

Vermont Sheep Dairies in Trouble!

Updated Feb 2010

BACKGROUND:

In Vermont – a state that used to be known for its sheep farms – there are just five remaining sheep dairies and cheese making farms, and *all* of them are in jeopardy due to a decision recently handed down by the Food & Drug Administration. For a long time, it has been required that all cheese making farms (cow/goat/sheep) test for antibiotics every day (both organic and conventional). Until recently, because there hadn't been an antibiotic test specifically validated for sheep's milk, sheep farmers and cheesemakers were able to use the same kits that had been validated for goats' and cows' milk. There are five choices and each test kit costs approximately \$200.



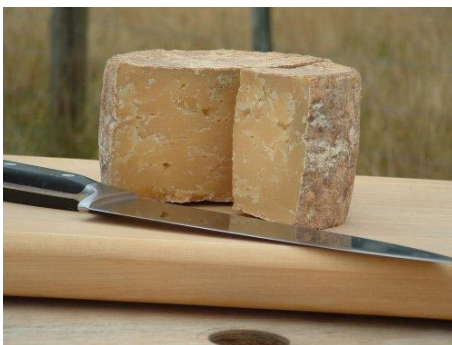
Last month, Vermont's sheep dairies and cheesemakers were informed by the Agency of Agriculture that a sheep's milk validation study had been conducted, and the result was that just ONE antibiotic test had been validated for sheep's milk. Why just one? Because only one testing company participated in the study!

PROBLEM:

Effective immediately, the Food & Drug Administration is mandating that all sheep's milk be tested with this newly validated antibiotic test kit. The sheep's milk kit is only available from **ONE** company – there are five options for cows' and goats' milk producers. The sheep's milk kit will cost each of our state's sheep dairies and cheesemakers a whopping **\$4700** – the cows' and goats' milk kits cost \$200. This high cost seriously jeopardizes the viability of Vermont's remaining five sheep dairies and cheesemakers!

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

- Right now – **Sign up on Rural Vermont's mailing list**, and note "sheep dairies" in areas of interest. When it's determined what the next steps must be to support and protect our state's sheep's milk producers and cheesemakers, Rural Vermont will call you to action!
- Write now – **Write a letter to the editor** exposing this unfair assault that puts Vermont at risk of losing its few remaining sheep dairies.



Rural Vermont: Celebrating 25 years of advancing economic justice for Vermont farmers through advocacy and education.