



OntarioSheep FARMERS Annual Report 2024-25

Towards a Stronger Future



A Message from the Chair & Executive Director

It was a great year to be in the sheep industry in 2024-2025. Our theme for the year was “Unlocking Profit Potential” which led the board as we celebrated an increased investment in the Risk Management Program, launched a new cohort of the Master Shepherd’s course, offered a new opportunity for industry engagement through our summer Field Day and supported the transition of a growing processor to federal inspection among many other initiatives.

OSF continues to organize the work we do strategically under five pillars – Community, Prosperity, Mastery, Invest and Operations.

Under ‘Community’ OSF is proud to share the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness, Rob Flack announced a \$100 million increase to the Risk Management Program in early 2025 that will contribute directly to our Ontario sheep farmers’ bottom lines. This was one of OSF’s advocacy goals for many years and it was very rewarding to achieve this investment in our industry. Thank you to the province for recognizing the importance of agriculture to the economic wellbeing of Ontario. The money will be added to the program over three program years starting with \$30 million in the 2025 crop year then an additional \$30 million in 2026 and \$40 million in 2027.

Congratulations and acknowledgement for their hard work, goes to our partners in the

Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition for this milestone announcement - Grain Farmers of Ontario, Beef Farmers of Ontario, Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association, Ontario Pork and Veal Farmers of Ontario.

This year there were provincial and federal elections and OSF produced two priority documents for the sheep industry that can be viewed on our website under Advocacy.

Provincial priorities: 1) improvements to the Ontario Wildlife Damage Compensation Program, 2) increasing veterinary access, 3) updating the Provincial Animal Welfare Services regulations to clarify the role of livestock guardian dogs, 4) ensuring all future interprovincial trade upholds Ontario’s food safety standards, and 5) greater provincial agricultural research investments.

Federal priorities: 1) greater access to veterinary tools and veterinary care, 2) ensuring all future interprovincial trade upholds Ontario’s food safety standards, 3) a permanent increase to the interest-free portion of the Advanced Payment Program to \$350,000, 4) greater federal agricultural research investments, and 5) an improvement to the federal business risk management suite of programs for bankability and predictability.

Also under Community, after two years of ongoing preparation and hearings, the Tribunal

concluded in fall 2024. The judge’s decision required OSF to update our regulations to incorporate the wording written into the judgement. This wording was added to the OSF regulations in November 2024 and shared with members and industry.

With the conclusion of the Tribunal, the board focused on improving national unity. The board executive has met with colleagues across Canada and has initiated meetings with Canadian Sheep Federation (CSF) to find opportunities for cooperation between our organizations. This fall, a very successful pregnancy ultrasound course was offered jointly by OSF and CSF in what we hope will be the first of many opportunities for collaboration.

Under ‘Prosperity’, the board engaged our processors this year on two fronts – condemnations and the transition to federal inspection. Many of our processors have been concerned with increasing condemnation rates in provincial plants for all commodities. Their raised concerns prompted OSF to meet with other livestock commodity groups, general farm organizations and OMAFA on the topic. Discussions are ongoing and OMAFA has committed to working with the industry to address the issues that are leading to these higher condemnation rates. Processors are looking to federal inspection as a new opportunity and OSF has been working with Parkhill Meats to better understand

the transition process and explore opportunities for grading lamb and price discovery for producers wanting to sell directly to a processor to gain valuable carcass feedback.

Also under our prosperity pillar, OSF repeated our social media-based BBQ promotion this year, targeting two new Longo's stores and only spending money on the Meta platform to increase the number of views for the same dollar investment as 2024. We significantly increased our impressions from 1.5 million to 2.7 million over the same period over the August long weekend.

Under 'Mastery', a new cohort of the Master Shepherds' course started in January of 2025. There are 18 participants in the full course from across Canada and parts of the US and they completed the first five modules of the course in this fiscal year.

In skill development, OSF ran five fecal egg count courses this spring and summer and three training sessions for Animal Welfare Services this summer. Training for animal welfare inspectors develops knowledgeable investigators and ensures a practical understanding of the Code of Practice so farmers are treated fairly when there are welfare complaints.

Additionally, OSF offered a seminar for our agricultural lenders this year under our Mastery pillar. Participants heard presentations and discussed the following topics: an overview of Ontario's lamb industry, OSF's strategic plan, succession planning, lamb marketing strategies, cost of production and a market outlook.

Under our Invest pillar, this year for the first time, OSF held a Field Day on July 24th in Orono in partnership with the Large Flock Operators and OMAFA. The day was well attended with over 300 people on site for the live demonstrations and to visit the 41 exhibitors. highlights included a speed fencing demonstration, new product showcases and multiple handling demonstrations. This was another great opportunity to engage our members, and we appreciate everyone who joined us in Orono and made the day a success.

