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BREEDERS  
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**OPP CONCERNED SHEEP BREEDERS SOCIETY**

Newsletter — August 1998

— NATIONAL SHEEP & GOAT —  
**HEALTH ACCREDITATION PROGRAM**

Kimberling Proposal Gaining Steam

As many of you know, we began corresponding with Dr. Cleon Kimberling when the OPP Society Test Guidelines were about to be published a few years back. Your directors wanted to ensure that the Society would not be in conflict with Kimberling's proposal for a national health program. At that time, Dr. Kimberling encouraged us to proceed with the test guidelines and also requested input regarding his own program. Following are excerpts from recent correspondence with Kimberling:

"... What we need now is producer input! Some of your group may be interested in joining the USAHA (United States Animal Health Association, see enclosed flyer) as this is the organization where a lot of policy is developed. All members are welcome to attend the USAHA meeting in Minneapolis on October 5, 1998. Those interested should contact Linda or Beverly at 804-285-3210 for a membership application.

As for the program on October 5th, the morning session will address scrapie and the Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program. The afternoon will be devoted to OPP, Caseous Lymphadenitis, Johne's, and possibly Footrot. There is a subcommittee for each of these conditions. Following a 15 minute update on each, the entire audience will be divided into 4 or 5 discussion/work/planning groups."

This Health Accreditation Program is what we've all been working toward for the past several years. Now is your chance to support Dr. K and help make it happen.

**PLEASE RETURN THE ENCLOSED HEALTH PROGRAM FLYER TODAY !!!**

**MARE'S HEALTH — A QUICK UPDATE** from Mary Jarvis, Secretary/Treasurer

In July of 1997, I contracted something unknown that has been affecting me ever since. First thought was an infectious disease but nothing (including Lyme) checked out. From there, I was sent to the rheumatologists. They couldn't determine any definite diagnosis but called it "undifferentiated connective tissue disease." Finally, the most recent thought is that it is CFIDS (Chronic fatigue syndrome).

This July, I went back to work at my off the farm job for three days (20 hours) a week. So far I am able to cope but fatigue, and joint and muscle pain, keep me from being the way most of you remember me. We are trying to scale the farm so that Rusty can do most everything by himself, we have reduced the flock size as well.

I deeply appreciate all the expressions of good wishes you have sent to me, and couldn't have managed without Judy Lewman rolling up her sleeves to pitch in with OPP Society help. We're hoping that eventually I will recover fully but it may take a long, long time. I appreciate your patience with delayed newsletters and directories.

I'm ready to roll on the 1998 directory; we have a lot of new members and I want to get it done and in the mail to you. Please send your 1998 renewals back post haste and I'll get my part done. Thanks!

*NOTE: Since Mare is so much fun to work with, the Board feels fortunate that she's chosen to hang with us. We also appreciate her graciously taking the heat for "delayed newsletters and directories," even though delays have usually not been her fault!*

**ANNUAL MEETING of the OPPCSB SOCIETY**  
Friday 27 March 1998 — Madison, Wisconsin

In the absence of Mary Jarvis, Judy Lewman opened the meeting shortly after 3 p.m. She passed around a list to check attendance, to update the present mailing list, and to add new breeders concerned about OPP. All present were asked to introduce themselves, indicating briefly their interest in OPP.

Because Mary — "the glue that holds this outfit together" — was missing, there were no secretary's or treasurer's reports.

The major item of business was action on a report from Miller Lavengood, chair of the OPPCSB By-Laws Review Committee. The committee suggested four changes:

1. Eliminate the office of president, but leave the Board of Directors at 7 members. Directors will decide among themselves each year who will serve as chair.
2. Change the office of secretary/treasurer from an elected position to one appointed by the Board and reviewed annually.
3. Require a minimum of three years tenure as a member-in-good-standing for all nominees to the Board of Directors.
4. Change all places in the by-laws where we refer to "OPP-free sheep" to read "OPP-test-negative sheep."

The only discussion was on the three-year tenure requirement in point three, and those present agreed to change the three year membership requirement for the Board to two years. Passed. The proposed changes will be circulated among the members and voted on by mail.

