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## **Northwest Alabama Small Ruminant Newsletter** **Winter 2010**

Greetings Everyone,

Hope the Christmas holidays provided an abundant opportunity to spend lots of time with your family and friends, and the New Year finds all of you in good health.

In this issue you will find the following: (1) Extension was proud to host quite a few programs for the benefit of small ruminant producers. (2) The key to longevity of the goat industry is to look to the future, some ideas on what needs to take place. (3) There is a national sheep and goat conference taking place in Nashville the latter part of January, make plans to attend. (4) USDA is about to conduct a Goat and Sheep Survey learn more about what they hope to accomplish. (5) USDA grant to expand Meat Goat Industry awarded to Extension Scientist. Take a look at the information to learn more. (6) Upcoming events include the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Small Ruminant Spring Symposium and Master Meat Goat Herdsman Program to be conducted across the State. (7) As we all know Gastrointestinal Parasites (stomach worms) are a big problem for goats and sheep. During winter time problems with worms are minimal, now is the time to develop a strategy how to deal with them as temperatures warm up this spring.

I hope this newsletter benefits you and your farm. As always I thank you for your support and appreciate your input concerning our outreach efforts with Alabama Cooperative Extension System/Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or problems.

Sincerely,

*Robert Spencer*

Robert Spencer  
Urban Regional Extension Specialist

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in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. An equal opportunity educator and  
employer.*

### **Year in Review**

There has been a lot happening within Extension this past year. It takes a lot of planning and networking but we want to make sure producers throughout the state have all the information they need and are successful. Extension conducted: their Annual Small Ruminant Spring Symposium, which focused on sustainable goat and sheep production; four Master Meat Goat Herdsman Program were conducted throughout the State, feedback was very positive; and the Annual Small Ruminant Conference held at beautiful Joe Wheeler State Park which focused on marketing. All these events will be repeated in 2010. Other agencies and institutions throughout the state have also done their part to also help goat and sheep producers. Tuskegee University, who has been a statewide leader in small ruminant educational programs for years, held their Annual Goat Day and as always did an outstanding job!

Prior to 2009, within Alabama, there were no USDA inspected processing facilities that would process goats and sheep on a regular basis. Now there are two, one in the Southeast and one in the Northeast part of the State. The one in SE. AL is D&W Processing, located in Newton, AL (between Dothan and Enterprise on US Hwy 84). It is owned and operated by Dan and Wade Hussey. You can reach them at the plant at (334) 692-9977. And the one in NW AL is Cox Butcher Shop located west of Florence; owned by Adam and Renee Cox, their phone number is 256-766-2051. Either facility is likely to require advance arrangements to have animals processed.

### **Looking To The Future**

Now that goat and lamb producers have this opportunity laid out before them they must take responsibility and move their industry forward. They must unite, begin

promoting and marketing goat and lamb to the general public, and create product availability awareness among ethnic and faith based populations who prefer goat and lamb. The key to long-term consumption of goat and lamb is to promote their health values to main stream American consumers. The future of the Small Ruminant Industry is not in a few processing facilities but rather in promotion of a fresh, healthy food product that is locally raised, processed, and readily available.



### **National Sheep and Goat Meeting**

This is short notice but it is not too late to make plans to attend the 2010 American Sheep Industry Association/National Lamb Feeders Association Convention. The annual meeting will be held in Nashville, Tenn., on Jan. 20-23, 2010. Early registration deadline was Jan. 5, but you can still contact the number below and learn more about registering. Registration information is also available at [http://www.sheepusa.org/Annual\\_Convention](http://www.sheepusa.org/Annual_Convention) or by calling 303-771-3500. Their agenda shows lots of interesting meetings, other entertainment activities for the family, and an opportunity to network with other sheep producers from across the country. There will be a day-long meeting on Saturday for the newly formed American Goat Federation.

