

2020 AGF Visit to the “Hill”

In March this year, just as Covid began to break out in America, Randy Dusek, American Goat Federation (AGF) President and Tammy Fisher, AGF Legislative and Public Policy Chair went to Washington, DC as part of the American Sheep Industry fly in. They met with a contingent of Scientists and Government officials with Agriculture Research Service (ARS) in Beltsville, Maryland. There was a useful exchange of ideas from a producer point of view to the scientific point of view. ARS discussed their research on stomach worms and shared information about future alternatives to dewormers that could end resistance and dependence on limited varieties of expensive dewormers. Randy and Tammy asked for assistance with Q-Fever and Anthrax research for sheep, goats and wildlife, and also learned of ever-increasing budgetary constraints and lack of scientists in the field of small ruminants in the government sector. All-in-all, the entire department of sheep and goat specialists at ARS were inviting, welcoming and AGF is continuing the dialogue with these supporters of American agriculture.

Randy and Tammy then visited with many members of congress and their staff members on Capital Hill to urge continued and increased funding for Scrapie Eradication through USDA’s Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and for Wildlife Services predator and hog control programs. In their meetings, they emphasized the importance of common sense rules for Electronic Logging and Hours of Service mandates on truckers hauling livestock that would ensure safe and efficient transport of livestock while protecting those on our highways as well as the welfare of the animals being hauled.

There was a full agenda of speakers from USDA as well as a representative of the Office of the US Trade Representative who explained the current trade situation with China and future negotiations with the U.K. EPA representatives shared information about the agency's progress on rewriting and implementing the Waters of the US rule which is watched closely by everyone in production agriculture. At the EPA Agriculture Office Tammy and Randy were told about new collaborations with EPA, USDA and FDA in agricultural issues. This is a very agriculture friendly development in the Trump Administration. They also were told that the M-44 cyanide guns used for predator control had been renewed for 15 years.

Tammy and Randy also met with the Department of the Interior where several attendees expressed concern about predation on lambs and goats by Black Buzzards and Carrion Crows. They shared producers’ concerns about the seriousness of the consistently more aggressive avian predators. These predators are seemingly no longer migratory in Texas and other states. They over winter and this is when most producers are kidding and lambing. They cause significant losses of newborns. The FWS agreed to look into this problem and consider delisting them from the migratory bird list so that measures can be used to control them. Currently, these birds are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. They also learned of legislation that could help with this process and AGF will move

forward with supporting HR 3655 “Livestock Protection Act of 2019” introduced by Representative Hollingsworth from Indiana.

Since [that](#) visit, obviously, the world has changed quite a bit. As [Randy and Tammy](#) flew home, through crowded airports, [it became apparent that they](#) were seeing the last of this type of travel for a while. [AGF](#) has been in close contact with USDA to continue to monitor the Coronavirus agricultural and small business packages available to producers. While the goat meat markets in many areas of the country have been largely unaffected by the outbreaks of Covid-19, smaller sectors of the milk, meat and fiber portions of the industry have suffered. [AGF](#) continues to push for assistance in any form we can get it and will be in touch with Congress and USDA in the coming weeks as the next Covid-19 “CARES-4” package is drafted and passed, hopefully by August.