

Official Scrapie Genotype Testing of Sheep

Are you getting “Official” Scrapie Genotype tests? Several labs offer Scrapie genotype testing and many producers are taking advantage of the availability of this testing so they can select sheep that are resistant to Scrapie. Producers can have their veterinarians collect samples or they can collect samples from their sheep themselves and send them to these labs to find the genotype of their individual sheep.

For a Genotype Test to be Official there are several requirements: An official test is one that is recognized by USDA (sheep only):

1.) The sample must be collected by an accredited veterinarian;
2.) The sample must be submitted to the lab with an official form called a “VS 5-29”. Veterinarians can get these forms from the Veterinary Services office in Des Moines, phone 515-323-2110 or 515-284-4140



3.) The sheep being tested must have an official Scrapie tag in place when the sample is collected and the veterinarian must record the complete Scrapie tag number on the VS 5-29 form. Any other identification on the animal should also be recorded on the VS 5-29.

4.) The sample must be sent to a USDA Approved Lab. A list of approved labs can be found on the USDA Scrapie web site at the link below:

https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/lab_info_services/downloads/ApprovedLabs_genotyping.pdf

Why are official tests important? Most labs provide reliable results, and in most instances, when you want to know your sheep’s genotype for your own selection purposes, sending a sample in on your own can make sense (some of the USDA Approved Labs accept private samples from producers). Official tests are particularly important with respect to the National Scrapie Eradication Program. If you purchase a ewe or ewes and later the flock that the ewes came from is diagnosed with Scrapie, state or federal officials will trace these ewes to your flock. In this instance there is a concern that one of these ewes could have been infected and spread Scrapie to your flock. If the ewe or ewes were still in your flock they could be genotyped and if they are RR or QR we know they couldn’t spread Scrapie to your flock since they are resistant. If the ewe(s) is no longer available for testing either due to death or sale then there is no way to know if the missing ewe(s) could have spread Scrapie to your flock or not. In this case, state or federal officials would need to do additional testing in your flock to determine if Scrapie is present. If you had an official test on record for these missing ewe(s) and they were RR or QR then we can be assured that those ewe(s) didn’t spread Scrapie to your flock and it could save you from needing further testing of your flock.

Bottom Line: Official Scrapie resistance genotype testing is recommended for all purchased sheep that you intend to use for breeding.

If you have questions or need clarification, please contact Dr. Gina Stoll at 515-281-8588 or Dr. Bailey Goos at 515-350-6922.

Your state or federal district veterinarian can also provide information on this subject.