



O · P · P

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Dr. Randall Cutlip Retires

— Noted USDA Researcher —

Randall C. Cutlip, longtime Research Leader of the Respiratory and Neurologic Disease Research Unit at USDA's National Animal Disease Center in Ames, Iowa, retired on January 1, 2000. Widely known among sheep producers for his pioneering work with OPP, Dr. Cutlip was more recently involved in research of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies, including scrapie and BSE.

Though the respiratory form of OPP was first reported in Montana more than 75 years ago, it was not until Cutlip's research — beginning in the mid '70s — that producers finally had an option beyond just "culling the lungers." Dr. Cutlip and his colleagues standardized the agar gel immunodiffusion blood test (AGID), developed earlier in Holland, which made it possible to detect infected animals before symptoms appear.

After further research with the new test, Cutlip began an experimental program in which sheep producers interested in eradicating OPP from their flocks — and willing to follow his protocol — submitted blood serum for AGID testing. That program continued through the '80s, ending when the test was licensed by USDA in 1990. This important diagnostic tool then became widely available through state laboratories and schools of veterinary medicine.

The OPP Society is honored to have Dr. Randall Cutlip as an active member, always willing to share his insight and answer our questions. We wish for him and his wife, Margaret, continued success and an enjoyable retirement.

Dr. Marie Bulgin's Presentation Well Received

— OPP AWARENESS UP —

Thanks to Dr. Marie Bulgin's talk at the Wisconsin Sheep Industry Conference last April, and Bob Black's pre-conference newsletter publicity, the OPP Concerned Sheep Breeders Society entered its 10th year with a running start. Secretary Annette Bader reports a steady stream of information requests — and new members (see enclosed update) — ever since the conference in Oconomowoc.

Dr. Bulgin, of the University of Idaho, opened with a talk on ewe lactation problems and lamb starvation. She caught the audience's attention with a photograph that had once graced the cover of a major sheep publication. Though an attractive photo at first glance — a range ewe standing watch over her newborn lamb — a closer look revealed a dam so emaciated that the lamb most likely starved to death. Though in full fleece, the ewe's spine and hipbones were clearly discernible. One listener recalled hearing oldtimers refer to such a ewe as having "fishback."

While a severely malnourished ewe will not produce adequate milk, mastitis is another cause of lamb starvation. Dr. Bulgin explained the difference between common bacterial mastitis and the "hardbag" mastitis common to OPP. She provided an excellent graphic to illustrate how OPP-caused fibrosis in the udder can severely restrict the amount of nourishment available to the lamb, even in an udder that appears to be full of milk. This was a revelation to several in the audience.

Moving on to her OPP presentation, Dr. Bulgin noted that while most producers are aware of the pneumonia form of OPP — "lunger ewes" — other manifestations of the virus have only recently been discovered (1984 and later) and are not widely known. In addition to the lungs, she explained that OPP can affect the udder as mentioned above; the joints, causing swollen knees and hocks; and the brain, causing rear limb

... *Bulgin, continued on next page*

OPP CONCERNED SHEEP BREEDERS SOCIETY

Recap: April 9, 1999 Annual Meeting, Oconomowoc, WI

Things started off with a bang when we realized that the crumbs and empty pitchers in the back of the room were all that remained of our refreshments (delivered early and no doubt appreciated by those in the previous session). The upside was that we didn't have to pay for the cookies and drinks.

With our secretary recently resigned, the business session was short and informal. We announced the appointment of Annette Bader to replace Mary Jarvis, and welcomed Dr. Bob Leder as he returned to the board. There being no other nominations, Brian Magee continues as a director. A brief financial overview was presented. It was noted that we are in the black but spending money as fast as it comes in.

Presentations earlier in the day by veterinarians Dr. Marie Bulgin and Dr. Cleon Kimberling helped to generate interest in our meeting. With so many new faces in the room and limited time available — we gave up one of our two scheduled hours to accommodate the programming — the meeting soon morphed into a general information session on OPP.