Judy Lewman noted that the brochures put out by the Society have been doing very well. The first printing of 200 went very quickly, and the brochure was re-printed. So far, 1600 brochures have been printed.

Judy suggested the possibility of bringing in an outside speaker for our next annual meeting. This would probably require an honorarium, or at least travel and lodging expenses. She then announced that the Board has discussed a dues increase to \$15. Discussion followed but no action taken.

Judy indicated a good response to a request, via the Association for Small Ruminant Practitioners, for veterinarians interested in serving as referral vets for people with questions about OPP. Responses have been coming in from all over. The list will be on the internet web page.

Judy asked Jim Schultz about nominations for the three positions on the Board of Directors, and Jim indicated that three people were nominated for those openings. All three currently serve, so the Board membership will not change.

Miller Lavengood moved to adjourn in order to allow adequate time for two speakers. Reedy seconded.

Someone made a suggestion about the possibility of a session at the Wisconsin sheep conference next year. No action.

Respectfully submitted by Bets Reedy, sec. pro tem

**TWO SPEAKERS FOLLOWED THE BUSINESS MEETING**  
Veterinarians David C. Henderson & Holly Neaton

Our first speaker was David C. Henderson from the Moredun Research Institute in Edinburgh, Scotland. Henderson, best known in North America as the author of The Veterinary Book for Sheep Farmers, serves as Head of the Clinical Division at Moredun. He presented a very interesting, brief history of the Institute and an overview of the research currently underway there. (See related information below.)

The second speaker was Holly Neaton, veterinarian and Polypay breeder, who spoke personally and professionally about OPP. Her informal talk (see facing page) allowed for considerable input from people in the audience who had questions or wanted to contribute from their own experiences. It seemed a good way to open the complexities of OPP to those in the room unfamiliar with the disease.

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**THE MOREDUN FOUNDATION FOR ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE — EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND**

Formed in 1920 as a coalition of farmers and veterinarians, and now employing 200 scientists in a state-of-the-art secured research facility, The Moredun Foundation is internationally acclaimed as a center of excellence in the fight against animal diseases. Moredun's 5000 members throughout the UK and abroad help to fund vital research, 60% of it devoted to sheep.

Non-voting overseas membership is open to those of us in the U.S. and Canada (£20 sterling). Included are newsheets on a specific disease topic every 12 weeks plus a twice-yearly update on all news and research. Address inquiries to:

Margaret Bennett  
The Moredun Foundation  
Pentlands Science Park  
Bush Loan, Penicuik, EH26 0PZ  
SCOTLAND

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**MILLER LAVENGOOD REMEMBERED**

We regret to announce that longtime OPP Society member, Miller Lavengood, passed away suddenly on May 7th at his home in Minnesota. Miller's can-do approach to every aspect of his life will always be remembered. He was at our annual meeting this spring and had also just recently been elected to serve as president of the Crow River Lamb & Wool Producers group. Miller's enthusiastic participation is sadly missed. Our condolences to Kathy and their family.

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**NEW INTERNET ADDRESS FOR SOCIETY WEB PAGE**

Please make note of our address change. The "OPP Fact Sheet" and other Society information can now be found at:  
<http://impossibledream.com/sheep/sheeph.htm>

We continue to be indebted to Rusty and Mary Jarvis for allowing the OPP Society to hang our page off their Groveland Farm web site at no charge.

# Holly Neaton, DVM — Eradication Experience

As presented at 1998 OPP Society Annual Meeting in Madison, Wisconsin

I bought my first sheep about 12 years ago and I was lucky that I found a flock that was quite healthy to buy from. Even though I was a veterinarian I certainly didn't have the knowledge to screen out all the various bugs that you can buy with sheep. I bought some homemade Polypays the following year and looked around for a ram. Seeing that there were none in Minnesota, I ended up purchasing one from Crumpled Horn in Montana as the shipping freight was only \$75. Crumpled Horn advertised that they were OPP free. I started looking into OPP as I hadn't had any experience with it and only knew the little bit they taught us in Vet school. I tested all my sheep and seeing that they were negative, decided to continue striving to prevent this virus from entering my flock. Throughout the 80's and early 90's the lay literature (including the sheep gurus from Pipestone) kept pooh-pooing OPP, claiming that it wasn't an important disease and we shouldn't waste our time worrying about it. I would hear personal tales of woe to the contrary — people looking for negative ewes to start over after selling all their positive OPP ewes that didn't milk worth a darn. I still didn't have any personal experience with the disease.

