

News Release

Alberta Lamb Producer's expansion campaign results in bigger flocks and increased industry investment

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AIRDRIE, Alta. [March 1](#), 2011 – Alberta's lamb industry is leading the way in Canada's lamb sector growth. This is partly in response to a province-wide expansion campaign that saw a 2.3% growth in overall Alberta flock size in 2010, according to a recent report from Statistics Canada. The campaign was launched as a call to action to increase lamb production in Alberta in order to meet increasing consumer demand.

“When we launched the campaign a little more than a year ago we were impressed with the response from the media and both new and existing producers,” says Margaret Cook, executive director of Alberta Lamb Producers (ALP). “The industry is growing and modernizing, and we're seeing proof of that as more new producers come on-stream, and others increase their flock size to improve profitability.”

As well in 2010, 53 cooperators in the province participated in the third year of the Alberta Lamb Traceability pilot project. Initial feedback has indicated clear benefits for producers from the use of radio frequency (RFID) systems. Those who choose not to invest in the full electronic technology available will still benefit from the research and data the study has produced. The first research findings and recommendations are now available in the February 2011 ALP newsletter (www.ablamb.ca) and on the SheepCentral website (www.sheepcentral.ca).

ALP has worked in close consultation with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) to create an incentive program to help Alberta's producers transition to RFID tags. ARD recently announced the Sheep Electronic Identification Incentive Program to encourage producers to adopt RFID technology. This program provides \$900,000 in funding to producers over a two-year period.

“Our campaign to increase awareness about the production and management efficiencies available from RFID systems has demonstrated to various sized producers the benefits of enhanced traceability requirements,” says Cook. “The RFID systems provide information that allows lamb producers to run their businesses better than before, and the incentive funding will help with the mandatory transition.”

Alberta's lamb industry saw growth in breeding flocks partly due to gains in ewe lamb retention indicating expansion among existing producers. In addition, there was an increase in new

producers entering the industry and a rise in interest from other livestock producers who plan to add or switch to lamb production on their farms.

While other sectors continue to struggle with financial losses, lamb producers are making money. Cook says the lamb industry is working together across the country to identify areas of improvement and looking ahead to future success and Alberta is being seen as a leader in this progress.

“Many of our members are embracing technology and leading-edge production practices so that they can rise to the challenge of meeting the ever increasing market demand for quality, local lamb products,” says Cook. “Increasing supply is good for the industry as a whole as we can become a viable alternative to replace foreign competing product. Alberta producers are taking a leadership position in support of the growth of our sector so that lamb producers can enjoy opportunities for growth and profitability.”

Alberta Lamb Producers is a producer directed and funded organization that represents the interests of Alberta sheep and wool producers to help build a sustainable, thriving sheep industry for all stakeholders. ALP provides every member with the opportunity to have a positive influence on the industry as a whole. ALP is responsible for a variety of programs all aimed at supporting producers and ensuring the continued growth and profitability of the industry.