Bill Duffield then addressed the group, describing his experience as the first producer to enroll in Ontario's new health certification program (see related article). Dr. Paula Menzies, of the University of Guelph, had faxed the final draft of that program to us the day before our meeting. Copies of the Ontario draft, as well as numerous other papers, were available for those in attendance.

A short discussion followed re: how the Society should address the topic of breed susceptibility to the OPP virus, with concern voiced that we take special care not to divert attention from the fact that differences do exist between breeds. It was also suggested that the Society consider distribution of basic literature on other chronic sheep health concerns in addition to OPP (see related articles).

Following a short question/answer period, many stayed on to visit. All in all it was a good session in the midst of a marathon day of presentations on various health issues.

Bulgin, continued from cover . . .

weakness and weight loss with scrapie-like symptoms. Bulgin feels that the biggest economic impact of OPP is probably due to hardbag mastitis and the resulting need for premature culling of ewes. She further pointed out that OPP can negatively impact milk production levels for the two lactations immediately preceding development of hardbag mastitis.

Diagnosis by blood testing for viral antibodies was discussed, along with methods for eradication and/or control of OPP. Dr. Bulgin recommends using the USDA licensed AGID test offered by laboratories associated with schools of veterinary medicine. She stressed the importance of careful record keeping and positive identification of individual animals.

We sincerely appreciate the excellent publicity given to us by Bob Black and the conference committee, as well as Dr. Marie Bulgin's willingness to fit Wisconsin into her busy schedule. Due in part to their generosity, the OPP Society is on a roll.

GREEN DOT ON YOUR ADDRESS LABEL?

As an enrolled producer in the VSFCP, we know you're concerned about ovine health issues. We hope you enjoy this newsletter and will consider joining us in our mission to build awareness and learn from each other.

SOCIETY TO DISTRIBUTE INFO ON OTHER ISSUES

An acute need for producer-oriented information on health issues other than OPP was a recurring theme during last year's Wisconsin Conference, and all eyes turned toward us. To no one's surprise, this subject (which has been mentioned numerous times over the years) was raised again at our annual meeting and your board agrees that it's time to act.

Without shifting our focus from OPP, and with a distribution system already in place, it will be relatively easy for us to make information available on other chronic health issues in addition to OPP — such as scrapie, caseous lymphadenitis, footrot, and Johnes — as well as some basics for beginners (think Mary Gessert's excellent articles in *The Shepherd*).

Though our OPP literature will continue to be distributed free of charge, other information will be made available at cost to our members (double cost for non-members). We'll offer introductory pieces as well as more technical papers for members to share with their veterinarians. An order list is now being assembled and will be included with the next OPP newsletter as well as with every info packet that Annette mails out.

BULGIN TALK AVAILABLE ON VIDEO

Couldn't make the Wisconsin Conference last year? Thanks to Kathy Lavengood, who turned up with a camcorder, members may order a video of Dr. Marie Bulgin's OPP presentation for just \$10 postpaid (\$15 non-members). Be forewarned — this was taped in the dark and is not a professional production. The audio, however, is excellent and you do get an occasional glimpse of Marie. The Society is grateful to Dr. Bulgin, who graciously agreed to be taped and declined royalties. The video may be ordered from OPP Secretary Annette Bader.

BREED ASSOCIATIONS AND THE OPP SOCIETY

We welcome the Icelandic Sheep Breeders of North America as a new association member and happily announce the return of the American Border Leicester Association. These join the Finnsheep and Clun Forest groups, both of which have been with us since the beginning.

Breed association dues are \$10, the same as individuals. Groups wishing to assist further are invited to donate 2¢ per animal registered in the previous year. All breed association monies received supplement our limited advertising budget.

Many of you are leaders within your respective breed associations and we know that a lot of good discussion is being generated. A few have also placed OPP Society ads in their respective breed newsletters. Your help is much appreciated!