In 1995 I purchased a ram that I had tested using the AGID OPP test at the MN VDL. I became suspicious of him after I heard someone else tell me that they had purchased a ram from the same flock that was OPP positive. This ram started losing weight and I had to treat it for pneumonia several times (rare in an adult sheep). I tested him in early 1996 and he and about 75% of my ewes were positive.

Should I sell out and start over or try to eradicate? I could bring other diseases with any new flock. I had been working hard on improving genetics and had been selecting for acceleration and prolificacy. I decided to cull the worst of the best and try raising lambs artificially.

The real expert on this subject is Judy Lewman and I appreciate all her suggestions. I used Elasticon tape to tape the teats on the positive ewes that were now isolated from the negative. This really worked slick. I never had the tape fall off and I didn't have to worry about the lambs nursing. I removed the lambs as soon as possible after birth but wasn't fanatical about it. I used artificial cow colostrum on some and frozen cow colostrum on a second bunch. Both seemed to work fine. You must be very careful of your source of cow colostrum to avoid Johne's disease and cryptosporidium (an intestinal parasite that causes diarrhea and has no treatment available). I vaccinated the lambs every two weeks for Clostridium C&D and used tetanus antitoxin when I docked tails and castrated.

After bottle feeding the lambs for the first day or so, I got them on the bucket and gave them as much warm milk replacer three times a day as they would drink. After two weeks they were only fed twice a day and encouraged to eat creep and hay. I weaned them when they were around 4 weeks old and had minimal problems with any of them. They were equal in size to the lambs from the negative ewes and much quieter. Due to lack of space, I mixed all the lambs together after weaning and hoped for the best.

I have tested them three times — the last about a month ago — and so far all have been negative except one who was a weak "maybe." In our experience those "maybes" almost always turn positive so I shipped her immediately. They are all due to lamb this month and look great.

I kept the positive ewes in a distant pasture and bred them to lamb in December so that I could get one more set of lambs from them. The orphaning didn't go quite as smooth this time but I still got 15 nice lambs. If I had been planning better, I would have synchronized the ewes with implants or prostaglandin and bred them all at one time. This would be intensive but easier to manage in the long run. Feeding bottle lambs for two months in the winter is expensive and time consuming.

The positive ewes are all gone now. I have tested the negative ones again and culled a few "maybe"s here and there. They need to be tested again now.

I started providing a few companies with sheep for their medical device testing and training one year ago. I try to use my own sheep as often as possible but many times their orders request weights, ages or breeds that I need to find and purchase. One of the companies requires that the sheep are OPP and Johne's disease negative and Q fever tested. I have tested hundreds of sheep from around the metro area and have not found a positive OPP or Johne's sheep yet and very few Q fever negative sheep. These sheep have ranged from 4 months to 5 years of age. I had an order for Merino sheep that took me to western South Dakota near Newell, sheep capital of the United States. Neither the sheep producers or the veterinarian that I worked with had any knowledge of OPP. The veterinarian that bled the sheep for me didn't even know where to send the blood for testing. One of the Merinos tested positive for John's and 11 out of 15 tested positive for OPP. When I explained the disease to the two producers that I was working with they thought maybe that was why they couldn't get their ewes to raise twins — one would always starve out. I can see why the average ewe in America only raises one lamb. This really turned me off to western ewes. 100,000 sheep go through the sales barn at Newell, SD a year.

