On this foggy November morning, as I sit to write this to you all, I am reminded that winter is approaching and this is one of our Industry’s busiest times. Lambing has already started for some Producers, the Feedlots and Processors are staying busy trying to meet demand and the price of lamb is staying steady at what, in my opinion, are record prices. We need to keep these things in mind following a particularly challenging year for Production of our product – lamb.

I have spoken to many Producers who have had difficulties with parasites and coccidia, I urge you all to take advantage of the Flock Health Program which is available through the department of Agriculture. If you sign up for it, it allows you to have 4 scheduled visits to the farm from your vet at a hugely discounted rate and perhaps would allow you to see with their advice where small changes could be made that would alleviate some of these problems. To learn more about the program you should be able to just contact your local vet and they should be able to bring you up to speed. Let me or Brad know if you are having difficulties in making the right contacts and we will do our utmost to help you out.

I hope that you were all able to accumulate enough forage to see you through the winter as that has also been a challenge to all farmers in the Province. As you can see from the article from Jonathan Wort, Ruminant Specialist at AgraPoint, there have been some problems with excess Copper in some feed mixes.

My advice to all producers is to have independent testing done on a regular basis of all premixed feeds to ensure that there is not an excess of copper mistakenly being mixed into the feed concentrates. We rely on our feed mills to produce the feed mix that is suitable for sheep and in most cases they are spot on, however there is always the possibility of human error and we as farmers must be the last spot check to ensure the health of our flocks. It is a bit late when lambs are condemned to Copper Poisoning and Ewes begin to die. So, save a sample of each batch you purchase and send for testing. Please contact Jonathan at Agrapoint for further information. I realize that this is a further expense to producers, but it is far cheaper than the losses that could accumulate in your flock.

We have been asked by the CSF to circulate a letter related to a Biosecurity Survey that is being conducted across the country. I ask that you read the letter and if you are able to participate to contact the survey company directly. This is, I believe, a step in the direction of the government finding out from Producers what will actually work on farm and it is extremely important that as many of you as possible respond. The alternative is that no one responds and someone sitting in an office with little or no practical farming experience will tell us what our Biosecurity Standards are going to be. So please, try to participate, if not for your own benefit, then for the future of our industry.

In closing, I must mention that I am attending the CSF (Canadian Sheep Federation) AGM in Winnipeg on Tues. Nov. 15th, and that as the CSF is starting a renewal process, I hope to see a greater focus on Producer needs being addressed, rather than the constant downloading of government designated requirements. Perhaps that is a pipe dream, but I am intent on getting this message relayed from Nova Scotia, at least.

By the way, in the very near future, SPANS will have its own website up and running and look for news and updates very soon being available re our own AGM. The web address will be www.nssheep.ca.

Best Regards and Happy Farming!

Best Regards,
Catherine Vallis, President
Copper Poisoning In Sheep - Is That Why My Sheep Died?

From: Jonathan Wort

There have been several recent cases of copper poisoning in sheep showing up around Nova Scotia and some condemnations of lambs at abattoirs during inspection in recent months.

While we have seen cases of copper poisoning for years there have been more cases than usual in the last year. This is a real concern because as a producer it could have a very significant economic impact if you were to lose a lot of sheep or lambs. Even if the sheep do not die the growth and performance of the sheep will be impacted and condemnations at slaughter will come off your pay check.

Sheep absorb copper from their diet in proportion to the amount of copper offered in the diet, not according to the body’s needs as with the absorption of other minerals. Any excess absorbed is stored in the cells of the liver, eventually reaching toxic levels.

(1) Sheep are unable to excrete the copper unlike other livestock. When the level of copper gets too high the liver releases the copper into the blood stream, once the copper is in the blood stream it causes breakdown of the haemoglobin in the red blood cells. This causes anemia in the sheep and eventually death.

