



## EWES GOaT NEWS Ivan Rush



Hope this finds everyone enjoying the late spring, early summer season. Also hope to see everyone at the tour and looking forward to seeing the members and pick up some hints on how to improve or just to enjoy.

Even though the lamb and goat prices have dropped a little we can all feel good with the current prices unless of course we are buying breeding stock and then ‘ouch’ may be in order. With the continued decline in sheep numbers and the strong demand for goats, in a still growing industry, it appears that the markets may be good for quite some time. I have been intrigued with the markets of both lambs and goats. Sheep is a very old industry that has a fairly good commercial industry – large feedlots, packers, and purveyors who process lamb for retail outlets. They also have a check-off program which helps promote American Lamb. Although check-off programs effectiveness is often discussed and cussed by some, I am convinced that they do some good in promoting our product. Collectively our funds can be used to advertise and promote in ways and places that I can never do myself. An ad in a popular magazine read in New York is something I could never do on my own nor could our organization.

The goat market is equally intriguing. At this point the meat market is often dependent on ethnic people that are willing to pay good prices for goat meat that meets their requirement. They are either processed by themselves or in many cases by relatively small processors that are often not federally inspected so in states like Nebraska it limits our retail marketing (legally) especially across state lines. Also with goats we are still in a growing market, even though that has slowed, so the sale of breeding stock is relatively high. When herd or production numbers reach a “filled” level then the average producer will have to rely more on products produced while only those with superior breeding will be able to rely on the breeding market.

Every effort with both sheep and goats need to be made to increase the size of our market at the consumer’s level. Because when all the dust settles the only new money coming into the market is from the consumers.

**Meat Animal Research Center** I was at the USDA MARC (Meat Animal Research Center) at Clay Center, Nebraska recently and had an opportunity to spend some time with Mike Wallace, Past President of the Nebraska Sheep and Goat Association and had a wonderful tour and visit. He indicated that they were just initiating another study where they are utilizing sheep breeds and combinations that’s major objective is to keep all input costs such as feed, labor, including shearing and other expenses at a bare minimum while maintaining relatively high levels of production. They will be doing this by incorporating breeds that excel in lambing rates such as Romanov, will be lambing in pasture in May and only checking and if necessary, docking and tagging once a day. Breeds such as Katahdins and Dorpers will be used to provide muscle, which are hair sheep, so no shearing cost, Suffolk are incorporated to provide growth. Again, the main objective is to increase profits with relatively low inputs. Mike admits that death loss, especially during lambing will probably be higher and predators are a problem although that is largely eliminated with guard dogs (unlike when I was a kid). Some soft hearted caring people would have a hard time accepting this like I would until I went to the bank. I guess it points out that many of us have different objectives. I still like to see a lot of growth and meat quality plus like to produce lambs that will do well in the show ring (even though that is an expensive battle that I have not

done well in). I also have high feed costs and labor requirements. Others have their animals just because they love their animals and profit is much less of a motive. Some deal in breeds that excel in a trait so that is where they put their emphasis. So the low input research will not be a recipe that most may want to follow but hopefully will give us some ideas or at least challenge our thinking on how to improve our profits.

Mike also said they were doing some research work on ovine progressive pneumonia (OPP) and although I had read a little on it I was pretty uninformed. It appears that MARC thinks it is enough of a threat to the sheep industry that they are devoting a considerable effort to it. One of their goals is to find a way to test for the disease early in life. I went to Pipestones vet clinic web page to get some added information and have posted it below.

## **OVINE PROGRESSIVE PNEUMONIA**

### **Pipestone Veterinary Clinic**

Ovine Progressive Pneumonia and its economic implications maybe one of the most controversial diseases in the sheep industry. OPP has been implicated as the cause of wasting disease, lactation failure, arthritis, and brain lesions, however few if any signs maybe evident in an infected flock.

**CAUSE** - OPP is caused by a slow acting virus that has an incubation period of one to two years. Infection is thought to occur by inhalation of virus shed from positive sheep or consumption of milk or colostrum containing the virus. After the extended incubation period the virus begins to cause damage to the lung resulting in a sheep that has chronic pneumonia, loses weight and eventually is culled, dies or is euthanized. Due to the long incubation period OPP rarely affects sheep less than 2 years old.

**OCCURANCE** - It is estimated that over 50% of the flocks in the U.S. are infected with OPP with the number of sheep infected within a positive flock anywhere between 1% to 70%. It is important to realize that the vast majority of infected sheep will never show respiratory disease or a wasting syndrome. They are ewes that are positive for the OPP virus and lead a normal productive life and eventually get culled from the flock for reasons other than OPP.

**SYMPTOMS** - OPP can cause increased respiration, weight loss, poor milk production and a general wasting disease. Arthritis and neurologic disease are more uncommon symptoms that have been attributed to OPP. It is important to realize that there are other diseases in sheep that can cause similar presentations such as chronic pneumonia, parasites and Caseous Lymphadenitis. On post-mortem exam the most remarkable lesion is that the lungs of the sheep fail to collapse. OPP can be diagnosed by different types of blood tests. The authors have experienced conflicting results and given the long incubation period of the virus a sheep can be infected for several months and still have a negative blood test.

**TREATMENT** - There is no treatment for OPP. Early culling of clinical animals and euthanasia of terminal poor doers are the only options available.

**Again, don't forget the Tour, Sunday, June 26 and the Annual Picnic at Riesen's on July 17 2011**

