



**O.P.P.**

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**Texel Leadership Commended  
OPP Tests Now Required for National Show/Sale**

*Editor's note: Over the years, several have wished out loud that breed associations would take a more active role in promoting high health status among member flocks. The Texel Sheep Breeders Society did just that in 2003, and will do so again in 2004, with an OPP test requirement for all entries in the TSBS annual show/sale. All test results, both positive and negative, must be posted prior to the sale. The following letter was sent to the TSBS board and is used here with their permission. Since much of what Gene Schriefer wrote could apply to any breed, this should be an inspiration to others who serve in leadership roles with their respective breed organizations.*

TO THE TEXEL SHEEP BREEDERS SOCIETY BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

I recently learned that the Texel Sheep Breeders Society board is requiring an OPP test for their show and sales. I'm surprised and quite pleased to hear a breed association take this bold and progressive step in helping to control and eliminate the spread of this slow insidious disease. I vigorously support this decision and hope your entire membership also supports this. Stand firm on your OPP test requirement and encourage Texel owners to do whole flock testing at least to assess the prevalence of OPP in their flocks. You cannot manage what you don't measure.

Our flock was well underway in testing and eliminating OPP when I purchased my first Texels 9 years ago, and even though I checked the reputation of the breeder with several people and asked the breeder specifically about OPP, I still wound up purchasing infected ewes. *Anyone* with Texel stock originating or descending from USDA-MARC needs to be testing, if they want to control the spread and eliminate this disease.

Texels are still our predominant breed and used as both crossbred dams and as terminal sires. With OPP eliminated from most of the flock, ewe productivity in terms of lambs, weaning weights and ewe longevity has improved, this improves the bottom line. Most of our breeding has been brought in via A.I. but we began a search for rams three years ago. Unfortunately, the U.S. Texel breeders I contacted were not testing for OPP, didn't have individual flock health programs in place, nor were they utilizing ultrasound for carcass traits at the flock level. This forced me to look at other breeds and also purchase stock from Canada, where health issues were more of a priority for purebred producers supplying seedstock to the commercial industry.

Being elected to your leadership position means not only dealing with the present but also establishing a vision and goal for the future, which may not be initially easy nor popular. Directly attending to health issues, especially when they appear to be prevalent within a breed, indicates a degree of serious commitment about the production of quality, healthy animals. Taking this first step and requiring testing to show/sell puts the Texel association ahead of other breeds not taking this measure. As your members clean up OPP from their flocks, I would certainly be interested and reconsider purchasing stock from U.S. producers.

Thank you,

Gene Schriefer  
Dodgeville, Wisconsin  
400 commercial ewes

**OPP Society Names  
Honorary Lifetime Members**

<b>Dr. Randall C. Cutlip</b>	<b>Joan E. Mueller</b>
<b>Stefania Dignum</b>	<b>Elizabeth K. Reedy</b>
<b>Mary Jarvis</b>	<b>James Schultz</b>
<b>Dr. Robert Leder</b>	<b>Dr. Cynthia B. Wolf</b>
<b>Brian Magee</b>	<i>Please turn to page 3.</i>

For more information on Texels and the Texel Sheep Breeders Society see: [www.usatexels.org](http://www.usatexels.org) or contact breed Secretary/Treasurer, Julie Korkow, at 406-436-2486 or: [info@usatexels.org](mailto:info@usatexels.org)

