout the year for our producers. The MSA will continue to try to accommodate producers with educational information to the best of our abilities through our new website and remain committed to our Manitoba Sheep Industry.

Submitted by Sheri Bieganski