OSF has also invested in two research projects – the Ontario Living Labs and a study of gastrointestinal nematodes (GINs) in sheep. The Living Labs project aims to determine the impact of grazing cover crops on subsequent corn crop yield and soil health. The GIN research is intended to fully understand the development of the carbohydrate larval antigen (CarLA) antibody in naïve lambs through a simulated grazing season, winter, and spring. To date, on commercial farms researchers have not been able to monitor lambs as often as required to fully understand how the response develops, wanes over winter, and then returns in spring.

Under the Operations pillar, to support the ongoing success of

our organization, OSF's board of directors held two annual strategic planning and priority setting meetings. The first was in December following the AGM and Convention and the second was in the summer, on location in districts 9 and 10 and included a social with local district members.

At this year's annual strategic planning session, the board began work on an updated strategic plan for OSF as the current 5-year plan will end in 2026. The board set a goal to fulfill 50% of the domestic market demand for lamb by 2040 and will begin the work to achieve this goal in the next fiscal year.

Thank you to the many organizational committee members, including the district committees, operational committees, district chairs' committee and the stakeholder committee, for guiding the board throughout the year and providing information from the grassroots and the broader agricultural sector to support the work of our organization.

Thank you to the board and staff of Ontario Sheep Farmers for your hard work this year. It has been a great year at Ontario Sheep Farmers, and we have collectively accomplished a lot as an industry.



Art Alblas
OSF Chair



Erin Morgan
Executive Director

Industry Overview



Ontario Sheep Farmers celebrates 40 years in 2025!

Our producer-led organization has represented Ontario's sheep farmers and advanced the sheep, lamb, and wool industries in Ontario since 1985.

OSF is the unified voice for the province's sheep farmers, advocating for their interests and promoting industry growth.

Our Vision

is to enable Ontario sheep producers to be the suppliers of premium lamb and sheep products.

Our Mission

is to educate, innovate, and strategically advocate on behalf of our membership, while maintaining high standards of professionalism and leadership.

OSF enhances marketing efforts through producer education, promotional campaigns, and raising consumer awareness. Originally established in the 1970s as the Ontario Sheep Association, OSF continues to evolve to meet farmers' needs and strengthen the sector.

