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Northwest Alabama Small Ruminant Newsletter Fall 2009

Greetings Everyone,

We had adequate rainfall this summer to keep your pastures productive and now the cool of fall is around the corner, I hope your pastures are lush for extended grazing and your barns are full of hay. In this issue you will find the following: (1) Endless numbers of programs taking place this summer, covering an array of issues relevant to small ruminant production. (2) Activities taking place throughout the state promoting goat and lamb and the value of it as a healthy meat choice. (3) What will you plant for this fall? Fall is always a desirable time to consider which forages and legumes to plant for grazing this winter and into next year. See what is working for other farm situations. (4) There are a several educational programs taking place this fall in both Alabama and Tennessee. Take a look at the information to learn more.

I hope you and your farm benefit from the information in this newsletter. 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 concerns.

Sincerely,

Robert Spencer

Robert Spencer
Urban Regional Extension Specialist

Programs This Past Summer

The number of programs taking place this summer relevant to small ruminant production was truly astounding. There were two Master Meat Goat Herdsman Programs, one for Northwest Alabama and one for the East-central region; both were well attended and feedback very positive. In July there was a field day at the Sand Mountain Research and Extension Center in Crossville, AL. The event showcased their meat goat demonstration project and the utilization of various forages. It was well attended and people really appreciated the opportunity to see what is taking place.

Every weekend in August was packed full of events across the State. The Chilton Research and Extension Center held their annual Farm, Home, and Wildlife Exp. Almost one thousand people toured the numerous presentations, demonstrations, and food sampling. There was the 3rd Annual Small Ruminant Conference which took place at the Joe Wheeler State Park in Rogersville. The location was picturesque and the information very innovative. The Blount County Dairy Goat Workshop took place mid-August. Attendees learned about fundamentals for a goat dairy, goat selection, and udder health management. The second half of the Master Meat Goat Herdsman Program took place in the Talladega area. Based on attendance and feedback this was the best one yet. The following weekend was the Risk Management & Business Development workshop in Mobile; lots of information, networking, and good food (see information below). Most recently, a meeting for goat, sheep, and rabbit producers took place at the Winfred Thomas Agricultural Research Station took place. This meeting was an opportunity for potential and existing producers to learn more about the various

agencies that provide services for rabbit and small ruminant industry. The meeting also offered an opportunity for people to learn about the progress Alabama Agricultural A+ Marketing Association has made over the past year. Lots of exciting things are happening with them (*see Promoting Goat & Lamb*). That same weekend there was an artificial insemination workshop in the Gadsden area.

In South Alabama, August 19-21, the Small Farms Research Center (Alabama A&M University) in collaboration with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System held their annual Agricultural Risk Management & Business Development Training in Mobile, Alabama. The Training Workshop was phenomenal! According to participants, this training workshop was the best ever. The workshop started with a field day which included a visit to a premier beef cattle farm; with all the information presented the entire program was easily worthy of being three days.

Promoting Goat and Lamb

Alabama Agricultural A+ Marketing Association (A+ Marketing) in collaboration with Alabama Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D), Alabama Cooperative Extension System, and the Small Farms Research Center have conducted a series of activities promoting goat and lamb as a healthy alternative. These have taken place from Mobile to Tusculumbia, to Sand Mountain. The meat has been served in the form of burgers as they are easy to cook and eat on a bun. Reviews from the consumers have been very positive; most common response, "I did not know goat could taste so good".



Examples:

Spring Park, Tuscumbia; August 27 - Fifty goat, and fifty lamb burgers were made available to the general public, the food sampling took place from 5-7 pm, by 6:30 all the burgers were gone and feedback from the consumers was very positive. Up until the last burger was gone there was a combination of adults and youth waiting in line to sample this unique food, no one went away hungry. From 6-6:30 there was an educational program which focused on goat and sheep production and the health and nutrient value of both meats.

Other locations where goat and lamb burgers have been served: Sand Mountain Goat Field Day, (July); Small Farms Research Center – Women in Agriculture Conference, Birmingham (July); Small Farms Research Center - Risk Management Conference, Mobile (August); Producer Meeting, Huntsville (August). All this is made possible by A+ Marketing and financial assistance from the Goat and Sheep Check-off Funds. All reviews have been very positive.

Also, goat and lamb is now available for retail at several farmers markets across North Alabama. Current markets include: one in Colbert County, three in Madison County, one in Jefferson County, and possible plans for Chattanooga, TN. All this is made possible through a grant from RC&D and a mutual agreement between A+ Marketing and Paul Spell of Humble Heart Farm. Mr. Spell is already selling gourmet goat cheese from their goat dairy, and he now markets goat and lamb from A+ Marketing.

What Will You Plant This Fall?