Sheep affected by copper poisoning are lethargic and anemic; they may grind their teeth and experience extreme thirst. (2) The sheep will eventually go off their feed and they will have an elevated heart rate and pant in an effort to get enough oxygen into their bodies. Their membranes are pale and may appear yellow. Their urine is bloody coloured. Death usually occurs within one to two days of symptoms. A post-mortem exam will show pale to dark yellow tissues and the kidneys will be very dark in colour.

(2) As with any unexplained death it is recommended that a post-mortem be performed, this service is available through the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture. For information on this service call: 893 6540 or consult your local veterinarian.

Copper is required in a sheep’s diet however, levels in the diet in excess of 25 ppm can be toxic. Cases have occurred when sheep have been grazed on pastures fertilized with high levels of pig or poultry manure. However it is more common that problems occur when feed not intended for sheep is fed (cattle, pig or poultry feed) or if there is an error in the mixing of a sheep ration or mineral supplement. While this is unintentional it can have very expensive consequences. The Canadian Sheep Federations; Food Safe Farm Practices Program recommends recording the purchase and delivery of feeds and mineral supplements and retaining a sample of each product in the event of future problems. This is a relatively simple process involving collecting and storing a small sample of each product in a plastic bag in your freezer. These samples should be dated and identified in case there is a need to test them in the future.

Identifying the cause of copper poisoning can be difficult however if you have feed and mineral samples that can be tested you will have a place to start.

If you suspect that you have a problem with copper poisoning consult your veterinarian for assistance. For more information contact Jonathan Wort: AgraPoint Livestock Specialist, phone 902 896 0277 ext. 232 or email j.wort@agrapoint.ca

3) Sheep Flock Health; a planned approach. Neil Sargison 2008 Blackwell Publishing

Sheep Associations Annual Meetings Announced

The Purebred Sheep Producers Association of NS will hold their AGM on Saturday November 26, 2011 at the Ruminant Animal Centre on the NSAC campus.

The Sheep Producers Association of NS will hold their AGM on Saturday January 21, 2012 at the Windsor Community Centre, Starting at 10:00 am. A $10.00 fee will be charged to cover the cost of lunch and refreshments.

SPANS is currently developing their new website, stay tuned for updates to www.nssheep.ca
Over 60 Beef and Sheep producers attended the Field Day at the Nappan Experimental Farm on October 22nd. The workshop featured presentations by Bill Thomas of AgraPoint and Less Halliday Beef Specialist from PEI, speaking on forage production and how important forages are in the diet of both sheep and beef cattle. Bill emphasized the importance of selecting the right forage species for different production purposes, like grazing vs. stored forage production. Less highlighted the value of soil testing and maximizing the fertility of your land to produce the best possible forage for your livestock. The soil feeds the grasses and legumes that you produce to feed your livestock and in return these forages are used to feed your livestock. If your forage is produced on healthy soils your yields and livestock performance should be better.

These presentations were followed by Dr Glover and Dr Barrett of the NSAC who reviewed the results of the research they are conducting in cooperation with the Sheep Producers Association of Nova Scotia and the Nappan Experimental Farm. Dr Glover is looking at the Omega 3 and 6 fatty acid and CLA levels in lambs pastured on red clover or tall fescue. The project is also comparing the effect of feeding various diets containing various oils like fish oil and soya oil and its impact on the meats composition. Dr Glover believes this project may provide producers with the information they need to produce lambs with enhanced fatty acid profiles allowing the production of meat that is healthier and more nutritious. This would provide producers with the opportunity to develop marketing opportunities for these meats.

Dr Barrett is using the same lambs and feeding treatments to look at the effect on the growth and sexual development of the lambs. His interest is largely triggered by producer concerns related to feeding sheep on high content red clover pastures and poor reproductive performance that has sometimes been associated with pasturing red clover. The initial results are indicating that the red clover lambs are growing faster and there doesn’t appear to be any negative impact on reproductive performance.

This project is a two year project with ongoing data collection and analysis. More information will be available in the coming months and this will be shared with producers as it is available.

These presentations were followed by an excellent beef and lamb on a bun lunch supplied by the Cumberland County 4H.