### **Southern SAWG Conference**

Practical Tools and Solutions for Sustaining Family Farms Conference: Chattanooga Convention Center, January 20-23, 2010. After January 6, please plan to register at the conference. The Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group always does an outstanding job of providing awesome information during their events. This is their 19<sup>th</sup> annual conference and the last time to be held in Chattanooga. Visit their website at <http://www.ssawg.org/>



### **USDA 2010 Sheep and Goat Survey**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) is gearing up for the Sheep and Goat Inventory Survey. Conducted each year in January and July, this survey provides critical inventory and production information for all states and the nation.

"During the first two weeks in January, producers will be contacted to participate in the Sheep and Goat Inventory Survey." said Carol House, NASS deputy administrator. "This survey will provide the latest information on conditions and trends in the U.S. sheep and goat industry for 2010."

When contacted by a NASS field office representative, producers will be asked to provide information on the number of breeding and market sheep and goats, lambs and kids born during the previous year, as well as mohair production, wool production and prices. For convenience, producers will have the option of responding to the survey by telephone, mail, during a personal interview or online.

Results will be published in the Sheep and Goats report, scheduled for release Jan. 29, 2010.

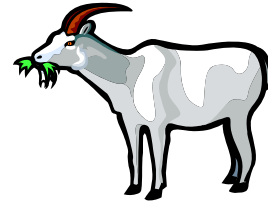
### **USDA Grant to Benefit Minority Farmers**

Dr. Maria Leite-Browning, an animal scientist with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System based at Alabama A&M University and Dr. Richard Browning, research associate professor at Tennessee State University, recently received a \$300,000 grant from the United States Department of Agriculture to expand small ruminant programs.

During the past three years, numerous goat producer workshops have been conducted jointly by Tennessee State University and Extension's Urban Affairs & New Nontraditional Programs unit at Alabama A&M University. Farmers have received technical assistance in various phases of management, including reproduction, genetics and breed evaluation, internal parasite control, general health management and marketing. However, participation by minority producers at these publicized events is often low. Similarly, the state of Tennessee has a farm cost-sharing program that has low minority participation.

Meat goat production in the United States is still considered a nontraditional and alternative agricultural enterprise. As ethnic populations continue to grow, so does the demand for goat meat. However, 50 percent of goat meat is still being imported from other countries. With the USDA funding, the Brownings are hoping to reduce that percentage and increase the number of minority commercial meat goat producers, particularly among African-American and Hispanic populations. This project will allow small farmers the chance to enhance their production skills and to create sustainable partnerships that are critical to producers with limited resources.

For more information, please contact Dr. Browning at (256) 372-4954.



## **Programs for 2010**

*The following events are sponsored by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System*

### **4<sup>th</sup> Annual Small Ruminant Spring Symposium**

Saturday March 6, 2010 at the Winfred Thomas Agricultural Research Station (A&M Farm), 372 Walker Lane, Hazel Green, AL. Event will focus on two interests' nutrition and Hair Sheep. Nutrition and nutrients play an important role in health, reproduction, and vigor. Also, come learn more about breeds of Hair Sheep and their unique appeal. Registration fee is \$10 per person, pre-registration will insure adequate quantities of food for lunch. To pre-register contact Eddie Wheeler at 256-582-2009 or e-mail at [wheeled@aces.edu](mailto:wheeled@aces.edu).

### **Master Meat Goat Herdsman Program Returns**

This state-wide educational program consists of three days extensive training on all major aspects of goat production, sessions are offered across the State on a regional basis. The program is designed for potential goat producers trying to acquire extensive training, and existing goat producers who are trying to improve their management, production, and marketing strategies. For more information contact one of the following people. For South AL: Anthony Pinkston (334) 382-5111, for West AL: Tommie Teacher (334) 624-8710, for West-Central AL: Ilana Stover (205) 487-0559, for East-Central AL: Henry Dorough (256) 362-6187, for Northeast AL: Eddie Wheeler (256) 582-2009, and Northwest AL: Robert Spencer (256) 766-6223. Registration fees to be determined later.

