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Dr. Marie Bulgin to Speak on OPP!
Health Program Workshop With Dr. Cleon Kimberling!
WISCONSIN SHEEP INDUSTRY CONFERENCE

— The Place to be on April 9-10, 1999 —

Once again Wisconsin leads the way! In spite of some unexpected last minute scrambling (their former site has been closed) Bob Black and crew have put together another blockbuster Wisconsin Sheep Industry Conference. Mark your calendar and note new location (Oconomowoc, between Madison and Milwaukee).

Shortly after last year's conference the OPP Society called University of Idaho veterinarian and researcher, Dr. Marie Bulgin, to see if she would consider traveling to Wisconsin in '99. Her immediate response was ". . . sounds like great fun!" When the Conference Committee later accepted our offer to help sponsor Marie they expressed interest in having her present on multiple topics. Dr Bulgin's down-to-earth demeanor and brass tacks approach toward tough issues — she'll speak on Idaho's new Scrapie Program in addition to OPP — are sure to generate lively discussion.

With John's also on the list of topics, plus Dr. Cleon Kimberling leading a discussion/work session on his proposed national health program, the '99 Conference has "morphed" into a cutting edge symposium of health issues. Black says, ". . . the daily news tells us that these topics will not fade away. The rest of society is becoming paranoid about what is put in front of them at dinner. Often those fears are misplaced, but it doesn't matter. We are outgunned in the war of words unless we find a Rachel Carson on our side."

. . . WI Conference continued on next page

— OPP SOCIETY SECRETARY STEPPING DOWN —

With sadness we announce that after 7 years of holding the fort almost entirely by herself, Mary Jarvis has elected to leave her position as our Secretary/Treasurer. Most of you have been aware of Mary's health problems which began nearly two years ago. Though it may be a diagnosis by default, the current theory is that she is suffering from chronic fatigue syndrome.

Mary and her husband, Rusty, are still actively involved in raising sheep on their Groveland Farm near Lake Superior in northern Wisconsin. She has also returned to her off the farm job, now working half-time. Mare says, "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. I just want to devote all of my now limited energies to our sheep and to the other animals we have here. We're hoping that I will recover fully but it may take a long, long time."

The OPP Society welcomes Annette Bader, of Hope Hill Farm in western Pennsylvania, who has been appointed as Mary's successor. A former special education teacher, she bred horses and owned a boarding and training farm before purchasing her first sheep. A Society member for nearly 4 years, Annette says that she and her physician husband, Bill, "read enough about OPP to know we wanted to take all precautions." Their foundation animals came from a closed flock, and they were the 8th in Pennsylvania to enroll in the voluntary scrapie program. Annette still teaches English riding lessons and is a National Examiner for the U.S. Pony Club, traveling around the country to test upper level riders against the Pony Club standards.

While the OPP Board will miss working with Mary, the glue that's held us together for so long, we're glad that she continues to hang with us as an active member. We look forward to enjoying more of her wit and terrific sense of humor as she and Rusty settle into a less hectic lifestyle. Don't get too complacent, though, Mare. Remember — Annette knows your e-mail address!

Heading up the slate of key presenters at the Wisconsin Conference along with Drs. Bulgin and Kimberling is long-time OPP Society member and founding member of the Ontario Suffolk Sire Reference Association (OSSRA), Bill Duffield. Bill will share his expertise and experience on multiple topics, including a comparison of objective production/performance data recording systems such as Ovissey, LambPlan, NSIP and Ewebyte.

OPP Society members Sandy DeMaster and Margaret Waite are also on this year's Conference program. Margaret will discuss integration of sheep into a farming operation, including the use of alternative forages. Sandy will be assisting veterinarian, Dr. Shelby Molina, with a presentation on Johnes.

The Society wishes to recognize those who were instrumental in putting this year's program together. Veterinarians Mary Gessert and Bob Leder, along with producer Jim Schultz, have assisted behind the scenes in bringing Drs. Bulgin and Kimberling to Wisconsin in '99. We also appreciate the hard work and enthusiasm of Wisconsin President and Conference Chair, Bob Black, without whom there probably wouldn't even be a conference this year. Many thanks to all!