Economic Impact

3,000

sheep farmers

285,000

lambs marketed

\$100 million

farm cash receipts

3,600

jobs supported

\$200 million

contributed to Canada's GDP

Source: Statistics Canada



2024-2025 Board of Directors



Art Alblas
OSF Chair



Ken Lamb
1st Vice Chair



Karen Davis
2nd Vice Chair



Jay Lennox
Director, District 2



Keith Todd
Director, District 3



Rafael Lara
Director, District 4



Ryan Schill
Director, District 5



Grant Cowan
Director, District 6



Wesley Godden
Director, District 9



Devon Wensink
Director, District 10



Jenna Wight
Director, District 11

Staff

Erin Morgan
Executive Director

Jennifer Johanson
Office Manager

Mishka Morgan
Accountant

Anita O'Brien
On-Farm Programs Lead

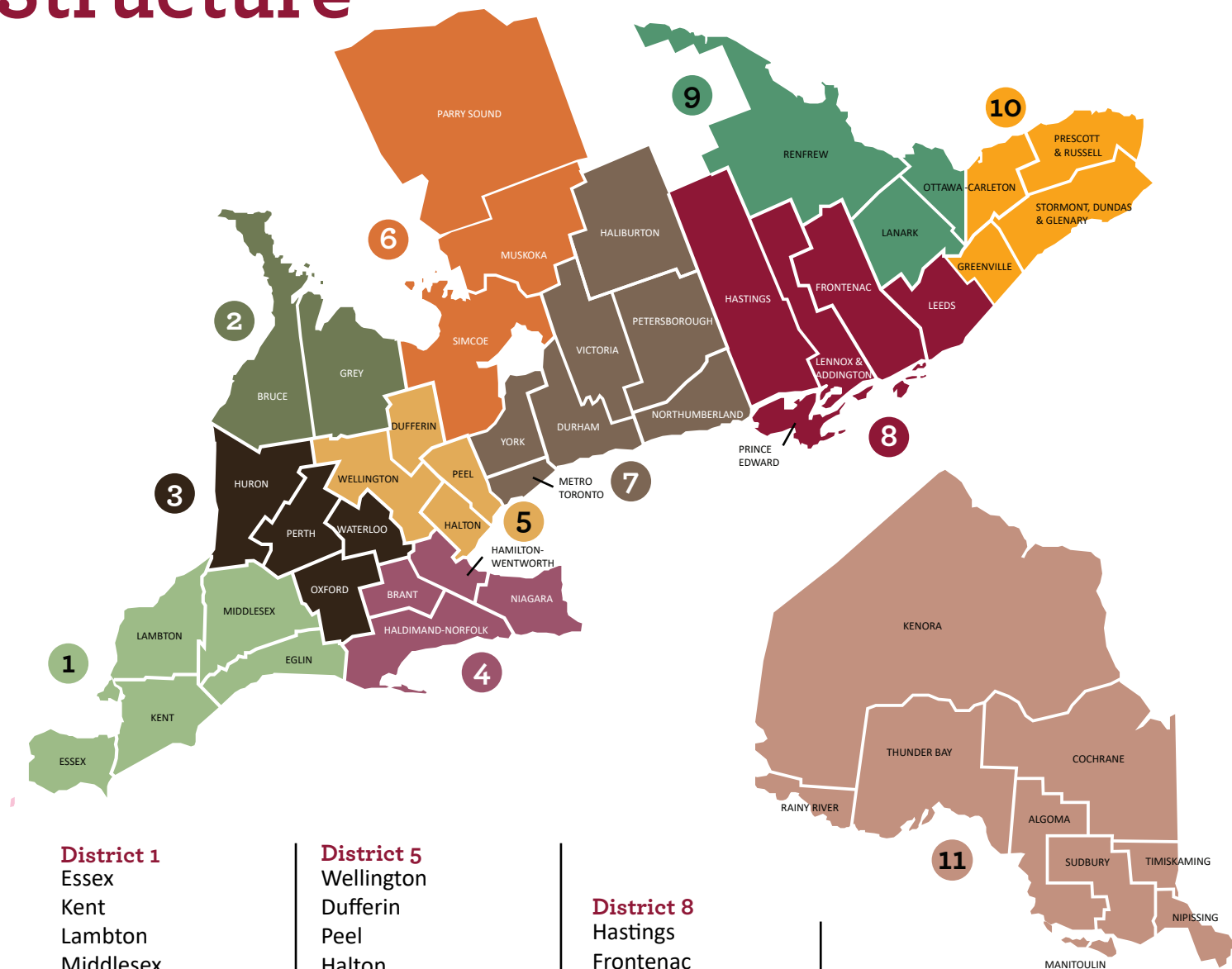
Walker Ball
Industry Relations Specialist

Michael Richards
Sponsorship - Advertising Coordinator

Jan Smith
Administrative Assistant

Heather Johnson
Member Relations Coordinator

Governance Structure



District 1

Essex
Kent
Lambton
Middlesex
Elgin

District 2

Bruce
Grey

District 3

Huron
Perth
Oxford
Waterloo

District 4

Haldimand-Norfolk
Hamilton-Wentworth
Brant
Niagara

District 5

Wellington
Dufferin
Peel
Halton

District 6

Simcoe
Muskoka
Parry Sound

District 7

Metro Toronto
York
Durham
Peterborough
Victoria
Northumberland
Haliburton

District 8

Hastings
Frontenac
Lennox & Addington
Leeds

District 9

Renfrew
Lanark
Ottawa-Carlton

District 10

Ottawa-Carlton
Stormont, Dundas & Glenora
Prescott & Russell
Greenville

District 11

Kenora
Rainy River
Thunder Bay
Cochran
Algoma
Sudbury
Timiskaming
Sudbury
Nipissing

Committees & Advisory Groups

Thank you to the volunteers and board members who have participated in committee meetings and the work of the committees this year!

Ontario Sheep Farmers offers many opportunities for producers to get involved and actively contribute to strengthening the sheep industry, through:

- Participating on district committees
- Volunteering as district chair and participating on the District Chairs' Committee to provide input into the Board's priorities and strategies
- Input into the Board's priorities and strategies
- Joining Ontario Sheep Farmers' committees or advisory groups dedicated to specific issues that impact the industry
- Engaging in advocacy efforts to support the industry's growth and competitiveness
- Supporting public engagement opportunities at fairs and consumer shows in your community
- Becoming an Ontario Sheep Farmers Board member to govern the organization and set industry priorities

Board Standing Committees

Standing committees bring together the practical knowledge of producers and the technical expertise from staff and industry to generate innovative ideas. The Board establishes these committees to develop solutions to a specific issue.

