



**O.P.P.**

**CONCERNED  
SHEEP  
BREEDERS  
SOCIETY**

**DIRECTORS**

**BILL DUFFIELD (04)**  
Ontario  
519-899-2663  
duffield@xcelco.on.ca

**MARY K GLOSTER (06)**  
New York  
607-898-3777  
sheepish@rockytopfarm.com

**ROBERT LEDER, DVM (06)**  
Wisconsin  
715-752-3459  
leder@dotnet.com

**JUDY LEWMAN (05)**  
CHAIR  
Minnesota  
952-472-4524  
JL6250@visi.com

**HOLLY NEATON, DVM (04)**  
SECRETARY/TREASURER  
Minnesota  
952-955-2596  
hollyneat@juno.com

**GENE SCHRIEFER (05)**  
Wisconsin  
608-987-4337  
sheepfarm@charter.net

**JEAN T WALSH (06)**  
New York  
315-858-6042  
jtw\_42@hotmail.com

**HOLLY NEATON, DVM, SECY**  
11549 HWY 25 SW  
WATERTOWN, MN 55388  
952-955-2596  
hollyneat@juno.com  
www.OPPsociety.org

**Texel Leadership Commended  
OPP Tests Now Required for National Show/Sale**

*Editor's note: Over the years, several have wished out loud that breed associations would take a more active role in promoting high health status among member flocks. The Texel Sheep Breeders Society did just that in 2003, and will do so again in 2004, with an OPP test requirement for all entries in the TSBS annual show/sale. All test results, both positive and negative, must be posted prior to the sale. The following letter was sent to the TSBS board and is used here with their permission. Since much of what Gene Schriefer wrote could apply to any breed, this should be an inspiration to others who serve in leadership roles with their respective breed organizations.*

TO THE TEXEL SHEEP BREEDERS SOCIETY BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

I recently learned that the Texel Sheep Breeders Society board is requiring an OPP test for their show and sales. I'm surprised and quite pleased to hear a breed association take this bold and progressive step in helping to control and eliminate the spread of this slow insidious disease. I vigorously support this decision and hope your entire membership also supports this. Stand firm on your OPP test requirement and encourage Texel owners to do whole flock testing at least to assess the prevalence of OPP in their flocks. You cannot manage what you don't measure.

Our flock was well underway in testing and eliminating OPP when I purchased my first Texels 9 years ago, and even though I checked the reputation of the breeder with several people and asked the breeder specifically about OPP, I still wound up purchasing infected ewes. *Anyone* with Texel stock originating or descending from USDA-MARC needs to be testing, if they want to control the spread and eliminate this disease.

Texels are still our predominant breed and used as both crossbred dams and as terminal sires. With OPP eliminated from most of the flock, ewe productivity in terms of lambs, weaning weights and ewe longevity has improved, this improves the bottom line. Most of our breeding has been brought in via A.I. but we began a search for rams three years ago. Unfortunately, the U.S. Texel breeders I contacted were not testing for OPP, didn't have individual flock health programs in place, nor were they utilizing ultrasound for carcass traits at the flock level. This forced me to look at other breeds and also purchase stock from Canada, where health issues were more of a priority for purebred producers supplying seedstock to the commercial industry.

Being elected to your leadership position means not only dealing with the present but also establishing a vision and goal for the future, which may not be initially easy nor popular. Directly attending to health issues, especially when they appear to be prevalent within a breed, indicates a degree of serious commitment about the production of quality, healthy animals. Taking this first step and requiring testing to show/sell puts the Texel association ahead of other breeds not taking this measure. As your members clean up OPP from their flocks, I would certainly be interested and reconsider purchasing stock from U.S. producers.

Thank you,

Gene Schriefer  
Dodgeville, Wisconsin  
400 commercial ewes

**OPP Society Names  
Honorary Lifetime Members**

<b>Dr. Randall C. Cutlip</b>	<b>Joan E. Mueller</b>
<b>Stefania Dignum</b>	<b>Elizabeth K. Reedy</b>
<b>Mary Jarvis</b>	<b>James Schultz</b>
<b>Dr. Robert Leder</b>	<b>Dr. Cynthia B. Wolf</b>
<b>Brian Magee</b>	<i>Please turn to page 3.</i>

For more information on Texels and the Texel Sheep Breeders Society see: [www.usatexels.org](http://www.usatexels.org) or contact breed Secretary/Treasurer, Julie Korkow, at 406-436-2486 or: [info@usatexels.org](mailto:info@usatexels.org)

**OPP SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING**

September 6, 2003

**Wisconsin Sheep & Wool Festival (near Milwaukee)**

Recap provided by Judy Lewman

We were honored to have Guy & Pat Flora and Kathy Kark of *The Shepherd* magazine stop by for a brief lunchtime discussion this year. Guy's presence was a first — never before has an ASI president attended an OPPCSB gathering.

