



Northwest Alabama Small Ruminant Newsletter Winter 2011

Greetings Everyone,

Winter is almost behind us, and what a winter it has been. Extreme cold temperatures and record amounts of snow; commodity prices including corn, soybean hull and corn gluten pellets hit all time high prices; and prices for young goats and sheep at sale barns continue to exceed two dollars per pound, live weight! This is a winter many of us will remember for a long time. There is that expression “gotta take the good with the bad”, and this has definitely been that kind of year.

I hope your farm is faring well in comparison to those who failed to secure sufficient quantities of hay for their animals. The drought we experienced the last half of summer kept many farmers from getting a third or final cutting of hay, and those who failed to buy early ended up with limited supplies. The drought also limited the amount of available vegetation in pastures, which has come back to haunt many farmers this fall and winter. If you are running short on hay, then make inquiries to secure enough for your animals through the spring. I have talked with several farmers who already sold out of any bales they had for sale; and some of the feed stores that sell hay are now asking a premium price due to limited supplies.

In this issue you will find the following: (1) An update on upcoming small ruminant activities and events. Looks like March is going to be a busy month throughout much of the State. (2) In the News, relevant news to goat and sheep producers. (3) Some thoughts on current situations regarding commodity prices; there is good and bad news. (4) What will you plant this spring to insure adequate amounts of vegetation for your animals? (5) Take note of the enclosed information regarding the Scrapie Program, and share the information with fellow sheep producers. USDA has made significant progress in eradicating Scrapie and moving quickly to meet the goal of complete eradication of Scrapie by 2017. Being able to collect money for a dead ewe is worth taking note! (6) Take a look at the enclosed flyer regarding Extension’s 5th Annual Small Ruminant Spring Symposium. Whether you have an interest in sheep or goats make plans to attend the Spring Symposium. It is time to start taking a proactive approach and plan for long-term sustainability!

I apologize for not getting this newsletter out sooner, but been waiting for details on upcoming events. As always I appreciate your interest and input regarding my outreach efforts with Alabama Cooperative Extension System/Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or ideas.

Sincerely,

Robert Spencer

Robert Spencer
Urban Regional Extension Specialist

ATTENTION

In an effort to comply with budget cuts I am asking that anyone who would be willing to receive the newsletters (if your aren't already) by e-mail instead of mail please let me know at rds0002@aces.edu

WORKSHOPS & ETC.

Open Forum for Goat and Sheep Producers

The Lawrence County Cooperative Extension Office is hosting an informal meeting for goat and sheep producers throughout Northwest Alabama. The casual format for this event will allow producers to discuss any pertinent situations and ideas relevant to goat and sheep production, and USDA agencies will be present to share information on their programs that may be of interest to sheep and goat producers. Robert Spencer, Regional Extension Specialist will be there do interact with producers, there will be goat meat available for people to sample, and producers will be encouraged to share what is on their minds.

The event will take place Thursday March 3, from 6:00-8:00 PM at the Lawrence County Cooperative Extension Office (13075 AL Hwy. 157, Moulton) in the Lawrence County Agriculture Center Meeting Room (front of building). If you have questions please call the Lawrence County Cooperative Extension Office at (256) 974-2464 or Robert Spencer at 256-766-6223 People from all surrounding counties are encouraged to attend.

5th Annual Small Ruminant Spring Symposium

Spring is just around the corner and so are plans for Extension's annual symposium for goat and sheep producers. This year's theme will be "Strategic Planning for Sustainable Production".

In recent decades the poultry, pork, and beef industry have come up with strategic management and marketing strategies that have moved them forward at a fast pace. Strategic planning and sustainable production have similar concepts to securing long-term viability and possible profitability. Both require accepting relevant concepts; developing and implementing management, economic and marketing strategies;

and securing plans for "passing the torch" onto future generations. All this serves to develop a "game plan" on where to go, how to get there, what will be encountered along the way, and what is to be accomplished. In the "big picture" each component and relevant decision makes a difference and contribution to your entire farm becoming sustainable. Interest in goat and sheep production is still relatively fresh, but has great potential; all it requires is strategic planning for long-term sustainability. The Alabama Cooperative Extension System's Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs recognize this and plan to address relevant components this during their upcoming 5th Annual Small Ruminant Spring Symposium. Primary topics include: year-round grazing, marketing, reproduction, parasite management, and disease prevention. To learn more about these concepts relevant to small ruminant strategic planning and sustainable production make plans to attend the annual Small Ruminant Symposium to be held March 12th at the Winfred Thomas Agricultural Research Station in Hazel Green, AL. See more information regarding registration, lunch, and contact information on the flyer included in this newsletter.