Audit & Finance

Ryan Schill (Chair)
Wesley Godden
Ken Lamb
Dennis Fischer
Andrew Pearson
Art Alblas (Ex-officio)

Governance

Wesley Godden (Chair)
Devon Wensink
Karen Davis
Jay Lennox
Keith Todd
Art Alblas (Ex-officio)

Research & Genetic

Grant Cowan
Wesley Godden
Rafael Lara
Keith Todd
Jenna Wight
Kim Schneider
Quintin McEwan
Mark Ferguson

Wool

Devon Wensink
Grant Cowan
Ken Lamb
Romy Schill
Lindsey Weber
Matthew Rowe
Lidiya Beida

Convention & Field Day

Wesley Godden
Karen Davis
Ken Lamb
Jenna Wight
Romy Schill
Chris Moore
Jillian Craig
Christoph Wand
Makinley Boudreault
Kelsie Armstrong
Art Alblas (Ex-officio)

Dairy

Keith Todd
Mike Thompson
Mark Martin
Willis Martin
Jeff Cressman
Andrew Pearson
Peter van der Veen
Rodney Weber

Director Recruitment

Ken Lamb
Keith Todd
Wesley Godden
Mike Swidersky
Phil Botden
Colleen Alloï

Maedi Visna

Keith Todd
Art Alblas (Ex-officio)
Paula Menzies
Rex Crawford
Davor Ojicic
Tim Pasma
Mark Martin
Kim Schneider
Lisa Sharko

Predation & Wildlife

Karen Davis
Jay Lennox
Wesley Godden
Jenna Wight
Mike Swidersky
Dennis Thompson

Vegetative Abatement

Devon Wensink
Karen Davis
Jay Lennox
Ken Lamb
Lyndsey Smith

Risk Management

Jay Lennox
Ken Lamb
Ryan Schill
Dennis Fischer
Art Alblas (Ex-officio)

Marketing

Karen Davis
Wesley Godden
Keith Todd
Ryan Schill
Rafael Lara
Bill McCutcheon
Mark Malpass

Stakeholder Relations

Western Ontario Lamb Producers' Association (WOLPA)
Ontario Lamb Producers' Caucus (OLPC)
Trillium Lamb
Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness
Large Flock Operators
Purebred Sheep Breeders of Ontario
Dairy Sheep Co-op
Ontario Sheep Farmers

