

Lamb and Wool Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes April 20th, 2022

The annual Lamb and Wool Program Advisory Committee met on April 20, 2022, starting at 5:30 p.m. at Minnesota West Community and Technical College, Pipestone Campus. Committee members present included: Dr. Jeff Held, Randy Dombek, Rob Rule, Dr. Larry Goelz, Kevin Goeken, Russ Gundermann, Wes Moser, Steve Schreier and Lila Schmidt attending remotely. Staff members present included: Ann Kolthoff, Philip Berg and Management Dean Dr. Craig Peters. Jeremy Geske was not able to attend.

Philip provided a welcome and thanked the committee members for their commitment to the program. The instructors value the committee's input into the program and their commitment to the success of the sheep industry. Committee members introduced themselves. Philip asked members to identify how the Lamb and Wool Program has impacted the sheep industry and/or themselves personally.

Philip asked for any regional/national reports from committee members.

Philip highlighted an email from Jeremy announcing his recent election to chair the National Sheep Industry Improvement Center (NSIIC). This organization continues to fund sheep industry research and other needed infrastructure investments. The last farm bill appropriated additional funding to NSIIC with ASI support. NSIIC receives a large number of applications for funding each year, but lack high-quality proposals that meet all the requirements of their funds. Jeremy also represents the USSA on the genetic stakeholders advisory board that is working with Dr. Ron Lewis on a research project to develop genomically-enhanced EBVs for sheep. This group is working with Suffolk, Rambouillet, Polypay and Katahdin organizations as well as NSIP. Cooperating flocks are asked to collect additional data related to longevity/productivity (e.g., udder scores, body condition, etc.) along with DNA samples on stud rams, ewes with multiple parities, and select lambs within each sire group for genomic testing. Jeremy is the director of the Institute for Regenerative Resources and AgriSciences at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

Benefits of the Lamb and Wool Program

- Knowledge base from the group. Sharing ideas (networking) and providing a support group
- Importance of keeping producers on the farm
 - Implementation of labor saving practices
 - Striving to economically obtain high production levels
 - Lamb Marketing as a tool used to reduce market risk
- Opportunities to stay on the farm – diversification of enterprises
- Improve uniformity and quality of sheep
- Local/regional impact
- Diversity of sheep producers (young, old, new, established, small and large)
- Partnerships instructors have built with industry

Bankers Update:

- Excess liquidity (too many deposits), people are paying off loans
- Competition from lenders for loans
- Increasing interest rates
- Cut into margins/profitability
- Digital-ACH more convenient

Philip asked committee to provide what they think are the signature items of the program to assist with promotion of the Lamb and Wool program.

- Low labor
- Risk management
- Support group (networking)
- Instructor expertise
- Planning for the future
- Consistency of production
- Similar vision
- Innovation

Philip reviewed 2020-2021 Program Enrollment and Activities:

Dr. Held asked about measuring the significance of outreach programs. Philip responded by indicating that the outreach programs are used as a recruitment tool.

Wes Moser commented that he was more comfortable with Zoom meetings. He also thought the remind text was very beneficial. Kevin Goeken indicated that text size needs to be bigger. Dr. Held questioned the in-person meeting attendance. Younger members have more difficulty attending in-person meetings due to busy schedules and lifestyles. Program needs to continue to explore ways for members to network differently.

Wes Moser asked about the age of participants attending Sheep for Profit and Lambing Time Short Course. Ann indicated that we are seeing younger producers. She also pointed out more are more business driven. Scalability is important to the sheep business.

Dr. Goelz questioned how much the program wants to advertise. He indicated that the program needed to be present in social media. Ann indicated that more program promotion has been through other industry leaders social media networks. This has been a way to reach a much larger audience in a very timely matter and works particularly well when offering virtual educational programs. The programming is competitive with a fast growing number of virtual educational programs that many times are available at no or very low cost. Instructors have also spoke at many industry meetings which has been a great way to promote program.

Philip introduced Dean Peters who was recently hired as the Dean of Management & Technical programs. Dean Peters provided a college update: Minnesota West Community and Technical College has hired Dr. Arthur Brown as Provost who will begin on July 1, 2023. Dr. Brown has limited agriculture background so it is important to highlight the importance of agriculture to Minnesota. Dean Peters also pointed out college

enrollment has increased in part due to management programs. Dean Peters also shared that one of his biggest challenges is finding quality faculty (instructors).

Philip shared with the committee that this next year would be the 50th year of the Pipestone Lamb and Wool Program. Philip asked committee members for ideas to celebrate this milestone. The celebration would be during the annual fall kick off meeting in November. The committee enjoyed the Hiawatha Lodge for last year's fall kick off but suggested looking for a larger meeting location to accommodate a larger attendance. The Pipestone Country Club was suggested. Philip asked who should be invited to the event. Committee members encouraged the instructors to invite and recognize past Lamb and Wool Instructors, outstanding producers and Hall of Fame inductees. Committee members thought it would be a good idea to display pictures of the past Hall of Fame inductees.

Dean Peters suggested recorded interviews be presented of past and present producers as well as industry leaders. Dean Peters indicated he would help to find assistance with editing the recordings.

Philip asked the committee for ideas for milestones to discuss/present at the celebration. The advisory committee provided the following landmark events:

- Introduction of Finnsheep
- Lamb saver tube
- Automated milk machines
- Electric netting
- Water tubes
- Ultrasounding
- Market agreement (Fall 1993)
- Antibiotic-free lambs
- Lambing groups
- Semi load of Western ewes
- Breeding groups
- Sheep management wheels
- Optimum production

The advisory committee encouraged instructors to form a committee for this meeting to get more people involved.

Philip and Ann thanked the committee members for their input and contributions to the Lamb and Wool program.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:40 p.m.