Room reservations for the Olympia Resort in Oconomowoc may be made by calling 1-800-558-9573 and requesting a room under the Wisconsin Sheep Industry Conference block. Rates are \$72 double, \$10 for each additional adult.

BETS REEDY RECOGNIZED FOR YEARS OF SERVICE

While we are more than pleased with the wonderful coverage given the Society in the Conference Issue of the "Wisconsin Shepherd," one major glitch must be clarified. Long-time OPP Society director and Clun Forest breed secretary, Bets Reedy, was a key player in getting our group up and running back in 1990 and we regret that her name inadvertently ended up on the cutting room floor. Bets is always eager to jump in at the drop of a hat wherever needed—and when Bets is involved you know the job will be done professionally and on time. We would be hard pressed without her!

NEW DIRECTORY ENCLOSED

Please check your listing carefully. Our Directory is mailed to everyone who requests information on OPP and/or the Society so we know you'll want to keep your listing up to date. All changes and corrections should be sent to director, Stefania Dignum, who has agreed to help lighten the load for Annette by keeping the directory info current.

VET REFERRAL LIST GROWING

The enclosed '99 Directory includes some additions to our Veterinary Referral List. We want to again thank those who agreed to pioneer this project! Our goal is to eventually be able to network with at least one veterinarian in each state/province. Interested vets are invited to request further information from OPP secretary, Annette Bader.

OPP SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING

Once again the Annual Meeting of the OPP Concerned sheep Breeders Society will be held in conjunction with the Wisconsin Sheep Industry Conference. This year the Conference is being held at the Olympia Resort in Oconomowoc (between Madison and Milwaukee). Our meeting is scheduled for 2 p.m. on Friday, April 9th. All are welcome — bring a friend!

'99 ELECTIONS — CALL FOR NOMINEES

The three-year terms of Brian Magee and Cindy Wolf expire this year. While we're happy to report that Brian will run for re-election, Cindy has decided to take a well deserved break after nine consecutive years on the Board. She remains as an active member. Wisconsin veterinarian and co-founder of the OPP Society, Bob Leder, has agreed to run for the open directorship. Others who have an interest in serving on the OPP Board are invited to send a short bio to Annette for publication in the newsletter. Nominations will be accepted through April 9th.

BYLAW REVISIONS APPROVED BY MEMBERSHIP

The following changes, which were presented at our last Annual Meeting and reported in the August '98 newsletter, were overwhelmingly approved by those members who returned the ballot with their dues:

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 two 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."

HEALTHY SHEEP ... MORE PROFITABLE?

As U.S. sheep numbers continue to decline industry experts scramble to come up with plans to stem the downward spiral. However, we've been struck with the large number of OPP Society members who have significantly *increased* flock size at a time when many of the nation's producers are selling out. We're curious as to why. We know that most of you are working hard to eradicate/control other chronic diseases in addition to OPP. Could it be simply that healthy sheep are easier to care for, allowing larger numbers to be run profitably in a given amount of time? Or what?

We're doing a comparison tally using numbers reported in the current and previous Society directories and will report further in the next newsletter. In the meantime, we'd be real interested in hearing from those of you who are expanding at a time when others are leaving the industry. Jot down a few lines and we'll include your comments when our official expansion numbers are reported.

KIMBERLING HEALTH PROGRAM UPDATE

Grass-roots support for a national health accreditation program continues to grow. Though nothing much came about at the USAHA (U.S. Animal Health Association) meeting in October, it appears that there may now be enough interest to get this project up and running as a producer-driven program. The list of producers in Dr. Kimberling's growing database far exceeds the number with which the VSFCP (Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program) began back in '92 and '93.

