

NAHMS National Sheep Study to Provide Needed Information

The National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) is planning a study to fill information gaps related to the health of the United States sheep population.

NAHMS, a nonregulatory program sponsored by the USDA, has conducted national studies of several U.S. animal populations. In 1996, NAHMS conducted a study to provide the U.S. sheep industry with its first estimates of national herd management and health. In 1996, questionnaires were mailed to producers. The Sheep 2001 study will be different in that data collectors will visit participating producers to collect data relating to health and productivity as well as biologic specimens. The Sheep 2001 study will update some of the Sheep '96 information and collect additional information addressing the industries' current health priorities.

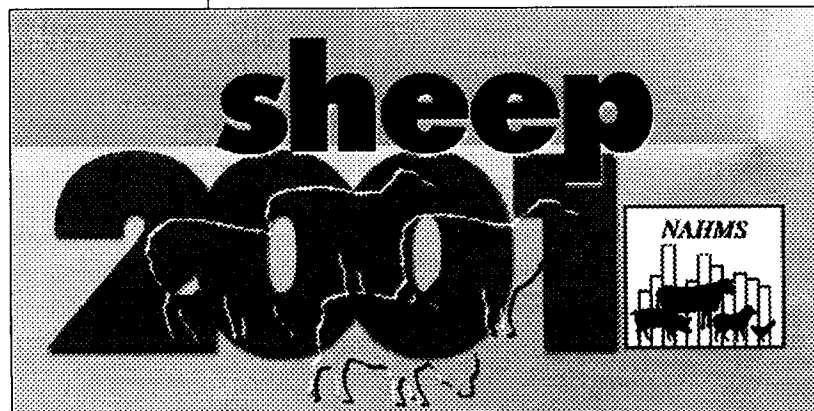
What Information Is Needed?

Information priorities have been identified by conducting focus groups with industry members and an industry-wide survey of sheep producers via interactive telephone and World Wide Web surveys. NAHMS staff has worked closely with the American Sheep Industry Association and university specialists to collect input and prioritize information gaps.

Diseases and health problems, such as Johne's disease, intestinal parasites, and scrapie topped the list of industry interests. Other topics affecting sheep health, such as nutrition and management practices related to footrot were also priorities that NAHMS will address through this study.

Study Objectives

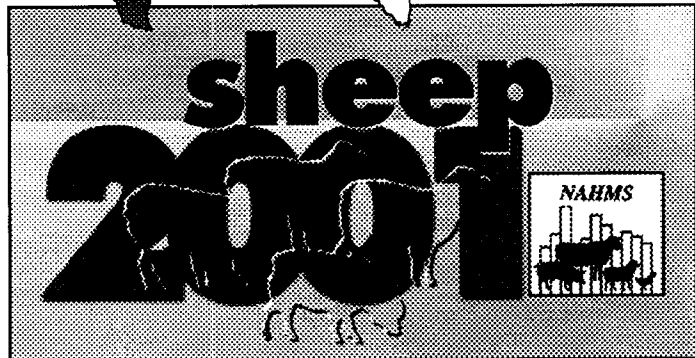
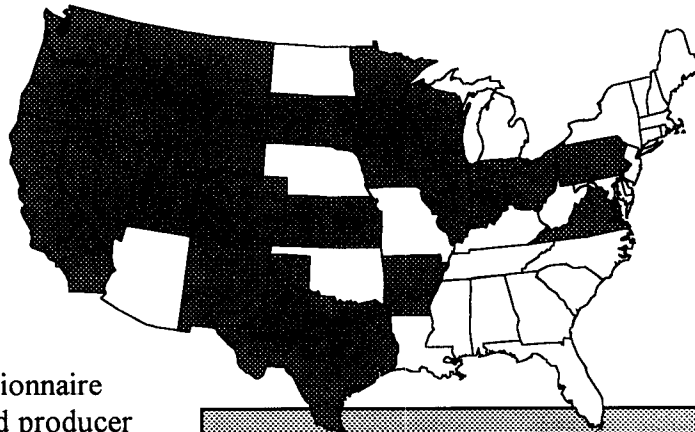
- Estimate the prevalence of **specific sheep diseases and conditions**, such as:
 - ◆ Johne's disease
 - ◆ Intestinal parasites
 - ◆ Abortions
 - ◆ Ovine progressive pneumonia (OPP)
- Describe potential **risk factors believed to be associated with scrapie**.
- Describe **management practices** employed by U.S. sheep producers **affecting illness and death**.
- Describe **nutritional practices and micro-nutrient intake levels** which impact sheep health.



The Sheep 2001 study will be conducted in 22 states.¹

In the fall of 2000, the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) will identify sheep operations with herds that best represent the U.S. sheep population in those states. In January 2001, NASS enumerators will contact those producers and collect the first baseline questionnaire data on management practices and producer opinion of herd health and ask them if they are interested in participating further in the study. For those who agree to participate, State and Federal Veterinary Medical Officers will administer an additional questionnaire and collect biological samples, such as blood for serological testing, in this second phase of data collection.

States Participating in the Sheep 2001 Study



Since the program relies on the voluntary participation of producers, *confidentiality is a top priority*. Only national and, where possible, regional results are released. Each participant will receive the national reports and, where feasible, individual results of biological testing. The NASS enumerator will discuss producer benefits in greater detail when they contact eligible producers.

By analyzing both questionnaire and test data, NAHMS hopes to provide useful information to help U.S. sheep producers, researchers, and others better understand disease issues in the sheep industry. Ultimately, broad producer participation in the Sheep 2001 study will increase both individual study benefits and benefits to the industry as a whole.

In addition to the Sheep '96 study, NAHMS has conducted national studies of other animal populations, such as beef cow-calf, cattle on feed, dairy cattle, swine, catfish, equine, and table egg layers.

For more information, please contact NAHMS or review results of NAHMS studies on the World Wide Web at:

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¹Arkansas, California, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.