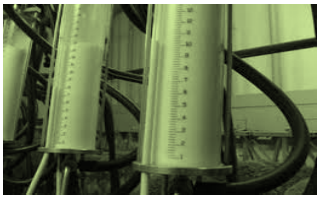
Milk Module



Which information needs to be recorded?

Quebec and Ontario dairy producers send dairy records to help building the genetic module for dairy sheep. More records need to be collected to provide more accurate genetic evaluations. Genetic evaluations are calculated once a week starting on Friday night (10 p.m. Eastern time) and new breeding values are available by Sunday morning, 7 a.m. Eastern time. Milk traits have good heritability thus the genetic evaluations assist producers in their ewes and rams selection.

When enrolling into GenOvis, milk producers access all the functionalities of the GenOvis program (reports (PDF/CSV), mating module) as well as a special section specific to milk records.

Information required for the milking module:

- To get started:
  - All dairy ewes and rams in the barn must be created into the program
  - Unique ID for each animal within the barn (tattoo format or RFID tag)
  - Birth date
  - Breed composition
  - Pedigree if known

- Basic data to collect (for all lambs born):
  - Lamb ID
  - Sire ID
  - Dam ID
  - Birth date
  - Sex of the lamb
  - Litter size
  - Type of raising: Only bottle-fed/only raised by the ewe/under the ewe+ bottle
  - weaning weight (highly recommended)
  - 100d weight (highly recommended)

- Milk data to collect (for all milking ewes):
  - Milk weight in a.m. and p.m. (could also be in p.m. then a.m.) or milk 24h (once a day) (need a specific scale) and time of milking
  - Fat (milk component) – optional but required to get this EBV
  - Protein (milk component) – optional but required to get this EBV
  - Somatic cells count (milk component) – optional but required to get this EBV
  - BHB, Lactose and MUN can also be recorded
  - Milking codes if required

Why record this information?

Pedigree

To get more accurate breeding values, it is important to record as much of the pedigree as possible into the system. This allows making links between animal's performance. As well, the breed composition of the ewes must be as accurate as possible to compare ewes of the same breed composition together.

Basic data to collect (for all the lambs born)

You need to record all the lambs born from your dairy ewes. The lambing date is used to determine the milk yield curve, and the litter size has an influence on the milk yield of the ewes. It is important to record lambs even if they died at birth, or in the first days, as the ewes will produce milk according to the size of their litter. Also, you need to record the lambs' sire to allow links between animals in the database. This keeps the complete pedigree for the ewe-lambs kept in the flock or sold to other dairy producers. The weights at weaning and 100 days are used to evaluate the growth potential of the lambs. It is highly recommended to take those weights, but genetic values will be generated even if they are not recorded. All lambs of a group should ideally be weighed on the same day. Eventually, the genetic program will improve milk production (quantity and composition), as well as the lambs' growth.

Milk data to collect (for all milking ewes)

You must provide at least 4 dairy controls (milk weights/tests day record) per ewe per year to calculate accurate milk yield curve. The controls don't need to be supervised by a technician for now. You should provide at least 2 or 3 milk components (analyses) per ewe per year to get these EBVs. It is possible to get genetic results even if the milk analyses are not done, but it is recommended to process them. The more data you enter into the system, the more accurate your breeding values will be.

Milk analyses

Lactanet, located in Canada, has developed specific Infra-red milk curves for sheep, as the ones used for cattle aren't appropriate for sheep. They also developed linear adjustment factors to correct sheep milk component results.

How to record information in the genetic program?

Basic lamb information can be entered manually in the program or by importing data in a specific format (Excel files). Dairy data can only be entered using import files for now. The headers for all the files to upload are available on our website and are easy to complete.

What are the developments to come?

Improvements to the specific section for milk producers

Dairy producers have access to a personal section to record or consult milk records and breeding values in the program.

New dairy reports

New PDF reports, as well as Excel exports and HTML report will be available for dairy producers. As a reminder, breeding values are updated every week.

Datasheets to explain how to make your selection

New datasheets will be provided to assist milk producers in their genetic selection.