A two-hour workshop with Dr. Kimberling at the Wisconsin Conference will allow all interested parties the opportunity to participate in developing a program to serve the needs of commercial as well as purebred breeders. Producers interested in a national health program but unable to attend the workshop with Kimberling are encouraged to send comments directly to him:

National Sheep & Goat Health Program, Dr. Cleon Kimberling, Veterinary Teaching Hospital, Colorado State University, Ft. Collins, CO 80523. (Phone: 970-491-1281, fax 0320, e-mail: ckimberl@vagus.vth.colostate.edu) All who respond will be placed on Kimberling's mailing list.

MINNESOTA BLOOD TESTING UPDATE

Several Society members are taking advantage of the University of Minnesota's offer to waive out-of-state surcharges for our group. The U of M asks that you please call ahead when sending 20 or more samples to assure that Londa has enough kits on hand to run your tests as soon as the sera are received. (Any who missed the related article in our last newsletter may obtain the U of M test submission form and other information from OPP secretary, Annette Bader.)

MARYLAND SHEEP & WOOL FESTIVAL

Since several Society members plan to be at Maryland this year, including our new secretary and at least one director, an informal OPP Society "gathering" is being planned for Sunday, May 2nd. Location and time (tentatively early afternoon for about an hour) will be posted on Carol Winchell's Finnsheep pen in the breed exhibit barn. There's been a lot of interest recently from this part of the country. We look forward to meeting as many of you as possible on May 2nd. All are welcome . . . bring a friend!

THIS IS YOUR NEWSLETTER . . .

. . . and we're always interested in hearing what's going on in your neck of the woods. Many comments in the Directory are interesting in themselves, offering insight to your vast pool of knowledge and experience. We encourage all to send in your news — whether a complete article or just a few sentences scribbled on the back of an envelope. We're eager to hear!

WAY TO GO, NEW JERSEY!

Latest buzz on the grapevine reports that APHIS* officials in New Jersey offer **free OPP testing** as an incentive for producers to sign onto the VSFCP. Drs. Cheryl Berthoud and AC Welsh will also assist with other testing as needed (such as *B. ovis*, etc.) while carrying out annual scrapie flock inspections.

This common-sense approach was initiated by Dr. Linda Detwiler, APHIS veterinarian and internationally renowned TSE/scrapie guru. And it appears to be working. Of the 16 NJ flocks now enrolled in the VSFCP, 13 signed on in '97 and '98.

We want to thank new OPP Society member, Carol Winchell, for bringing this to our attention. Dr. Berthoud credits Carol as well as fellow producer, Ruth Hunt, for their enthusiastic support and assistance in recruiting for the NJ program.

**(Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service of the U.S.D.A., administrators of the VSFCP)*

LUKES' FINNSHEEP IN "THE SHEPHERD"

The flock owned by OPP Society members, Larry & Elizabeth Luke, is featured on the February cover of "The Shepherd" magazine. Elizabeth reports that their wonderful greenhouse *barn* is what has been receiving the most attention, with inquiries coming in from all over the country.

An accompanying article by Elizabeth, who currently serves as both vice president and secretary for the Finnsheep group, appears on page 12 of the magazine. She documents their odyssey with the sheep, including a bout with OPP and its eradication from the flock. Nice job, Elizabeth!

INTERESTING BOOK

Mad Cow U.S.A. (subtitled: "Could the nightmare happen here?")

Before you say you've heard "enough already" about TSEs (transmissible spongiform encephalopathies, including BSE in cattle and scrapie in sheep), you might want to take a look at Mad Cow U.S.A. Published in 1997, in the wake of heavy media attention surrounding Richard Rhodes' Deadly Feasts, this book didn't come to our attention until last year. Mad Cow U.S.A. was written by John Stauber and Sheldon Rampton, investigative reporters associated with the public-interest Center for Media and Democracy (one of several groups that recently joined in petitioning U.S. Health and Human Services to strengthen animal feed bans and step up surveillance for Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, or "CJD," the human form of TSE).

This book is well written, includes a glossary, and is fully documented with 14 pages of references. Recommended for anyone who wishes to broaden their perspective on a highly complex issue.