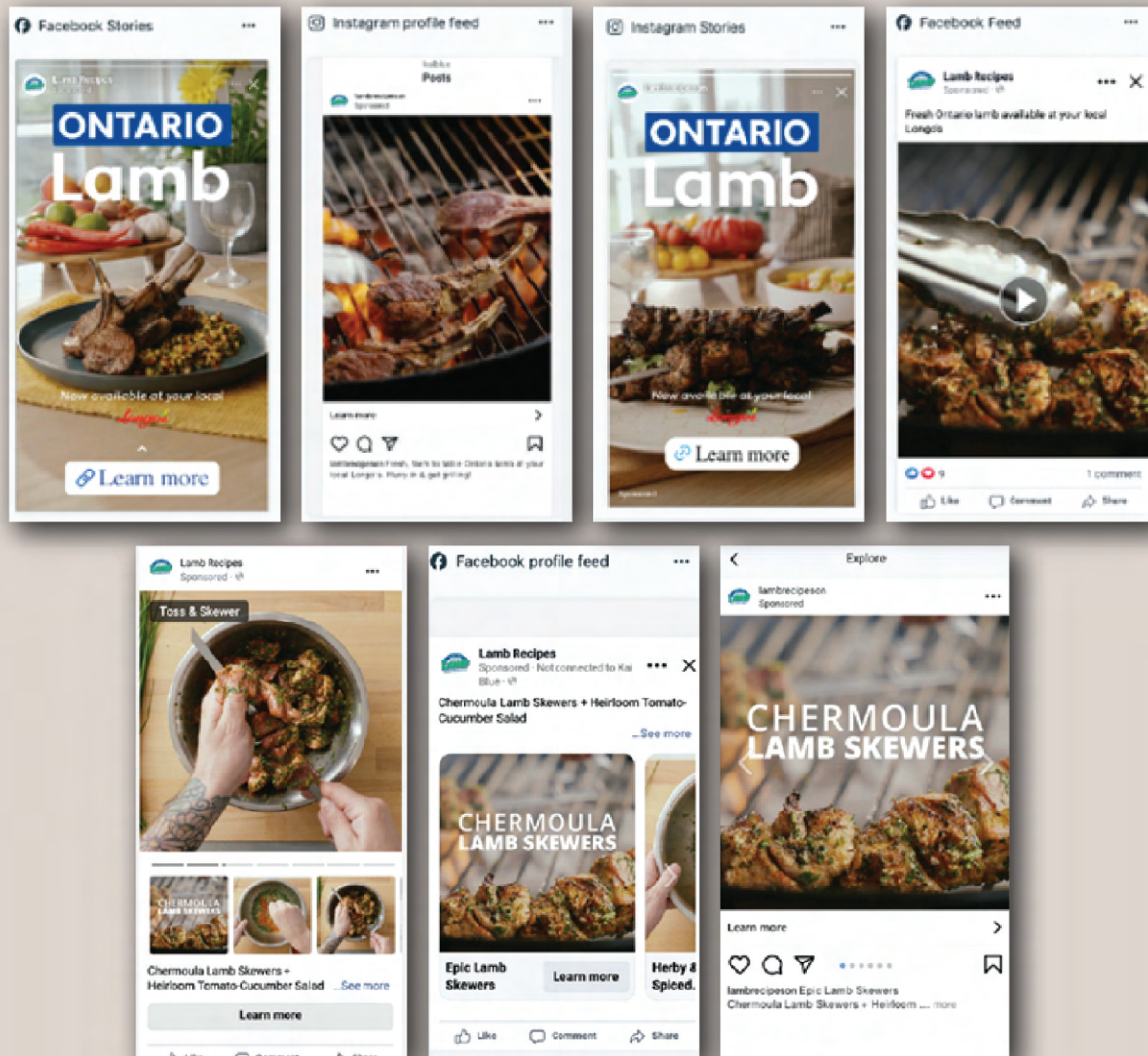
Marketing and Market Development

Prosperity Pillar

Building more dynamic market relationships with a focus on supply chain optimization.

Summer Lamb BBQ Project

In summer 2024, OSF ran a BBQ promotion pilot to test the efficacy of social media promotion. We promoted two delicious Ontario lamb recipes through social media to two small geographic regions around two Longo's stores on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. We developed beautiful videos and product shots for the campaign. The campaign was very successful last year by social media standards and increased sales at the target Longo's stores. As a result, this year, OSF ran the same campaign, focused on two new Longo's stores and only spending money on the Meta platform to increase the number of views for the same dollar investment. These ads ran in mid-summer and outperformed the same advertisements during the same weeks in 2024. The campaign resulted in 2.7 million impressions (1.5 million in 2024), 3,777 click throughs to the OSF lamb website and a cost per 1,000 impressions of \$2.18.



Industry Promotion

OSF also partnered with Farm and Food Care to participate in Breakfast on the Farm this year and their virtual farm tours. A virtual tour was filmed in 2024 at Peter and Ellie Van der Veen's farm and OSF now has a VR headset for our trade show booth for people to experience the farm through the headset at consumer shows like the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair.

At the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair, OSF sponsored the Junior Sheep Show for another year. The show has grown each year and welcomed over a hundred showmanship competitors from across the province in 2024. Additionally, OSF worked with our colleagues in the wool industry from the Fibreshed and Campaign for Wool to showcase products made by local Ontario artisans in our booth and tell the story of both lamb and wool to visitors.

Processor Engagement

OSF has also been working with processors throughout the year. One processor has been connecting with OMAFA and members of the board to discuss options for price discovery, carcass grading and direct marketing. Other processors have been concerned with condemnation rates which have prompted meetings with other livestock commodity groups, general farm organizations and OMAFA on the topic and discussions are ongoing. OMAFA has committed to working together to support the work of our organization and resolve issues.

International Market Research Study

The board completed their international market research project in 2025 and there were a number of recommendations made to the marketing committee in the final report from the project. The marketing committee has been meeting throughout the year to discuss updated strategies for 2025/26 which has led to the Policy Day topics for the OSF AGM that will gather insight and direction from members on the strategic direction of the organization.

Yield More Financing



37 sheep farmers are
program approved

\$1.48 million

in program
approved credit

60 payments
processed

\$1.3 million

borrowed



*Cumulative statistics from the start of the program



Member Engagement

This year, under member engagement, we completed a commercial breeding stock survey as previously mentioned and delivered a well-attended Field Day in July. We also attended many producer events and trade shows including Canada's Outdoor Farm Show, Western Fair Farm Show, Ottawa Valley Farm Show, Earlton Farm Show, Grey Bruce Farmers' Week, Jones Feed Mill and Midwest Co-op sheep days and the Eastern Canadian Sheep Shearing Championships at the Teeswater Fair.

Additionally, OSF hosted our annual Dairy Sheep Symposium in early spring in Floradale for producers interested or involved in the sheep dairy industry. This event continues to grow in popularity both with producers and trade show exhibitors.



Update to the 4H Sheep Club Manual

OSF has supported 4H over the past two years through the process of updating their Sheep Club materials and this spring, the new Sheep Club manual was completed and shared with 4H clubs across Ontario. Thank you to the sheep producers who volunteered to sit on the steering committee.



