

MEDIA RELEASE: NEW CANADIAN GENETIC SERVICES NETWORK WILL IMPROVE GENETICS FOR CANADIAN SHEEP AND GOATS

November 21, 2023 (Ottawa, Ontario) – The potential for growth in the Canadian sheep and goat industry is significant. Domestic production only accounts for 40% of the Canadian lamb meat market and the number of goats in Canada has more than doubled in the last 30 years.

To capture existing opportunities, Canadian sheep and goat producers need access to the right genetics, and to the tools necessary to keep these genetics competitive.

“Our industry organizations saw this potential and began a collaborative project to improve sheep and goat genetics and record keeping,” says Brian Sullivan, project lead. “This led to the creation of the Canadian Genetic Services Network to formalize our partnership and set long term goals.”

The main objective of the Network is to develop strategies for the genetic improvement of sheep and goats in support of all Canadian producers including purebred and commercial ones and to represent the sheep and goat genetic improvement industry at the Canadian level.

“This new Network is a result of three years of collaborative work as an industry on a federally funded project to identify means to improve Canadian sheep and goat genetics”, says Sullivan. “The work has included the development of standards for data collection and exchange and the identification of opportunities to improve overall enrolment in genetic improvement programs.”

Areas of activity of the Network will include genetic evaluation through genomics, promotion and advice on participation in genetic improvement programs, coordination of genetics and genomics research, coordination of industry standards for capturing and recording data required for genetic services, and creation and maintenance of data exchange systems for the genetic improvement industry.

The project participants have also been planning to identify ways to make genetic improvement services more efficient and cost-effective in the long term. An action plan will be completed for this purpose early in 2024. This project is funded in part by the Government of Canada under Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada’s Canadian Agricultural Strategic Priorities Program.

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Members of the Canadian Genetic Services Network are The Canadian Sheep Breeders Association (CSBA), the Canadian Goat Society (CGS), the Canadian Meat Goat Association (CMGA) and several organizations that currently provide genetic improvement services for sheep and goats, namely the Centre for Genetic Improvement of Livestock (CGIL) at the University of Guelph, the Canadian Centre for Swine Improvement (CCSI), the Centre d'expertise en production ovine du Québec (CEPOQ), the Ontario Sheep Farmers (OSF), the Canadian Livestock Records Corporation (CLRC) and AgSights.