

Development and Assessment of Quality Milk Courses for Ontario Dairy Sheep and Dairy Goat Producers

Researchers: Paula Menzies (Department of Population Medicine, OVC); and Jocelyn Jansen, Phil Wilman, Michael Foran (Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs).

Objectives:

1. Develop milk quality courses for the dairy sheep and dairy goat industries;
2. Evaluate the milk quality courses in terms of utility and ease of use to selected members of user groups;
3. Evaluate the change in knowledge base of those producers and veterinarians that complete the courses, compared with a control group of producers and veterinarians; and
4. Evaluate changes in milk management-related practices and specific milk quality parameters of those producers that complete the courses, compared to a control group of producers.

Summary: The goat and sheep dairy industries in Ontario are strong. However, a limitation to growth is KTT support of the production of quality milk. In 2001, the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario identified unacceptable goat milk quality as requiring extension and regulatory effort to address. OMAFRA responded by hiring new personnel in the Food Inspection Branch to work with the industry. There is a need for additional support by developing training courses to help sheep and goat farmers produce quality milk. Two courses, one for each species, will address all aspects of the production of quality milk from milking procedure to milk transport, animal management to equipment management. Information from around the world will be translated into an interactive course using text, narration, photographs and video. The courses will be available both as a DVD and a paper-based workbook. They will be designed to educate and to evaluate the knowledge of the producer, and to promote a relationship with support personnel such as veterinarians, equipment dealers, processors, and OMAFRA extension and regulatory personnel. The intended outcome, which fits with OMAFRA stated priorities, will be healthier animals, producing more and higher quality milk, with improved food safety for Ontario consumers.

Time Frame: Start date—September 2010; End date—April 2013.

Funding: This project is funded by the Knowledge Translation and Transfer (KTT) competition OMAFRA – University of Guelph agreement - with expected funding from various industry sources.

Contact: Dr. Paula Menzies, pmenzies@uoguelph.ca