



NEWS RELEASE

Texas Animal Health Commission

"Serving Texas Animal Agriculture Since 1893"

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Scrapie Confirmed in a Hartley County Sheep

AUSTIN – Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) officials have confirmed scrapie in a Hartley County ewe. The ewe was tested by TAHC after the owner reported signs of weight loss and lack of coordination to their local veterinarian. The premises was quarantined and a flock plan for monitoring is being developed by the TAHC and USDA.

"The TAHC is working closely with the flock owner, sharing all of the options for disease eradication," said Dr. David Finch, TAHC Region 1 Director. "We are thankful the producer was proactive in identifying a problem and seeking veterinary help immediately."

Texas leads the nation in sheep and goat production. Since 2008, there have been no confirmed cases of scrapie in Texas. The last big spike in Texas scrapie cases was in 2006 when nine infected herds were identified and the last herd was released from restrictions in 2013.

According to USDA regulations, Texas must conduct adequate scrapie surveillance by collecting a minimum of 598 sheep samples annually. Since USDA slaughter surveillance started in FY 2003, the percent of cull sheep found positive for scrapie at slaughter (once adjusted for face color) has decreased 90 percent.

Scrapie is the oldest known transmissible spongiform encephalopathies, and under natural conditions only sheep and goats are known to be affected by scrapie. It is a fatal disease that affects the central nervous system of sheep and goats. It is not completely understood how scrapie is passed from one animal to the next and apparently healthy sheep infected with scrapie can spread the disease. Sheep and goats are typically infected as young lambs or kids, though adult sheep and goats can become infected.

The most effective method of scrapie prevention is to maintain a closed flock. Raising replacement ewes, purchasing genetically resistant rams and ewes, or buying from a certified-free scrapie flock are other options to reduce the risk of scrapie. At this time the resistant genetic markers in goats have not been identified, therefore it is important to maintain your sheep and goat herds separately.

The incubation period for Scrapie is typically two to five years. Producers should record individual identification numbers and the seller's premise identification number on purchase and sales records. These records must be maintained for a minimum of five years.

Producers should notify the Texas Animal Health Commission (800-550-8242) or the USDA-Austin Office (512-383-2400) if they have an adult sheep or goat with neurologic signs such as incoordination, behavioral changes, or intense itching with wool loss. Producers may order scrapie identification tags by calling 866-873-2824.

For more information, please visit our website at:

http://www.tahc.texas.gov/animal_health/scrapie/scrapie.html.

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