Welcome to Florida Small Farms and Alternative Enterprises Conference

Foundations for Success With Sheep or Goat Enterprises: Planning and Implementation
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For more information on Small Farms, visit our website at:
http://smallfarms.ifas.ufl.edu/ or contact your local County Extension Agent.

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Foundations for Success With Sheep or Goat Enterprises: Planning and Implementation

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Discussion for Small Ruminant Education Session
2014 Florida Small Farm Conference
Species and Enterprise Options

• Sheep for meat (lamb) production
• Goats for meat (chevon) production
• Goats for milk production
• Sheep or goat breeder --- Selling genetics
• Youth projects (Market goat is fastest growing in GA)
• Vegetation management with goats or sheep
• Sheep for wool and fiber arts enterprises.
Major Topics

- Planning the enterprise for sustainability
- Marketing options
- Facilities
- Breeds and sources
- Feeds and feeding
- Health considerations
- Animal protection
- Profitability
Whole Farm/Household Planning in support of small ruminant enterprises

• Farm resources inventory
  – Labor, soil and water characteristics, facilities, pasture or crop land characteristics, animals.

• Farm planning
  – Household involvement.
  – Strengths of the place.
  – Known problems on the farm
  – Marketing and economics
  – Top three goals

• Small Ruminant Toolbox.  www.ncat.org
Essential Elements of Reproduction

• Sheep
  – Gestation ~ 147 days
  – Estrous cycle ~ 17 days
  – Seasonally polyestrous. Short-day breeders
    • Breed and type differences.

• Goat
  – Gestation ~ 150 days
  – Estrous cycle ~ 21 days
  – Seasonally polyestrous. Short-day breeders
    • Breed and type differences.

• Accelerated breeding = Three parturitions/2yr.
Marketing Options

• Meat animals.
  – Own consumption.
  – Live animals direct at farm gate.
  – Live animals to auction market.
  – Carcass and cuts direct to customer. State or Federal inspected facility required.

• Dairy animals.
  – Own consumption.
  – Cheese and other milk products, including soap.
  – Fluid milk. State may require Grade A to sell.
Facilities

• **Fences**
  – Woven and electric (internal)
  – Avoid 6” verticals if raising horned animals.

• **Shelter** *(cold wind, rain, shade)*
  – Young + (Wet + Cold) = Hypothermia = Chilled = Dead
  – Permanent versus Temporary or Mobile

• **Water** – is it really clean? ....., automatic?

• **Working facilities.** Strong, secure, ease of use.
Available Breed Options in SE

• Sheep breeds – Suffolk, Hampshire, Dorset, Polypay, Dorper, Katahdin, Natives.

• Dairy goat breeds – Saanen, Alpine, Toggenburg, LaMancha, Nubian

• Meat goat breeds – Kiko, Boer, Spanish, Myotonic, Savannah.
Crossbreeding

• Advantages in production, reproduction, general health and hardiness.
  – Individual breed merit combined.
  – Hybrid vigor or heterosis.

• Many systems but key point is to be systematic.
  – Suggest rotational system using 2 or more breeds, and saving replacement females.
Usefulness of rotational systems

• Create own replacement females, capture ~ 75 % to 87% of original heterosis (hybrid vigor), capture inherent merits.

• Level of hybrid vigor will vary from trait to trait.
Example: Three-breed rotation

• Kiko x Spanish = .5K + .5S
• KS x Boer = .5B + .25K + .25S
• BKS x Spanish = .625Sp + .25B + .125 K
• SSKB x Kiko = .5625K + .3155Sp + .125 B .....
Breeding Stock Sources

• Do not use auction or livestock sale barn as source.

• Purchase directly off farm.
  – Breed association listings in state or nearby.
  – County Extension or agricultural educator.
  – Advertisement in paper or Bulletin.
  – Keep eyes open in neighborhood.