The information in this section is based on what has taken place with the Meat Goat Demonstration Project at the Sand Mountain Research and Extension Center, and feedback from other producers who have experimented with a variety of forages. Fall is a good time to plant grasses and legumes, with a focus on winter grazing and grazing for next year. Whether one chooses to overseed or prepare a seed bed it will depend upon individual circumstances, which will vary from farm to farm; evaluate your situation and available resources. As always prior to planting anything Extension encourages each farmer to submit a soil sample for nutrient analysis, your local Extension office can provide you with the appropriate directions, forms, and containers. Keep in mind planting legumes is always a good practice!

For over a year the Sand Mountain Research and Extension Center has been operating a meat goat operation that involves utilizing a variety of forages. This project currently has paddocks of fescue grass, sericea lespedeza, alfalfa, white clover, red clover, chicory, and rape. Based on observations here is what has done best considering goat's preference and grazing/vegetation growth and performance. The goats appear to prefer sericea lespedeza, alfalfa, red clover, chicory, and fescue (not necessarily in that order). These are also the same types of vegetation that have done best when it comes to grazing tolerance and growth performance. The white clover did okay, but not as good as the red clover. The other factors to consider are the nutrient values, the table below shows protein and total digestible nutrients (TDN). Keep in mind matching nutritional needs for goats is a base of 12% with a range of 14-16% when it comes to young and lactating does, which should be justification for planting certain forages.

Several producers have communicated positive results when utilizing sericea lespedeza, chicory, red clover, and white clover, along with grasses. The other benefit of these particular legumes is they are high in tannins, which have shown potential to mitigate the impact of gastrointestinal parasites. Something to consider

is the use of crab grass, with proper soil conditions/fertilizer its nutrient value is comparable to alfalfa. Alfalfa is difficult to grow in the South, due to extreme humidity and heat. Remember, goats and sheep are just like you and I, they need variety in the diet!

Nutrient Value - Forbs			Nutrient Value - Legumes		
	Protein	TDN		Protein	TDN
Chicory (leaf)	22	92	Alfalfa, full bloom	17.5	58
Rape	8.8	58	Clover, red	15	59
Vetch, common	19	59	clover, white	15	58
Fescue Grass	13	57	Lespedeza, common, bloom	15	52

As always forage availability and winter grazing is important, one of the common choices is rye grass. Your choice of what to plant may depend on your location (North versus South). The most important consideration is the nutrient (N, P, & K) availability and soil pH. Extension always encourages forage managers to soil test in order to determine what and if any supplements are needed. For more information on planting recommendations for grasses and legumes contact your local Extension Office and ask for Don Balls “Planting Guidelines”.

Upcoming Events 2009

October 24th – 1st Annual Southeast Dairy Goat Conference; Middle Tennessee Research and Education Center, Springhill, TN. An opportunity to learn about dairy goats, goat dairies, and value-added opportunities (*see flyer*).

November 19-20 - Risk Management & Community Outreach Conference, Huntsville, AL. If you have attended and enjoyed our

conferences, seminars, and workshops thus far, this is one conference you don't want to miss. This is our biggest conference of the year and as always it only gets BIGGER and better! The conference will be held in Huntsville, Alabama and there will be over 25 resource speakers, specialist, and experts focusing on risk management strategies, business development, sustainable agriculture, government program, and on-site demonstrations. You do not want to miss it! We will begin taking registration on September 30, 2009. So go ahead and mark your calendar! We hope to see you there! For more information contact Elicia Chaverest (Program & Marketing Specialist, Small Farms Research Center, Alabama A&M University) 256-372-4970.

Mark your calendar for **Saturday March 13, the 4th Annual Small Ruminant Symposium**. It will focus on nutritional management along with a special segment addressing Hair Sheep. The event will take place at the Winfred Thomas Agricultural Research Station just north of Huntsville.



1st Annual Southeast Dairy Goat Conference

For those with an interest in goat dairies, dairy goats, and value-added products.

Saturday October 24th, 2009

9 AM - 4 PM

(Building opens at 8:00 AM and registration begins at 8:30)

Middle Tennessee

Research & Education Center

1000 Main Entrance Drive (faces Saturn Parkway)

Spring Hill, TN 37174

Registration - \$35 or \$50 per couple, children \$10; fee includes educational materials, refreshments, product samples, and lunch. Pre-registration necessary, please contact: An Peischel at (615) 963-5539 or e-mail: apeischel@tnstate.edu

Conference to include a series of talks and hands-on demonstrations with dairy goats on site. Topics to include: forages and nutrition for dairy goats, dairy goat selection criteria, dairy goat facility and processing regulations, 4-H goat programs (dairy and meat), value-added products, equipment sanitization and care, dairy goat business and facilities startup and an internal parasite management discussion including a FAMACHA training (FAMACHA cards will be available for \$10 each).

This is a collaborative effort with experts on site representing: Alabama Cooperative Extension System, Middle Tennessee State University, Tennessee Department of Agriculture, Tennessee State University, and the University of Tennessee.

For directions and map visit: <http://middletennessee.tennessee.edu/location/>.

Front of Center faces Saturn Parkway, meeting facility located at back of property.