Field Day

This year for the first time, OSF held a Field Day on July 24th in Orono in partnership with the Large Flock Operators and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness. The day was well attended with over 300 people on site for the live demonstrations and to visit the 41 exhibitors. Highlights included a speed fencing demonstration of Rappa and Gallagher fence products and multiple handling demonstrations by Huber Ag Equipment, Prattley, Schummer Enterprise (Kevin Kidd Equipment) and Veno (Zuidervaat Agri-Import Ltd).

Communications Highlights

Flock Talk Podcast



In November of 2023 Ontario Sheep Farmers introduced the first Flock Talk podcast and since then, we have aired 75 episodes. In 2024/25, we covered many interesting topics including sheep management software, an interview with the Minister of Agriculture, an update on the new Sheep Dairy Co-operative, succession planning, animal health from many angles and lots more.

Total Listens
3,934 **2,780**
Apple Music Spotify
Total Views
2,200
YouTube

Ontario Sheep News



OSN is read by producers, processors, auction markets, industry partners, sponsors and advertisers across Ontario.

2,400
copies were distributed per edition in 2024-2025.

Wellness Journal



OSF produced a Wellness Journal this year with funding through the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership. The journal included exercises, journalling prompts, record keeping pages and a daily calendar within for members to record ideas, make plans and reflect for the purposes of sustained or improved mental health. A journal was mailed to every member of OSF.

Newsletter

The Messenger circulated to over
1,353 subscribers four times per month.
3.7% click rate (+26.9%)
47.6% open rate (+19.3%)
37 net subscriber growth (+26%)

Social Media

@OntarioSheep

facebook
361,100
users reached

Instagram
87,497
users reached

87,413 orgainc, 84 paid

12,000
impressions

@LambRecipes

facebook
2.8 million
users reached

Instagram
406,382
users reached

35,794 orgainc, 370,588 paid

142,000 impressions

YouTube
49,200
views

403,300
impressions

1,350
subscribers

YouTube
49,200
views

403,300
impressions

1,350
subscribers

Advocacy & Community Building

Community Pillar

Building more dynamic market relationships with a focus on supply chain optimization.



In January 2025, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness, Rob Flack announced a \$100 million increase to the Risk Management Program. This was OSF's top advocacy goal for many years and it was very rewarding to achieve this announcement. Thank you to the province for recognizing the importance of agriculture to the economic wellbeing of Ontario. The money will be added to the program over three program years starting with \$30 million in the 2025 crop year then an additional \$30 million in 2026 and \$40 million in 2027.

Congratulations and acknowledgement for their hard work, goes to our partners in the Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition for this milestone - Grain Farmers of Ontario, Beef Farmers of Ontario, Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association, Ontario Pork and Veal Farmers of Ontario.

This year there were provincial and federal elections and OSF summarized our priorities in documents that are available on our website under Advocacy.

Provincial Priorities

- 1** Improvements to the Ontario Wildlife Damage Compensation Program
- 2** Increasing veterinary access
- 3** Updating the Provincial Animal Welfare Services regulations to clarify the role of livestock guardian dogs
- 4** Ensuring all future interprovincial trade upholds Ontario's food safety standards
- 5** Greater provincial agricultural research investments

Over the last couple of years, there have been resolutions calling for changes to the provincial Wildlife Damage Compensation Program that covers flock losses from predation. OSF has a committee that provides guidance to the board on this program, and the committee set two goals: to achieve a higher valuation for commercial breeding stock than cull price and to improve the reporting timelines for the program, possibly through an online reporting system. OSF is working with Beef Farmers of Ontario and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture to advocate for these and other improvements to the program. There is more detail on our progress in this issue of the magazine.

Federal Priorities

- 1 Greater access to veterinary tools and veterinary care**
- 2 Ensuring all future interprovincial trade upholds Ontario's food safety standards**
- 3 A permanent increase to the interest-free portion of the Advanced Payment Program to \$350,000**
- 4 Greater federal agricultural research investments**
- 5 Improvement to the federal business risk management suite of programs for bankability and predictability**

The top federal priority raised by our members is to improve access to veterinary tools. OSF is in support of the work the Canadian Sheep Federation is doing with federal livestock colleagues and national veterinary and livestock health organizations to improve access to pharmaceuticals. There is a white paper written by the coalition of federal organizations that has been presented to the government with recommendations to improve access to the pharmaceuticals approved and available to livestock farmers in other countries. Additionally, OSF has been advocating for provincial programs to improve the number of food animal veterinarians in the province and improve access to veterinarians for sheep farmers in more remote regions of the province.

The recent announcement by the federal government to open interprovincial trade will be watched closely by OSF in the future as details are shared. The position of Ontario Sheep Farmers is that equivalency of provincial food safety standards must be considered before opening provincial trade to highly regulated products like meat.

Additionally, OSF will be supporting the transition of traceability oversight from Canadian Cattle Identification Agency to Canadian Sheep Federation. OSF will also be working with our sheep milk producers as more information is shared by OMAFA on expected changes to the Milk Act. Our organization will provide updates on these changes as they are available.

Our advocacy positions on all priorities shared in this article are on our website in greater detail and continuously updated at www.ontariosheep.org/advocacy.



Investing in the Future

Invest- Sheep Research

Research is a way to consider and prioritize the future needs of our organization.

Living Lab Ontario



OSF has invested in the Ontario Living Lab project led by Ontario Soil and Crop to accelerate the adoption of BMPs that sequester carbon, mitigate GHG emissions and support other environmental benefits through the process of co-development and testing on real farms. The project aims to determine the impact of grazing cover crops on subsequent corn crop yield and soil health.

Spring soil sampling on the 2024 cover crop sites was completed early in 2025. The results from fall 2024 comparing grazed and ungrazed sites, show little

differences overall in soil properties but some trends for more inorganic nitrogen in the grazed treatments. To determine whether this is agronomically significant, researchers did spring testing and are monitoring the corn in 2025. Researchers are also watching bulk density carefully as some sites were slightly higher in the grazed treatments.

The project is on track in terms of sampling and setting up new cover crop fields for 2025-2026. Thank you to the 7 producers (three sheep and four beef) who volunteered in 2024-2025 and will continue to participate in the project next year.

Beyond the Living Labs forums, the work was presented at the Guelph Rural symposium, the Canadian Society of Soil Science and the Canadian Society of Agronomy in 2025.



Living Labs grazing site in Harriston, ON, on October 21, 2024, following grazing with sheep.

Gastrointestinal Nematodes (GINs) in Sheep

The work on GINs continues with a project led by Dr. Emma Borkowski titled, Investigating kinetics and biology of mucosal immunity to gastrointestinal nematodes in sheep, funded by OMAFRA, Ontario Sheep Farmers, NSERC Discovery and Livestock Research and Innovation Corporation (LRIC).

This study, that began in 2024 and will conclude in 2027, is intended to fully understand the development of the carbohydrate larval antigen (CarLA) antibody in naïve lambs through a simulated grazing season, winter, and spring. To date, on commercial farms researchers have not been able to monitor lambs as often as required to fully understand how the response develops, wanes over winter, and then returns in spring. Using the research animals at the Ponsonby Sheep Research Station allows them to track antibody levels and health parameters weekly while administering controlled trickle (low-level) nematode challenge so that variation in exposure does not affect the immune response they are measuring. Year 1 (2024) involved isolating local strains of *H. contortus*, *T. circumcincta*, and *T. colubriformis* for use in the challenge trials.

In year 2, the researchers are comparing groups of older naïve lambs ~5 months old at first exposure (representing fall-born lambs on accelerated programs) with newly weaned ~2-month-old lambs (representing spring-born lambs) to see if age affects the response.

As of fall 2025, the researchers are in the middle of their first challenge trial. They have successfully isolated and propagated field strains of *Haemonchus contortus*,

Trichostrongylus colubriformis, and *Teladorsagia circumcincta*, and are half way through the first 52-week challenge trial comparing newly weaned lambs and 6-month-old lambs.

In year 3 (2026), researchers will compare ram, wether, and ewe lambs to determine how sex affects the CarLA response. These analyses will guide use of the CarLA Saliva Test[®] for genetic selection on Canadian sheep farms by giving insight into optimal timing of testing and how use of the test may need to be modified depending on management (accelerated lambing or not) and management group (rams vs ewes).

Central Progeny Test

OSF has been meeting with researchers and leaders within OMAFA and U of G about opportunities to utilize the Ponsonby Sheep research station. After last fall's Convention focused on genetic selection for profitability, the OSF Research Committee engaged Mark Ferguson to discuss opportunities to increase genetic gains in the Ontario sheep flock. A proposal for utilizing Ponsonby for a central progeny test for improving genetic resistance to parasites and cocci is underway. We hope to work with Dr. Angela Canovas to increase genetic testing on Ontario sheep farms and at the Ponsonby Research Station through a research project that was submitted for funding this fall. OSF also plans to survey members and Ontario processors to set future genetic improvement priorities.

Education

Mastery Pillar

Building a more effective business support system with a focus on the professional development for sheep farming.

Fecal Egg Count Workshops

In summer 2025, 48 participants including producers and veterinarians met at five locations across the province to participate in OSF's Fecal Egg Counting workshops with the goal of acquiring the ability to identify and count gastrointestinal nematode (GIN) parasite eggs in a fecal sample.

Classes were taught by parasitologists, veterinarians and University of Guelph post-grad students. Each class began with a brief overview of the life cycle of GIN parasites and then covered anthelmintic resistance and the importance of adopting additional management tools such as FEC evaluation.

With support from the workshop leaders and OSF staff, participants used samples from their own farms to prepare fecal float slides to analyze fecal samples using microscopes and learned the critical skill of identifying which items were GINs.

Using fecal egg counting to help assess parasite loads in a sheep flock is one way to decrease reliance on anthelmintics and change the way in which these drugs are used on farms. The FEC skill allows producers to determine whether GIN and or coccidiosis oocytes are present and to what extent they are impacting their animals.

Master Shepherd's Course

A new cohort of the Master Shepherds' course started in January of 2025. There are 18 participants in the full course including producers from Ontario, BC, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, New York, and New Hampshire. Participants completed the first five modules of the course in this fiscal year including their in-person farm tours and business planning workshop.

The course is also offered to producers wanting to take individual modules online and so far this year, 12 producers have taken a selection of modules.





Tracey Werry, Mark Bearinger, Vince Stutzki, Mark Ferguson and Erin Morgan on a panel at Convention

Winter Webinars

OSF ran two winter webinars this year – an Ontario Agricultural Outlook for 2025 led by OMAFA's chief economist, Steve Duff and Strategies for GIN Control in Sheep by Dr. Emma Borkowski from the University of Guelph.

Duff highlighted the continued influence of the U.S. market on Ontario producers, making special note that our domestic demand for meat remains steady. Imports continue to dominate supply, however Ontario farmers remain well-positioned to sell to the strong Ontario market. Duff pointed to a positive price forecast and stronger returns over feed, suggesting improved margins and a bright year ahead for the province's lamb industry.

Convention

At Convention last fall, OSF welcomed a genetics expert from New Zealand and Australia, Mark Ferguson. Mark toured Ontario to better understand our production systems and shared insights for improved flock genetics with attendees.

The presentations were rated very highly by participants averaging 4.5 out of 5 for the keynote, the genetic panel and the market lamb assessment panels at the Convention.

When asked about takeaways from the day, participants noted the need to record and review data to drive decision-making, the importance of setting clear goals and objectives and the importance of body condition scoring.

Grazing Course

A grazing course has been under development over the last 18 months and is nearing completion for launch in fall 2025. The course will take those interested in offering grazing as a service through a series of modules developed by Ph D students from the University of Guelph with funding from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. At the end of the self-guided online course, participants will have developed a business plan for a grazing business including a starting budget and will have access to mentors who will provide feedback and help refine their business plan for their chosen market.

Sheep Lenders' Seminar

The Sheep Lenders' Seminar is hosted by OSF every 2nd year in partnership with Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness.

Held in-person with a virtual option on April 23rd, this year's event had 26 ag lenders and producers in attendance.

Participants heard presentations and discussed the following topics: an overview of Ontario's lamb industry, OSF's strategic plan, lamb marketing strategies, cost of production and market outlook. The producer profile presentation focused on his relationship with his lender, succession planning and a virtual farm tour.

Highlights of Farmer Events

Ontario Sheep Farmers attended multiple farmer events across all 11 Districts. Here are a few pictures from across the province.

Earlton Farm Show



Ottawa Valley Farm Show



Canada's Outdoor Farm Show



Eastern Canadian Sheep Shearing Championships



Kinsmen Super Shear Finalists. (Left to Right - Jay Lennox, Josh Bruton, Gavin Mutch, Justin McKague (teeswater kinsmen), Pauline Bolay)

Ontario Sheep Farmers sponsored the Eastern Canadian Sheep Shearing Championships in 2025. The event moved to the Teeswater Fair in 2025 and included a shearing school and a speed shearing competition. Shearing champion, Gavin Mutch from New Zealand led the courses and won the open speed shearing event. There were 29 students and 25 competitors and OSF commends the organizers for an amazing event.

Consumer Facing Events and Promotions

Ontario Sheep Farmers actively engaged with the community through various consumer-focused events in 2024-2025, such as the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair, Breakfast on the Farm and the International Plowing Match. These events provide a platform to promote Ontario lamb and educate the public about sheep farming.



Breakfast on the Farm organized by Farm and Food Care Ontario and held in Norfolk County at the Simcoe Fair Ground. Pictured Michael Richards with Senator Rob Black.



Promoting lamb and wool at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair in November 2024.



International Ploughing Match at the Lindsay Fairgrounds in October 2024.

