

Lamb and Wool Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes April 23, 2008

The annual Lamb and Wool Program Advisory Committee met on April 23, 2008, starting at 7:30 p.m. at Minnesota West Community and Technical College, Pipestone Campus. Committee members present included: Randy Dombek, Dr. Jeff Held, Gail Boeve, Rob Rule, Dr. Larry Goelz, Russ Gundermann, Bill Aeschlimann, Wes Moser and Lila Schmidt. Bob Koehler and Dean Risa were unable to attend. Staff members present included: Mike Caskey and Philip Berg. Management Dean Al Brudelic was also present.

Mike provided a welcome and thanked the committee members for their commitment to the program. The instructors value the committees input into the program and their commitment to the success of the sheep industry.

Mike reviewed the 2007-2008 Lamb and Wool Program and handed out a summary. Credits sold were highlighted and the cost of the producer member program was discussed. There were 74 producer members of which 34 were full producer members from Minnesota, 16 were full producer members from out-of-state, 10 were small flock, 6 were intermediate flock and 8 special (Newsletter and Sheep Central and over 225 miles from Pipestone).

The special category is a new area that has been expanded. This option consists of a Newsletter, Sheep Central, A one day Sheep Management Update and Tour, Lambing Time Short Course and Bus Tour and Instructor phone and e-mail access. The program is designed for individuals who fall outside the designated travel distance of traditional producer members. In addition this new option is only offered to those individuals who have successfully completed the Sheep for Profit School. There has been 4 Sheep for Profit School (2003, 2004, 2006 and 2007).

Dean Brudelic suggested using Web X to enhance the new special category as well as possibly part of the online course offerings. The instructors were encouraged to explore the possibility of utilizing this new technology.

Dr. Goelz and Bill Aeschlimann both asked if there would be ways to target young serious producers. Encouraging and enrolling young producers is the future of the program. The committee offered a lot of discussion and indicated that the Small Flock option was added several years ago as a way to get young producers involved. Mike pointed out that we do get participation in the small flock option but sometimes it is difficult to maintain enrollment due to lack of farm visits or individual contacts (relationship building). A suggestion was made that the program look at the possibility of offering the full member producer activities (farm visits) at a reduced tuition rate the first year of enrollment. Dr. Held pointed out that the program already has a hook for new members in Sheep Central, Lambing Time Short course and Bus Tour, and On-line courses.

Committee members who are enrolled in the program suggested ideas for producers to get to know one another such as individual introductions, round table discussions, mentoring new members, and a way to recognize outstanding producers. A kick off banquet/meeting was suggested. Families would be invited and a meal could be served prior to an evening meeting. The group thought this would be great and it was suggested to do this at the first January meeting when milk replacer is picked up. Mike also discussed the Holaway Memorial awards and thought the kick off meeting/banquet would be an excellent way to recognize deserving individuals.

Randy Dombek suggested putting together a fall field trip again, for member producers only.

The Lambing Time Short Course continued to be successful with 52 participants from multiple states and selling 26 credits. Mike reviewed the Lambing Time Short course and Bus tour. He indicated that we have visited or toured most of the producers within driving distance of Pipestone. An hour bus time is maximum. Randy Dombek suggested starting at a different location. The instructors have thought about this but were concerned about meeting facilities, meal preparation and guest speakers. Dr. Held proposed having the program later than the first part of February. The committee discussed the pros and cons of this suggestion.

Mike and Philip reviewed the Sheep for Profit School and the new Facility tour offered this summer. The committee really liked the idea that new programs were being offered.

Philip review Sheep Central and the three On-line sheep management courses. The statistics presented indicated that about 40 percent of the producer members are utilizing Sheep Central especially for those individuals who are in the new special enrollment option. Philip also reviewed the most popular sites and provided the committee a list of information on Sheep Central.

Philip handed out a summary of the on-line sheep management courses offered (Introduction to Sheep Management, Introduction to Sheep Health and Ewe Ration Formulation). Thirty six individuals took the on-line Introduction to Sheep Management, 18 took the on-line Introduction to Sheep Health and 15 took the on-line Ewe Ration Formulation course. A total of 87 credits were sold for on-line courses. Individuals from 24 states and Canada have taken an on-line course of which there were 31 females and 18 males and 3 Post Secondary Education Option (PSEO) Students. There were four high school students who took on-line courses but not as a PSEO student.

Philip reviewed the program web page and showed committee members some of the changes. One of the biggest changes was adding an area for individuals to provide contact information so they could be contacted with future program information. This was started late last fall and 260 individuals have provided e-mail addresses. Many pictures have also been added along with registration information of many of the programs. Lila thought the pictures really added to the site.

Philip also presented the program promotional plan for the 2007/2008 year. He reviewed the publications and presented the ad utilized. The instructors requested feed back on where and when they should place ads and asked for feed back on the ads used this year. Dr. Held thought they looked good but encouraged the instructors to make them more active. The committee really liked the pictures in the ads. A few new publications were suggested and the committee members were encouraged to research and send the instructors other possible publications.

Mike pointed out that there is a growing need with existing producer members to explore getting bigger. This would include a variety of things such as networking. The committee discussed possible options on how the instructors could help to facility this process. The committee believed strongly that the instructors need to provide leadership in this area.

Mike thanked the committee again for all their time and input. The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 p.m.