

OPP ERADICATION UPDATE



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Does it really matter if sheep have OPP?

- Some report no difference in production between positives and negatives
– *usually because symptomatic ewes are culled w/o being counted* –
- A 40-year-old USDA study is often quoted as supporting evidence, but . .
- That study ***failed to include*** 100's of ewes unable to feed even one lamb
- Those ewes, most with hardbag, ***were culled just prior to the study***
- We know this from two who were working with the flock at the time
- Both have provided statements and given permission to quote

Brian Magee

(former Shepherd at Cornell University in New York, retired)

“They (researchers) failed to note that a large number of ewes from this flock were culled at lambing with hard udders unable to feed even one lamb. I don’t have an exact number but it was in the range of 600 ewes both years I was in the lambing barns suckling lambs and taking them off as orphans.”

Yves Berger

(former Director of the Spooner Dairy Sheep Research Program in Wisconsin, retired)

“I was working with Brian in Dubois in 1975-1977. My wife was working in the orphan lamb rearing area. The sheer number of lambs raised on milk replacer was certainly a reflection of the poor milking ability of many ewes that numbered about 4,500 at this time. I was also shocked by the high lamb mortality.”

40 Years Later, we now know that . . .

- Only 10 to 30% of OPP transmission is from infected dams to lambs
- Most transmission occurs when young ewes join the infected adult flock
- Eradication can be accomplished without expensive orphan rearing
- It's possible to raise OPP-test-negative lambs from test-positive dams
- So OPP-positive ewes that remain productive do not need to be culled
- There are varied routes to a test-negative flock — no one-size-fits-all
- The **Elitest**[®] ELISA is crucial to the success of a new eradication strategy — ***overall superior specificity and sensitivity of 99.3% and 99.4% —***



OPP Society Volunteers are currently monitoring numerous flocks undergoing the eradication process, including the following . . .

Flock “A”

- Prior to testing for OPP, producer had culled heavily based on symptoms
- First test of 215 ewes & rams = 33% infected with the OPP virus (OPPV)
- Those test-positive but genetically valuable were moved to another farm
- Test-neg replacements are being retained from both pos and neg dams
- Now, 2 years later, owner has 340 strongly test-negative ewes & rams
- Most recent test found 1.5% infected; owner will continue to monitor
- Total testing costs to date ÷ 340 (owner does the bleeding) = \$28.75*
*** \$6.25/test + \$1 each for supplies + \$10 accession fee per lot submitted**

Flock “B”

- Producer manages per the STAR system, i.e. 5 lambings per year
- Has been culling 25% of the ewe flock each year to maintain production
- 290 adult ewes recently tested for the first time were 88% OPPv-positive
- Owner hoped to purchase test-negatives; now plans to grow from within
- 87 ewe lambs tested 3 months post-weaning were only 19% positive
- Will concentrate future testing \$\$\$ on young potential replacements as ewe lambs will be plentiful through the multiple lambings
- This allows retention of genetics, with test-pos dams culled at weaning

New 30-minute video available via YouTube



— Access through links on OPP Society website —
Also available as DVD for those who need or prefer that format

*Presented by Dr. Cindy Wolf at the
2018 Annual NSIP Sale in Spencer, Iowa*

*Slide show prepared by Judy Lewman and Dr. Holly Neaton
Photos courtesy of Cindy Wolf and Kelley O'Neill*