With so many excellent speakers on board for the Festival, our meeting morphed into a roving discussion of the health certification issue as OPP Society members and other interested parties huddled between sessions. The consensus among those at the Festival concurred with member surveys received earlier in the year: that any type of certification protocol was beyond our resources, and that a connection to the voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program seemed most viable. Dr. Bob Leder agreed to carry on with that project. (See update below.)

Our literature was prominently displayed throughout the weekend. As always, the directories were a hot item and disappeared as fast as we could set them out. Another sign that our message is being heard: two consignors to the production-tested sheep sale posted OPP test results this year, and one mentioned that our Web site was his incentive to begin testing! (All sale rams were also genotyped for scrapie susceptibility at codons 171 and 136; this was a new requirement by sale management.)

**OPP CERTIFICATION PROGRAM UPDATE:****OPPCSBS Petitions APHIS**

by Bob Leder, DVM

In early December I drafted a letter, with the input of the other directors of the OPP Society, to Diane Sutton, DVM, the head of the Scrapie Flock Certification Program at APHIS. In the letter we encouraged APHIS to consider offering an add-on program of OPP free certification to the SFCP. It is our hope that APHIS would give this proposal serious consideration. We believe that such a program would serve as an incentive to encourage more producers to enroll in the SFCP. Additionally, such a program would serve producers who have already eliminated OPP from their flocks by offering official recognition of their efforts.

The letter was sent in the middle of December, before the Christmas rush. We have not received any notice yet from Dr. Sutton regarding her thoughts of our proposal.

**DICK SISCO REMEMBERED**

With sadness, we note the death of Dick Sisco who was elected to serve on the OPP Society board early last year. He was diagnosed with leukemia last summer and died a short time later, on August 21st. Dick was always a strong supporter of sheep health and was a leader in trying to find ways to educate producers about scrapie, OPP, and other health issues. His flock was the 2nd in the country to be certified under the SFCP. Dick is remembered as a person of respect and integrity, a good friend to the industry, and to the Suffolk breed in particular.

**NEW DIRECTORS WELCOMED:**

Mary Gloster — Jean Walsh — Gene Schriefer

Jean Walsh and Mary Gloster were elected to the OPP Society board of directors last year (to serve through 2006 and 2005, respectively), as was Dick Sisco (through 2004). The board later appointed Gene Schriefer to fill the remainder of Dick's term. Bios for both Mary and Jean appeared on the ballot sheet enclosed with your 2003 newsletter. To read more about Gene, please turn to page 4.

**ADVERTISING & OPP STATUS**

by Bill Duffield

Advertising of an "OPP-free" flock makes me very nervous. One of the problems that I see is the potential for being sued. The OPP Concerned Sheep Breeders Society voted to change the bylaws a few years ago to read "OPP test-negative" instead of "OPP-free." The Society also has test guidelines for people to refer to that can assist them in knowing which questions to ask prior to purchasing new animals. The farm records should show the dates when tested, if the complete flock was tested, and any other information that the potential buyer would like to see.

In Ontario, the normal is to state "low risk Maedi-Visna" or "Maedi-Visna low risk." A flock in Ontario could be on the Ontario Sheep Health Program for this or, if there is ample data, could also advertise this way. This states to me that this farm has been testing for OPP and has a relatively clean flock for this disease. I realize that at the farm of origin the animal was low risk. I also realize that bringing that animal home in a not clean vehicle, or in a vehicle with animals that have not been tested, or into a flock that has not been tested for this problem, will NOT guarantee that that animal will stay this way (low risk).

Here are also some others that could get people into trouble:

**"Johnes free"** This is very hard, and not a very accurate test as the test runs around 50% accuracy. This test if not done properly can show false positives due to some vaccines used on animals. I have, because of semen collection, had to test my rams for this disease before and after collection, and these tests had to be negative at that time to Johnes's. The words I'd use would be "low risk Johnes's" or "Johnes's test negative."

**"Certified Scrapie-Free"** (in the USA) This too makes me nervous as the testing is still experimental. Yes, there have been a few flocks that were Certified Scrapie-Free after 5 years or more and came down with animals that had scrapie. I feel again there are better words. Since this is a government program, maybe "SFCP" or "USDA Certified Scrapie-Free" would be better.

One person in the OPP group I must congratulate as this person stated "closed ewe flock." This tells me that this flock does not purchase any ewes outside the flock but only purchases rams to improve the flock. The Fact sheet of the Ontario "GLOSSARY OF SHEEP BREEDING TERMINOLOGY" (Order no. 00-079, October 2000) states the following for:

**Closed Flock:**

An existing flock that does not introduce any live animal breeding stock to the flock. New genetics enter the flock through the use of artificial insemination and embryo transfer.

