

January 30, 2018

Dear Ontario Goat member,

Despite the many twists and turns our industry has seen over the past year one thing remains constant- Ontario Goat (OG). OG has continued to work on behalf of all of Ontario's goat farmers to ensure there is a producer voice representing our industry.

As you know, OG is a producer run organization that works for the benefit of everyone and promotes the entire goat industry – meat, dairy and fibre. The OG Board and staff work to increase the profile of the Ontario goat industry through three strategic priorities:

- **Public awareness and communications:**
 - This includes consumer education, media requests for information, government and industry partner requests for assistance or information, responding to questions about the goat industry and generic consumer awareness initiatives partnering with Foodland Ontario and the Ontario Independent Meat Processors.
- **Industry relations and education:**
 - This includes a number of important priorities including working with government and industry partners on a number of important issues such as animal welfare, traceability, collaborating and partnering with other organizations like Farm & Food Care, AMI and the OSCPA as examples.
- **Producer resources, support and education:**
 - OG is the only producer group with the ability to leverage funding that can then be invested in important industry research and project initiatives. Development of animal welfare educational resources and the distribution of the Goat Gazette newsletter are examples how OG supports producers.

Enclosed, please find a summary of some of the projects and initiatives we have worked on lately that has a direct benefit to you and your goat operation.

Over the last few years our membership structure has been such that we were funded through a voluntary check-off from the licensed milk shippers (and some voluntary from meat goat producers) and an annual membership fee for our other goat members.

The voluntary check-off agreements for dairy goat producers ended on December 31, 2017. As a result, OG will be moving to a flat rate membership fee for 2018 for all goat producers. As we move into 2018, there is much work to do to build a sustainable Ontario and Canadian goat sector. The OG Board will be focused on our three key priorities while continuing to work with industry partners as our limited resources will allow.

The annual membership fee helps leverage OG projects and initiatives the organization undertakes on your behalf. As part of your membership you will receive OG's quarterly magazine, *Alliance*, which serves as our industry's main communication tool and the weekly *Alliance* e-blasts and the monthly *Goat Gazette*. You will continue to receive a discount to various industry seminars and free access to all of OG resources. All OG members will receive free registration to our Annual General Meeting and Producer Education Day on March 21 in Woodstock at Cowan Park. Any producer who is not a member of OG will be subject to non-member rates.

These are just a few examples of the tangibles to membership; one important benefit that jumps to mind is the advantage OG has by being part of the *Alliance* partnership. Without the help of Veal Farmers of Ontario we would not have been able to streamline our efforts, improve efficiencies and reduce overhead over the last eight years. If we want to continue to reap the benefit of our partnership we need to be able to contribute our share. We cannot put a value on what that partnership has done for our association in reducing costs and developing relationships with industry partners.

If we are not able to continue with the partnership we will be covering the entire costs of running an association on our own. Something that will change what our association will be capable of. Yes, the past year has been a tumultuous one and we are not sure of the future but having a home will go a long way towards the first steps of stability by keeping costs down. The other benefit that is important to remember is the benefit of belonging to an organization of like-minded individuals working towards improving a developing industry, it is hard to put a value on but the possibilities could be endless.

Enclosed you will find a 2018 OG membership renewal form. Please complete the form and return with payment to our office (OG can accept cheque, credit card and electronic fund transfers). I hope you will see the many benefits of supporting OG and your industry. If you have further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact any one of the OG Directors or the OG office at (519) 824-2942 or by email at info@livestockalliance.ca. Please note that your annual membership expired on December 31, 2017, if we do not hear back from you by **April 1, 2018**, you will be removed from our contact list.

On behalf of OG, I would like to thank you for your past support and hope you will continue to show your support for OG and see the benefits to supporting our goat industry with a producer voice. We are all goat producers who want the same future from our industry, to be stable and secure. Together we can work towards making that happen.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anton Slingerland', written over a horizontal line.

Anton Slingerland,
President