A note on the type of test to use. I don't believe that we have any choice other than the AGID test available at most state diagnostic laboratories. Get to know the technician that runs the test and request that the same tech always runs your tests. It can be a tricky test to interpret and an experienced technician can pick up on the early "maybes." We have an excellent technician at MN VDL in Londa Kroone. It is probably best to choose one lab and stick with it. I would not recommend the OPP ELISA test that is available commercially as I have found major inaccuracies with it over the years.

I feel that I have got a handle on OPP for the moment and will continue to test and cull over the next few years. Use of artificial insemination, working with other producers to buy rams from or making your own will cut down on the chance of bringing the disease into your flock. Look on the bright side — at least it isn't scrapie.



## University of Minnesota — AGID Tests for OPP Favorable Changes in Fee Schedule

Good news! Working with Dr. Jim Collins, who was recently appointed to head up the U of M Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, Holly Neaton has worked out a price break for our members living outside of Minnesota. In the past, this lab has added a 10% surcharge for out-of-state submissions. Dr. Collins has now offered to waive the non-resident surcharge (40¢ on the \$4 test) *only* for OPP Society members.

In response to Holly's suggestion, Minnesota has now also adopted a sliding fee scale for multiple submissions. A single AGID OPP test is now \$4, with each additional test up through a total of 20 also charged at the rate of \$4 per test. Submissions of 21 through 50 samples will now be charged \$3.75, and more than 50 are now \$3.50 each.

The U of M has an international reputation for excellence. (Producers in the U.K. report that their scrapie DNA tests are done at Minnesota.) Londa Kroone, the meticulous technician who performs AGID OPP tests at the U of M, has a loyal following among OPP Society members. For fast turnaround, you and your vet can help Londa by observing the following:

### BLOOD DRAW:

A 3 ml. blood draw is adequate. If drawing with a syringe instead of a vacutainer needle, be sure blood is directed gently down the inside of the tube to avoid "splashing" (which may mean your serum will be pink instead of straw colored—O.K., but clear serum makes for an easier reading on the test).

### TUBES:

Preferred are red-top glass, 16 x 100 mm size (10 ml. draw, finger diameter, 4" long). Plastic tubes with snap caps are O.K., but push-in caps are difficult to remove. Please avoid plastic tubes with push-in caps, as well as the very slim (pencil diameter) or short (5 ml. draw, "stubby") glass tubes.

### SERUM ONLY:

Send only serum drawn off blood clots. (Your vet can spin these down, or blood can be allowed to clot at room temperature and serum transferred to a fresh tube.) Serum may be refrigerated or frozen, but don't freeze whole blood. *If samples were frozen, make note of this when submitting to the lab.*

### LABELING:

Number tubes 1 through XX. Number should be dark, easy to read, and placed at the very top of the label (nearest the red rubber stopper/cap) while the tube is held in an upright position. Then, turning the tube on its side (horizontal), write the date drawn, individual animal ID, and your last name on label.

### PAPERWORK:

Use the Minnesota Board of Animal Health Test Chart (photocopy from this newsletter). All information on the chart must match tube labels. Submit under your veterinarian's name, regardless of whether the blood is drawn by you or by the veterinarian. Specify if non-resident OPP Society member.

### PACKING/SHIPPING:

Pack carefully in a strong carton to avoid breakage. Tubes may be packed in a horizontal position. U.S. Priority Mail is fast (2-3 days) and economical (\$3 for 2# package). To avoid weekend layover in hot weather, mail early in the week. Unless shipping during extreme heat, ice pack is not necessary.

## OPP, SCRAPIE, AND THE SHOW RING

by Teresa Simons of Northern California —  
Recent message from "Sheep-L" used by permission:

*"Well folks, I've gone and done it. I got my number today. I'm flock CA58 in California. My vet has urged me to do this — go on the Scrapie Program. But what really motivated me was that I show and one of the new rules for California fairs is that if you're on the Scrapie Program you can request and get separate pens for your sheep where you're not up against anyone else's sheep or goats. Being that my my flock is also OPP negative — and has been since I started in 1992 — this was the biggest incentive for me to also go on the Scrapie Program."*

## OPP A CONCERN FOR COMMERCIAL PRODUCERS

Jim Schultz, of Weed Eden Farm in Wisconsin (and former OPP Society president), argues a good case for eradication. Speaking at the '98 Wisconsin Sheep Industry Conference, Jim shared 5 years of income/expense data on his flock. Even after costs of preg checking and OPP tests, his 240 ewes returned nearly \$35 per head to labor and management in '97.

