

What is scrapie and why is surveillance important?

Scrapie is a very rare, devastating disease that affects the central nervous system of goats and sheep. It is in the same class of diseases as bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in cattle and chronic wasting disease (CWD) in elk and deer. Like these diseases, once an animal is infected with scrapie, it is always fatal.

Sheep and goats can get scrapie by either coming into direct contact with the saliva, urine, feces, blood or birthing fluids of an infected animal, or indirectly by ingesting anything from, living in or spending time in a contaminated environment like a barn or pasture. Males are just as susceptible to becoming infected with scrapie as females.

Scrapie develops slowly. A sheep or goat can be infected for a long time and be spreading the disease without appearing ill. Clinical signs are typically seen between 2 and 5 years of age, but some animals can be much older. Once an animal finally does appear ill, it will typically die within months. In Canada, some scrapie-infected sheep and goats present as thin, or weak and wasting despite having a good appetite, while others are simply “poor doers”. Other signs may include trembling, excitability, lack of coordination, itchiness and sudden death. There is currently no treatment, vaccine or way to test an individual live sheep or goat for this disease, so surveillance testing of animals that die, are slaughtered or are euthanized is critical to ultimately eliminating scrapie from Canada.

What is the National Scrapie Eradication Program (NSEP)?

Scrapie eradication in Canada is a collaborative effort between producers, industry, veterinarians, laboratories and governments. The NSEP is made up of three different internationally recognized, science-based programs:

1. **On-farm disease response** – In the event of a positive case.
2. **Scrapie surveillance system** – Any producer can participate; no enrollment is required. The system involves free testing of deceased mature sheep or goats (over 12 months of age). It aims for a sufficient number of sheep and goat samples per province, and samples come from abattoirs, farms, stockyards, laboratories, etc.
3. **Scrapie Flock Certification Program (SFCP)** – A voluntary risk management program where enrolled producers agree to follow specific standards over a number of years to achieve negligible risk status for scrapie for their own herd’s well-being and to facilitate trade within Canada and/or for export.

What do I need to know about having my sheep sampled?

The mature small ruminants that die on-farm are the most valuable animals we can sample for scrapie; therefore, if you have a mature sheep that is found dead, or that is euthanized or slaughtered on-farm, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) can test for scrapie at no cost to you. Also, any small ruminants with clinical signs of scrapie must be reported to the CFIA right away. If scrapie is suspected, your animal may be euthanized (with compensation) and tested for scrapie.

In the rare event that your animal tests positive, you can learn more about CFIA’s disease response by reading the following document on the CFIA’s website: [Understand what to expect if scrapie has been detected on your farm.](#)

How do I contact my local CFIA District Office to learn more about scrapie or have my sheep tested?

Grand Prairie 780-831-0335	grandeprairieanimalhealth.acia@inspection.gc.ca
Red Deer 403-340-4204	ABNRedDeerAH-SARedDeerABN.acia@inspection.gc.ca
Lethbridge 403-382-3121	lethbridgeanimalhealth-santedesanimaux.acia@inspection.gc.ca
Edmonton 780-395-6700	ABN_AH-SA_Edmonton@inspection.gc.ca
Calgary 587-230-2468	animalhealthcalgary-sacalgary@inspection.gc.ca