Following lunch John Duynisveld of AAFC reviewed the recent and ongoing research at Nappan Experimental Farm; including the current grazing project that is being conducted with funding from the CCA. This project is looking at grazing different forages mixtures to identify the most productive mixtures for pastures in the region. This is part of a larger project that is also being conducted in Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba.

Following the presentation the groups toured the farm looking at the sheep and the beef grazing projects and the plots that are being used for the various trail.

The ongoing projects at Nappan are good examples of research that has a practical application for producers that could improve their farm’s profitability. For more information contact Jonathan Wort Livestock Specialist at AgraPoint phone 902 896 0277 or email j.wort@agrapoint.ca

---

**The Modern Shepherd 2011-12 Information**

The Modern Shepherd Program is designed to assist new and existing sheep producers improve practices and increase sheep production in Atlantic Canada.

Four modules will be delivered to cover all aspects of the sheep industry - Module 1: Husbandry, Handling and Pastures, Module 2: Nutrition, and Breeding, Module 3: Health, Module 4: Lambing and Marketing.

For more information please visit www.nsac.ca/cde
The Purebred Sheep Producers of Nova Scotia held their annual sheep sale on Labour Day weekend at the AgriDome in Bible Hill Nova Scotia. The sale featured 202 animals grossing $54,110, an average of $268. The sale average was slightly lower than 2010 but was in line with 2009 and 2008.

### 2011 Atlantic Sheep Sale Results
From: Rosemary Wort

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total Sales</th>
<th>Avg. Price</th>
<th>High Price</th>
<th>Consignor</th>
<th>Breed</th>
<th>Buyer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rams</td>
<td>Lambs</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>$3,260</td>
<td>$465</td>
<td>$910</td>
<td>Paul McNutt</td>
<td>Suffolk</td>
<td>Arthur Jones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yearlings</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>$6,680</td>
<td>$514</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
<td>Bill McNeil</td>
<td>Suffolk</td>
<td>Julia Dulenty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mature</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>$1,910</td>
<td>$478</td>
<td>$710</td>
<td>Donna Shaw</td>
<td>Dorset</td>
<td>Kintail Farms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>$11,850</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ewes</td>
<td>Lambs</td>
<td>14 (reg)</td>
<td>$3,255</td>
<td>$233</td>
<td>$425</td>
<td>Troy Hiltz</td>
<td>Suffolk</td>
<td>Carey Ross</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yearlings</td>
<td>46 (x/g)</td>
<td>$8,680</td>
<td>$189</td>
<td>$310</td>
<td>Doug King</td>
<td>II de France Grade</td>
<td>Tony Mullen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mature</td>
<td>53 (x/g)</td>
<td>$12,285</td>
<td>#232</td>
<td>$410</td>
<td>Ralph Downey</td>
<td>Romanox/ Friesian</td>
<td>Bryan Cogger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>178</td>
<td>$42,260</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Located on the Canadian sheep Federation website ([www.cansheep.ca](http://www.cansheep.ca)) the Virtual Tool Box is a virtually based ‘tool box’ to assist new entrants to the Canadian sheep industry. It’s full of information producers need to know in relation to running a business and managing production.

Each SPANS Newsletter will highlight one of the tools available in the box. The Flock Health section of the Virtual Tool Box will help you answer the following questions:

1. Why is it important to have a valid veterinary-client relationship?
2. What management practices should I employ to ensure a healthy flock?
3. How do I take a sheep’s temperature?
4. What is the normal respiration rate for sheep?
5. What is the normal heart rate for sheep?
6. How can I reduce environmental stresses on animal health?
7. Can transportation impact sheep health?
8. How should I manage on-farm mortalities?
9. Why should I regularly vaccinate sheep?
10. What are the most common vaccines for sheep?
11. What are some of the common disorders that affect sheep?
12. How do I administer antibiotics to sheep?
13. How do I give a sheep an injection?
14. How do I insert a stomach tube?