



# ewe GOaT NEWS

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## Happenings

A little time has elapsed since my last ramblings. It seems as time flies by plus I was out of the country for a couple of weeks. I felt we had another excellent tour in September. A few years ago I was not aware of the many premium sheep and goats we have in this region plus the wonderful and devoted people we have to care for them. One would definitely have to have been impressed with the quality of goats and sheep we saw on the tour.

The Donaldsons showed us some excellent quality Boers, along with very workable facilities and yet at a fairly low cost. They also had an excellent discussion on the use of A.I. Even though it takes a little investment especially with the liquid nitrogen tank, it allows the goat producers to tap into some of the leading bucks that they may not be able to buy. I think the liquid nitrogen tank cost could be minimized by finding someone to share with. In the case of Donaldsons I think they use one in the cattle operation. I would be happy to allow someone to store semen – at least until the tank is filled.

At Pam and Mark's we not only saw some excellent goats, facilities included plans to make even better, plus the added treat of products from their produce, the cheese, brats plus the ice cream was just super. I know several people recognized the quality of the two young bucks and in fact I think one producer tried to get one loaded in the back of his pickup and was late for the next stop. Pam also gave an excellent discussion on guard dogs. Many are able to be in the sheep and goat business now because of guard dogs while many coyotes put up a howl - only. Also many of our members have excellent guard doges for sale at a reasonable price so you do not have to drive long distances. All the dog owners that I know in the organization are very passionate about their dogs and are willing to help others.

Hagels showed the result of expansion and focusing in on quality goats which included a couple large champion banners. There again we saw some very workable facilities and yet though innovative thoughts and adopting the cost was kept down, Because of a little later kidding the young bucks were smaller than others but had tremendous potential.

The sheep breeders got their fix at the Neals' and saw some super big, high quality meat and wool ewes and a couple of bucks. If even the goat breeders were not impressed with the quality, I would suggest seeing an eye doctor soon. They also demonstrated the value of the wonderful Border Collies. I realize that many sheep and goats are managed each day without trained Border Collies but I wonder why. I know they get more exercise than me – in my case I am overweight and my dog is thin. If I didn't have a good dog, I would have to walk more but would be more frustrated and eat more so would probably still be overweight. I digress a little.

I hope you are all planning to have a great leg of lamb for the Holidays.

I asked at several stops about their objectives for selecting seed stock. I realize that for some eye appeal or show winners seems to be a major objective while for others animal performance or output of product are primary objectives. Some will suggest you can have both but in reality that is probably not true. Eye appeal traits, such as color, ear set or the “show model” has nothing to do with weight gain. I realize that those who stress the show will most likely have a group that will want to compete for years to come and very high prices will be reported from sales around the show arena. In some cases the money actually trades hands with no strings attached.

Over the years I have observed the conflict between the show and production industry in other species. Currently there are a very small number of swine and beef cattle producers that participate in the show side and are usually associated with the youth shows. They need to have moms and dads to pay very inflated prices for “show animals” for their children for “a learning experience.” I have supported 4-H and FFA youth shows for many years and will continue to do so but will maintain that our youth can learn more by paying market price for their animal, feed it as economically as possible with local grown feeds and then make a profit. No, they probably won't have as many show champions, unless in the performance class which gets little attention among “show people” and fair management. Again, I digress. The point I started to make is that other industries that produce meat (protein) for the consumer, the show part has shrunk to a very small part of the industry and in fact is ignored and sometimes laughed at by those who make their living by producing meat for the consumer. Does the poultry producers care about who had the champion rooster at the Denver National Western?

I hope you all will be able to attend the next meeting which is Thursday, December 15 at the Panhandle Research and Extension Center. We will have an excellent speaker, Erica Rosa Sanko, from Denver who is marketing specialist for Livestock Marketing Information Center and will discuss sheep and goat marketing - see attached.

### **Ewe and Doe Body Condition and Nutrition**

It is the time of year to evaluate body condition and if needed adjust rations so they are in good body condition as they approach lambing or kidding. If they are too thin then the young will be weaker, the mothers will not milk as well, the quality of colostrums will be lower plus unless body condition is improving ketosis or pregnancy disease can develop. In rare cases ewes or does that are way too fat can develop ketosis or in some cases milk fever.

Approximately 2/3 of the fetal growth occurs in the last 1/3 of pregnancy so the nutrient requirement increases considerably during the last 30 days of pregnancy. This is even more dramatic with females carrying multi fetuses. Ewes or does develop ketosis for two reasons. Basically the cause is due to the female requiring more energy than she is getting from her feed so she starts to use fat from her body reserves. As this occurs the fats are used for energy

however in their breakdown excess ketones are built up in the blood stream. In more advanced cases the ewes breath will smell somewhat sweet. The other problem with females in late gestation is that the fetuses take up a lot of space in the abdominal cavity and reduce the space in the rumen. This is especially true when females are carrying twins and triplets. As space for feed is decreased in the rumen she simply may not be able to eat enough forages to meet her energy needs.

Ewes or does with ketosis will start showing symptoms by simply not coming to the bunk to eat, will be slow in moving around, will not want to rise when asked and in general just very lethargic. In more advanced stages they may appear to be normal otherwise. Treatment is helpful and sometimes provides recovery however often the results are very discouraging.

It is imperative that treatment is started very early with offering some very high energy feeds such as corn or distillers grains, however often times appetite is depressed so drenching is required. For sheep I prefer propylene glycol and many veterinarians recommend it for goats also. Recently Connie Ross of Texas wrote that propylene glycol was a very bad choice and even suggested it was harmful for goats. Others use syrup, molasses, honey or any quick releasing energy. Many veterinarians have some propylene glycol on hand or it can be ordered from vet supply catalogues. Drenching needs to be done 2 or 3 times per day. A recent research paper suggests a new approach to treat ewes with pregnancy disease. They report that administering Banamine at the level of 1 cc/40 pounds of body weight in conjunction with conventional treatment increased recovery and survival rate considerably.

The best way is to prevent the disease from occurring which is providing adequate nutrition. If ewes or does are in good body condition then only a slight increase in energy would be required. If the females are fairly thin then considerable energy would be needed. I like to use whole shelled corn as an energy source. If produced on your farm or purchased from a neighbor in the bulk it is usually the cheapest source of energy. If it is purchased in a 50 pound bag it may still be the cheapest energy source even though it may cost more per bag. Corn will have close to 85% TDN or energy (same thing) while most sweet feeds will be closer to 75% TDN because the oats, barley and molasses contained in the mixture is considerably lower in energy than corn. Pelleted complete feeds often carry considerable fiber such as from alfalfa hay which is lower in energy. The one feed I like and is higher in energy than corn is the grain by-products from the ethanol or the corn syrup industry (distillers' grains, wet or dry, or corn gluten feed). They are high in fat which is very high in energy plus the fiber is very digestible and does not lower fiber digestion in the rumen corn tends to do. Unfortunately distillers' grains are not usually available in less than 25 ton loads so is often not available when only needed in small quantities. Perhaps your major feed supplier could get some in smaller quantities.

I personally try to have most ewes in average condition at this time and am currently feeding 1 pound of corn per ewe per day plus all the excellent quality of alfalfa they want (try to keep waste to a minimum by feeding so they clean up each day. I plan to sort off a few young

ewes and 5% of the old thin ewes next week and feed them up to 2 pounds of corn for February lambers.

I personally rely on the alfalfa and corn to provide the majority of vitamins and minerals and only offer trace mineralized salt. Some would argue with my approach to mineral supplementation but until I feel I have a problem with production or reproduction I see no reason to add more expenses.

The old saying goes the eye of the master fattens the animal. I think this applies if the master's eye evaluates body condition and responds with proper nutrition which will alleviate pregnancy disease but more noteworthy provide an excellent lamb or kid at weaning.