• Match source enterprise management with yours.
Feeds and Feeding

• Focus on forage. Most cost effective.
  – Quality tied to maturity. Rotational grazing good.
  – Grasses and legumes.
    • Warm season perennials; Cool season perennials
    • Warm season annuals; Cool season annuals
• Mineral supplementation – Sheep n goat difference
• Match energy available with energy needs.
• Use concentrates wisely according to need.
• Additives – Deccox; Ammonium chloride
• Diet formulation software from Langston University.
Health Considerations

• Vaccination – Enterotoxemia
  – *Clostridium* types C & D, and C. tetani (CD&T)
  – Breeding stock annually, 2ml
  – Lambs and kids twice.  2ml x twice at 4-6 wk. internal.
  – If dams not vaccinated, young need vaccination within week of birth.
  – Keep vaccine refrigerated.
  – Dispose after open 1-3 days. Loses effectiveness.
Health considerations ....

- Internal parasites. \textit{(Haemonchus contortus)}
  - Use appropriate pasture and herd/flock management.
    - Stocking rate
    - Rotation
  - Deworming. \underline{Smart Drenching}
  - Use product that works. How to know?
  - For \textit{Haemonchus contortus} see indications of anemia.
  - Treat only individuals, and only when needed. Do not treat and go to new pasture.
  - See \url{www.acsrpc.org} or \url{www.wormx.org}
  - Workshops and training by arrangement for obtaining FAMACHA eye chart
Health considerations

• Pregnancy toxemia or ketosis.
  – The principal cause of pregnancy toxemia is low blood sugar (glucose) and presence of ketone bodies.
  – Disease is often triggered by stress including nutritional stress or inclement weather.
  – Most prevalent in ewes and does carrying two or more lambs or kids. Affects ewes and does that are extremely fat or excessively thin.
  – The best preventive measure is moderate body condition and increased feeding of high energy concentrates or grains during the last month of pregnancy.
Pregnancy toxemia

- **Treatment** - Treatment of pregnancy toxemia in ewes/does other than feeding concentrates might include; oral propylene glycol or corn syrup are quick sources of energy and should be given at the rate of 200 ml four-times daily along with 3 to 4 liters of an electrolyte solution designed to reverse dehydration.

- Get the offspring born if parturition has not yet occurred.
Health continued...

• **Foot rot**
  – DO NOT BUY IT!
  – Keep hooves trimmed.
  – Animals that have chronic long hooves should be sold.
  – Can trim and treat with copper sulfate footbath.

• **Caseous lymphadenitis (CL)**
  – Infection in lymph nodes. DO NOT BUY IT!
  – Corynebacterium pseudotuberculosis. Abscess.
  – Lance, catch puss, heal and dry, sell for slaughter.
    • No human health risk from meat or milk.
Animal Protection from Predators

• Common “predators” – coyote, wild dog, vulture, fox and homeowner dogs. Signs differ.

• Options –
  – Good fencing of appropriate design.
  – Guardian animals.
    • Livestock protection dogs. Several
    • Donkey or llama
  – Trapping and hunting
Issues of Profitability

• Rate of mortality.
  – Try to keep pre-weaning mortality below 3%.

• Cost of feed.
  – Minimize manufactured feeds. Use supplemental feed judiciously. Test hay for nutrient level.

• Level of reproduction.
  – Need to have twins or more born
  – Aim for weaning 200% lamb or kid crop.

• Spread land and facilities fixed costs.
  – Co-species grazing with cattle or horses.
Key Question in Enterprise Economics

• Is it profitable?

• Will it cash-flow?

• Is it the way I want to spend our (my) time and money?
Vegetation Management

• Sheep or goats are tools. Their productivity is not important.

• Targeted species can include: privet, kudzu, pigweed, honeysuckle, briars and brambles, and brush.

• Need a critical size of areas in order to spread fixed costs of equipment, portable facilities, transportation.

• Management requires a force to finish all. Not concerned with animal productivity.
Targeted Grazing

• Requires repeated passes to destroy vegetation.

“Targeted Grazing” document available via American Sheep Industry Association (ASI) www.sheepusa.org
Summary

• Lamb and goat enterprises can be profitable and enjoyable.
  – Many options in type of enterprise.
  – Get them born and keep them alive.
  – Keep them healthy. Vaccination & parasites.
  – Manage the pastures and forage resources.
  – Keep expenses within allowable range.
  – Feed them what they are designed to use.
Organizations With Information

• American Sheep Industry Association
  – www.sheepusa.org

• American Goat Federation

• eXtension www.eXtension.org
  – Goat Industry Community of Practice
  – Sheep Industry Community of Practice

• State Extension specialists and universities or institutes
Goat or Sheep?

The End