Life on The Farm

Elmore County Farmer's Federation Sheep & Goat Committee presents their 4th annual spring event, this year's theme is "Life on the Farm". The event will be held at the Elmore County Ag Center (340 Queen Ann Rd., Wetumpka, AL 36092) on Saturday March 19, 2011, beginning at 9:00 A. M. and concluding after the goat shows.



There will be informal presentations, animal husbandry and cheese making demonstrations, music, vendors, all kinds of live animals, a goat meat cook-off for adults and youth, free food, a goat show and costume contest, and much more. Best part is it's all free! This event is always lots of fun and well attended. Last year there were over four hundred people who visited the day-long event. For more information contact: Edith Grover at EGWILDWIND@AOL.COM or 334-514-0495, or Lynn Watson at PLMW2007@YAHOO.COM, or 334-567-4067

IN THE NEWS

The following article was taken from the American Sheep Institute Weekly Newsletter

NAHMS Sheep 2011 study

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) is currently working on the 2011 Sheep Study.

NAHMS conducts national studies on the health and management of the U.S. livestock, poultry and aquaculture industries. These studies are designed to meet the information needs of the industries and other stakeholders-as identified by those working with these industries.

Only by gathering good field information and samples can we help the industry assess its real live problems," said Jim Logan, DVM, chair of the American Sheep Industry Association's Animal Health Committee. "Pharmaceutical and biological companies look to the NAHMS studies for statistical data to determine the need for a product and if that product will be marketable."

The Sheep 2011 study will:

Describe trends in sheep health and management practices from 1996 to 2011 to 2011. Describe management and biosecurity practices used to control common infectious diseases, including scrapie, ovine progressive pneumonia, Johne's disease and caseous lymphadenitis. Estimate the prevalence of gastrointestinal parasites and anthelmintic resistance.

Estimate the prevalence of *Mycoplasma ovipneumonia* in domestic sheep flocks. Relate presence of the organism in blood and nasal secretions to clinical signs and demographic and management factors.

Facilitate the collection of information and samples regarding the causes of abortion storms in sheep.

Determine producer awareness of the zoonotic potential of contagious ecthyma (sore mouth) and

the management practices used to prevent transmission of the disease.

Provide serum to include in the serological bank for future research.

By gathering reliable and valuable information on the U.S. sheep industry, the Sheep 2011 study will help to provide the producers and practitioners of tomorrow with information on current management practices, help policymakers and industry make informed decisions, measure the impact of disease, assist researchers and private enterprise to identify and focus on vital issues related to sheep health and productivity, and conduct economic analyses of the health and production of the U.S. sheep industry.

Participation in all NAHMS studies is voluntary. Randomly selected producers who choose to participate in the study will be visited by representatives from USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service from January through February 2011. During this visit, an on-site questionnaire will be administered. Eligible producers will also be asked to participate in the second phase of the study.

Producers who participate in the second phase will be visited by veterinary medical officers and/or animal health technicians who will administer questionnaires and collect biological samples beginning in March 2011.

Because NAHMS' studies rely on voluntary participation, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) protects the privacy of every participant. Only those collecting the data know the identity of the respondent. No name or address is ever recorded in any APHIS database. No data will be reported on any individual or in a manner that would allow the identification of an individual.

The Sheep 2011 Fact Sheet is available at www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/nahms/sheep/downloads/sheep11/Sheep11_is_Objectives.pdf.



POINTS TO PONDER

Commodity Prices

By the time you see this report it will be two weeks old, but still worth taking note. Similar market reports can be found by visiting market reports for Hershey, PA and San Angelo, TX.