Minnesota commercial shepherd and new Society member, Janet McNally, is another who has eliminated OPP and feels it was well worth the cost. Now running 200 highly prolific Booroola Dorsets on her Tamarack Farm, Janet says: *"The largest impact eradicating OPP has had on my flock is to increase longevity. My ewes are now living about 3 years longer, and 2/3 to 3/4 of those with triplets can now raise those litters unassisted, even to the ripe old age of 7 and 8 years old. Prior to eradicating OPP, production was declining at 4, 5, and 6 years old, and ewes were usually culled by age 5."*

## JACOB BREEDERS SPEAK UP

Karen Kerr, a member of the Jacob Sheep Breeders Association as well as the OPP Society, and Joan Horak, who serves as secretary of the Jacob Sheep Conservancy, recently shared their knowledge of OPP in their respective Jacob newsletters.

Karen, of Wisconsin, listed problems that were eliminated after she had "cleaned house" (her first test turned up 19 positives out of 50 — 30 have been culled over the past 4 years). Symptoms observed in the OPP-positive ewes included premature births, long labors, low birthweights, lactation problems, and excessive time to recondition following lactation.

In her JSC article, Joan quoted another breeder who asked, *"What good is all the conservation in the world if we are merely spreading this disease among the flocks of this rare breed?"* Joan, of Texas, continued by stating that, *"We cannot lose the longevity and the rearing ability of our Jacobs; we need to gather correct information about the breed, not skewed by undetected OPP. More important, we cannot inflict this disease on new breeders and owners."*

Fred Horak, JSC editor and husband of Joan, further reports that OPP was **the** topic of conversation around many of the booths at the Maryland Sheep & Wool Festival this spring.

# HEALTH ACCREDITATION PROGRAM

**This is your chance** to voice support of an overall **health accreditation program for sheep and goats**. Dr. Cleon Kimberling, of Colorado State University, has dusted off his 5-year-old health plan proposal (first presented when he chaired the American Sheep Industry Animal Health Committee) and now he needs to hear from you.

The ultimate **goal of Kimberling's plan**, built around the Voluntary Scrapie Program, is to address consumer **food safety and animal welfare concerns** while also providing **healthy seedstock** to the industry. "By taking quality control steps from the time an animal is born—and by documenting its health and well-being—we can **build consumer confidence**," he explains.

Dr. Kimberling's **multi-level program** is designed so that a flock/herd can advance to the next stage as rapidly as testing can be completed and other qualifications met. The plan addresses overall **management and record keeping** in addition to eradication and/or control of such diseases as **Brucella ovis, caseous lymphadenitis, foot rot, OPP/CAE, Johnes, and scrapie**.



Dr. Kimberling demonstrates EID implant.

**Dr. Kimberling is the current chair** of the United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) **Sheep & Goat Committee**. (The USAHA, formed in 1897, is a national non-profit organization serving in an advisory capacity to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.) When the USAHA convenes in **Minneapolis on October 5, 1998**, Kimberling plans to present a **resolution requesting that a Sheep & Goat Health Accreditation Program be implemented** under the combined auspices of Extension, APHIS (Animal & Plant Health Inspection Services, USDA), and State Veterinarians.

This health plan proposal has received support and encouragement from the **American Association of Small Ruminant Practitioners**, the **OPP Concerned Sheep Breeders Society**, and several producers already involved in the **Voluntary Scrapie Program**.

*Now Dr. Kimberling needs to hear from YOU!*

**NOTE: This is a self-mailing form. Please fold, seal, stamp and mail to address on reverse.**

YES — I would like to request that USAHA recommend establishment of a National Sheep & Goat Health Accreditation Program. Please notify me as further information becomes available.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ FLOCK/HERD/FARM NAME \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE\_(\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ FAX\_(\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ E-MAIL \_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS: