

## Thriving goat industry working toward traceability

Canada's goat industry is thriving and producers can't keep up with demand, thanks to growing ethnic and gourmet markets. As the industry grows, goat producers are embracing new tools such as traceability to remain competitive, increase productivity and to guard against the spread of animal health threats.

"We certainly can't supply the demand right now – we import a lot of goat at the moment. If you look at Ontario and Quebec even 10 years ago, production has doubled or even tripled," said Zoë Thorbergson, general manager of the Canadian National Goat Federation. "The larger producers – if you are looking at dairies and large meat herds – certainly use identification tags to better manage their animals."

Livestock traceability is the ability to follow an animal from one point in the supply chain to another. Canada's livestock traceability system is built on three foundational pillars – animal identification, premises identification, and animal movement recording and reporting. Goat producers are encouraged to obtain a premises identification number from their province or territory as it is an essential component of traceability, enabling rapid notification in the event of animal health emergencies.

The Canadian National Goat Federation implemented the National Goat ID voluntary program as an initial step by the goat industry in readiness towards a mandatory national traceability program for goats. Producers may purchase tags now from the distributor Ketchum to participate in the voluntary ID program. The mandatory NGIP will include identification tags and numbers, and reporting requirements. Producers are working diligently to build an identification system that will work well for everyone because the goat sector has some unique challenges not found in other livestock sectors.

"Ear types on most kinds of cattle and sheep are very similar, but goats on the other hand have a wide variety of ear type and size. The Lamanchas have little elf ears that are only an inch long," Thorbergson said. "We have to ensure that whatever program is put into place is actually feasible for each of our sectors – meat, dairy, fibre – so that they can actually implement traceability into their daily management."

Jean-Philippe Jolin operates a large dairy goat operation in Quebec and he has begun to use RFID tags for his animals.

“The traceability technology has allowed more intensive management of milk production, and has made my on-farm genealogy much easier to follow,” he said.

Thorbergson says the goat industry is looking forward to being able to move ahead with animal identification and traceability because of additional benefits for producers.

“It’s (individual animal identification) certainly efficient, particularly if you’re identifying kids when they’re born ensuring that you have the right genealogy that those kids came from that doe. Ensuring the lineage of the animals is very important, especially with milk and meat production,” said Thorbergson. “In the dairy business you want to make sure you’re keeping the daughters from your best milking does, and you want to make sure you are breeding your best animals.”

Canada’s goat industry is committed to establishing a national goat traceability program, one step at a time. For more information, please visit [www.tracecanada.ca](http://www.tracecanada.ca) or [www.cangoats.com](http://www.cangoats.com).