### **What Will You Do About Those Parasites?**

Winter is here and cold temperatures tend to keep gastrointestinal parasites in dormancy (then again there is always the exception to the rule). Now is the time to start developing a strategy to deal with them when warmer temperatures return, especially when the Barberpole Worm becomes prevalent. The following ideas are taken from a training manual distributed by the Southern Consortium for Small Ruminant Control; you can visit their website at [www.scsrpc.org](http://www.scsrpc.org).

It is well known goats were not meant to live in a warm humid climate, they thrive best in arid or cool climate regions; and they were meant to browse on brush and low hanging branches, not graze solely on pastures, especially over-grazed pastures.

Most producers are aware of problems with parasites developing resistance to certain wormers. The problem has a long history, at this time there are no magical answers or quick fixes. This is a worldwide problem! Most recent recommendations are to stick with a wormer until it stops working then switch to another product. There are certain practices such as fecal-egg exams and FAMACHA which can help deal with the issue. Fecal-egg exams help determine the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of wormers. While FAMACHA is practical only when Barberpole Worms are a problem, it helps determine animals who are anemic and need treatment (or culling), and others that are okay and may be tolerant of the Barberpole worm.

The life cycle of stomach worms is approximately twenty-one days. The key to parasite control is to interrupt their life cycle; complete elimination of these parasites is not possible, only management and minimization. Parasites not only suck blood from the stomach or intestines of goats, but their actions damage the lining of the stomach and intestines which impedes their ability to properly digest food and absorb nutrients.

The primary components to include when developing a strategy is as follows: (1) Know which animals continually require worming and which ones don't. Some form of recordkeeping insures accuracy. Consider culling the animals that continually require attention, you may encounter the same problems with their off-spring. (2) If possible utilize rotational grazing. While land and fencing is costly, if you can afford to fence in additional areas it will allow you to move animals from one pasture to another on a regular basis, otherwise known as rotational grazing. This is all part of breaking the life cycle of parasites. (3) Know if your wormer is working and dose according to weight of individual animal. Fecal egg exams were mentioned earlier and can be done on the farm with proper microscope and equipment or by a vet for a nominal fee. It needs to be done prior to worming each goat and a week or two after to see if wormer is effective. If ineffective it is time to switch to another wormer. Administer based on label or veterinarian recommendations of dose per pound. It is not good to under dose and you don't want to risk killing an animal because they were poisoned by overdosing. (4) Learn the FAMACHA management system and selectively

worm based on an as needed basis. Extension conducts training classes on a frequent basis across the State, and a properly trained veterinarian can also teach you. (5) Develop a working relationship with a veterinarian of your choice. Word of mouth, the Internet, and other farmers are good sources of input; but nothing beats the expertise of a vet that will work with you! (6) Don't overstock available pastures/paddocks! If that means you have to reduce herd size, so be it. Once you allow your herd size to get so large they graze everything to the ground you are in for trouble and expensive health care for your animals. (7) Consider co-species grazing, start by reducing your herd size and adding another species such as cattle or horses. If you have goats adding sheep is possible, if you have sheep you can add goats. Cattle are more tolerant of parasites and seem to vacuum up parasites that bother goats or sheep.

Producers must learn to effectively treat or else cull problem animals, treating the entire herd, on a regular basis is not a good practice, only treat the animals that need it. Otherwise, that is what builds parasite resistance. Learn to cull! Cull problem animals, cull animals that are frequently sick, cull if your herd size is too big to easily manage. Feed and healthcare expenses are the two most expensive portions of operating expenditures. Farming is meant to be enjoyed, not stressful; take time to learn what works best for your situation and implement accordingly; remember, too many animals on too little space can result in complications including extra expenses for feed and healthcare - bigger is not always better.