Nashville, TN Monday, Jan 17 2011 USDA/TDA Dept
Ag Market News
Tennessee Sheep and Goat Auction: Tennessee
Livestock Producers Graded Goat and Sheep Sale.
Columbia TN, January 14, 2011

Receipts: 748 (562 Goats; 186 Sheep) Last Sale 344
Next Sale January 28, 2011. (second and fourth Friday
each month)

Goats sold per hundred weight (cwt) unless otherwise
noted, weights, actual
or estimated.

Slaughter Classes: Kids

Selection 1

25-35 lbs

36-50 lbs - 208.50-216.50

51-65 lbs. - 231.00-232.00

66-80 lbs - 220.00-228.00

81-100 lbs - 160.00

Selection 2

25-35 lbs

36-50 lbs -198.00-229.00

51-65 lbs 226.00-230.00

66-80 lbs 190.00

Selection 3

25-35 lbs 149.00-159.00

36-50 lbs 170.00-181.00

51-65 lbs 198.00-219.00

Yearlings Selection 2-3

55-95 lbs 120.00-213.00

Slaughter Bucks/Billies
All Wgts 103.00-119.00

Slaughter Nannies/Does
All Wgts 91.00-117.00, mostly 98.00-117.00

SHEEP

Slaughter Lambs-Includes all breeds, sold per hundred
weight (cwt).

Choice and Prime 40-60 lbs 208.00-219.0

Good 160.00-206.00

Choice and Prime 61-80 lbs 210.50-219.00

Good 179.00-216.00

Choice and Prime 81-100 lbs 174.00-200.00

Good 162.00-171.00

Choice and Prime 100-120 lbs few 176.00

Slaughter Ewes Utility and Good:
All Wgts. 99.00-110.00

Prices have been truly amazing, probably some of
the highest prices ever. Based on what I am told
the "5th Saturday" Sale in Russellville is also
paying relatively well.

All this is good news for goat and sheep
producers who have struggled for so long to
make a profit. The question some have asked me
is why, why such good prices? My speculation is
based on estimates from USDA's National
Agricultural Statistics Service; they have been
saying for the past two years goat and sheep
inventories are down across much of the U.S., by
at least two percent. I speculate we have a
ongoing demand for these two commodities, but
inventories/supply are low; an ideal economic
situation for producers. Why are inventories
low? Speculation on my part includes two
reasons: (1) Several years of drought whereby
livestock producers (cattle included) reduced
their inventories so pastures could sustain what
animals remain. (2) Two plus years of a poor
economy which caused some farmers to
reconsider goat and sheep farming and respond
by reducing their herd size to a more affordable
inventory, or sell out entirely and eliminate farm
expenses.

Also, in the past few years I have talked with
quite a few "older" producers who sold out for
health reasons or simple economics (couldn't

afford to risk their retirement funds on livestock). Looking back over the past five years I have seen many of the large-scale operations go out of business for one reason or another. Times have changed and so have the number of familiar faces at meetings, shows, and other small ruminant events.

Speaking of commodities have you noticed the prices of corn, soybean hull and corn gluten pellets, and grain based feeds in general? Everything is way up, corn over \$6/bushel, corn gluten and soybean hull pellets over \$170 a ton, feed prices in general are back up to what they were a few years ago when drought and the ethanol “craze” hit.

Why? Economists will be the first to say we’re part of a global economy; U S. grain products are bought and sold throughout the world. They will also tell you we are not long the primary driving economic force in the world economy; now countries like China and India demand more grain products than the U.S. Therefore, futures (commodities) buyers know the world demand for grains will continue throughout the world and prices as well.

Good news is goat and sheep prices at sale barns are up; bad news is cost of inputs (feed, fuel, hay, and etc.) are up as well, and short of a world-wide bumper crop on grains and decrease in fuel, these grain and fuel prices will remain strong due to the futures markets. What we have is a typical farmer’s dilemma.

What Will You Plant This Spring?

Winter months offer time to reflect on your forage management plan from the past year, and plan for what you expect to work best this year. Not just for spring and summer, but into the fall. Take the time to walk your pastures and evaluate what worked and what did not. Ask yourself was management a factor and/or was weather a factor? At the same time you could be gathering soil samples and then send them off for nutrient analysis. Are you soils short or abundant on



nitrogen, potassium, and phosphorus; what is the pH level, is it time to apply lime? Take the time to call or visit your local Extension office and ask for copies of planting guides for grasses and legumes. Carefully study your options!

Fertilizer will be expensive this year. Now is a good time to consider planting legumes in the form of clover or sericea lespedeza. However, wait until after the last frost to plant legumes or grasses. Legumes help “fix” nitrogen into the soil, and are a good source of protein for goats and sheep. Only you know which type of clover (red, white, or crimson) is preferred by your animals. Sericea is a good source of nutrition for your animals and high in tannins which tend to suppress problems with stomach worms in your animals.

As in interim ground cover and early source for grazing material consider planting rye grass, anytime towards the end of February or through March will work. Although it is not an ideal time as in the fall, it will work and serve better than nothing at all. Sure it will die out as warmer temperatures arrive, but is better than doing nothing.

While spring is not an ideal time to try and establish grasses, it beats waiting until fall. Consider the needs of your animals and consider the need for ground cover to reduce soil erosion and nutrient run-off.

SEE THE NEXT TWO PAGES FOR MORE RELEVANT INFORMATION!



FY 2011 Scrapie Surveillance Project - ALL Sheep Breeds

This project allows a \$75 payment to reimburse costs associated with carcass disposal or transport costs to an Alabama state diagnostic lab for any breed of sheep that is 14 months of age (evidenced by eruption at gum line of one or both permanent central incisors) or older if the animal dies on the farm and samples are collected for Scrapie testing. The project is aimed at increasing Scrapie surveillance of sheep in Alabama.

State/Federal Animal Health Technicians will make farm visits to collect samples and sign up producers for payment or producers can deliver the sheep carcass to an Alabama State Diagnostic Laboratory. The producer may contact their local State/Federal AHT directly or they can phone (334) 223-7141 and an AHT will be dispatched to their farm for sample collection or completion of paper work for payment. It is important that samples be collected soon enough after death that the tissues have not deteriorated in the heat to an extent that they are not testable. A maximum of 3 samples can be collected per "Scrapie Flock ID" or "Scrapie AL number". Funds are available to collect 40 total samples for FY 2011 under this incentive program. A Scrapie tag does not have to be installed in the ear if the animal dies on the farm but the "Scrapie flock ID" must be provided to the AHT or an application for a flock ID number must be submitted. Please help Alabama achieve our Scrapie Surveillance goals by participation in this project! ****Just confirmed: A \$50 additional payment per sample is now available for the first 20 sheep tested for Scrapie in 2011 under this incentive project bringing the total producer reimbursement for delivery of the carcass to a diagnostic lab or on-farm carcass disposal costs to \$125 per sample for the first 20 samples submitted and \$75 per sample for the following 20 that are submitted for sampling. A W-9 Form (for the \$50 payment) and ability to have funds deposited by direct deposit (for the \$75 payment) are required.

If producers have any specific questions about the Scrapie Surveillance Project they can contact:

Dr. Cindy Brasfield

Veterinary Medical Officer

Designated Scrapie Epidemiologist

USDA, APHIS, Veterinary Services Division

Alabama

cell: 334-657-5549 email: cynthia.m.brasfield@aphis.usda.gov



5th Annual Small Ruminant Spring Symposium

STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Saturday March 12, 2011

9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Registration begins at 8:30 a.m.

**Alabama A&M University's
Winfred Thomas Agriculture Research Station**

372 Walker Lane, Hazel Green, AL

[Just south of Hazel Green, east off US 231/431 out of Huntsville]



Symposium Fee: \$10 per person

[Includes lunch: Goat and Lamb Burgers, Hotdogs, Chips, Desert, Drinks]

Pre-Registration Information:

For more information contact

Eddie Wheeler 256-582-2009
wheeled@aces.edu

Send registration checks to:

Alabama Cooperative Extension System
Suite G21, 424 Blount Ave., Guntersville, AL 35976-1132

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