

Lamb and Wool Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes April 22, 2014

The annual Lamb and Wool Program Advisory Committee met on April 22, 2014, starting at 5:30 p.m. at Minnesota West Community and Technical College, Pipestone Campus. Committee members present included: Randy Dombek, Dr. Jeff Held, Karla Gundermann, Rob Rule, Dr. Larry Goelz, Chad Benda, Russ Gundermann, Wes Moser, and Steve Schreier. Staff members present included: Mike Caskey and Philip Berg. Management Dean Brad Schloesser was also present. Lila Schmidt was absent.

Mike provided a welcome and thanked the committee members for their commitment to the program. Committee members provided a short introduction. The instructors value the committees input into the program and their commitment to the success of the sheep industry. Minutes from the 2013 advisory committee meeting were mailed out and Mike reviewed the highlights of the 2013 meeting.

Last year the advisory committee recommended adding more farm group session if possible. Instructors evaluated this addition and are looking to add a working facility session in the fall of 2014. Ewe body condition scoring and pre-breeding management would be worked into the session.

Another item discussed last year were ways to get enterprise analysis information to aid in production and financial benchmarking. Instructors have mailed out a Quick Evaluation of Production Records form in an attempt to collect more information. Only a small percentage has returned this form and the instructors will continue to encourage producers to complete and return the form. Dr. Goelz encouraged the instructors to continue to work to collect this information. Benchmarking this information would be very useful.

Mike reviewed the 2013 fall kick off meeting. Seventy people attend the fall kickoff meeting which was held on November 26th, 2013. Rick Stott, CEO/President of Superior Farms was the guest speaker. Mr. Stott provided an excellent presentation. Bruce and Karla Gundermann were recognized as the 2013 Outstanding Producer and they provided a short slide show of their operation.

Steve Schreier asked about reaching young people interested in the sheep industry. Additional comments were made on targeting PSEO (Post Secondary Education Option) students. Philip emails Agriculture instructors promoting online opportunities and each year a few PSEO students enroll in an online course offering.

Dinner was served at 6:45 p.m.

Mike reviewed the Lamb and Wool Program credits sold and the history of credits sold. Fewer credits were sold this year as compared to the record high 2012/2013 program year.

Philip reviewed the online course offerings and the number of students enrolled. Berg indicated the online courses have been converted over to a more self-paced educational course. There are no current plans to develop an additional online course.

Philip reviewed the onsite educational course offerings. The 2014 Sheep Facility tour has been scheduled for June 9th. Advertising has been placed in major sheep publications and news releases have been emailed out to farm media and sheep association. A mass promotional email was sent out promoting the Facility tour. A short slide show was part of the email so individuals could view some of the things they might see on the tour.

Philip and Mike have put together bound program handouts for the Facility Tour, Sheep for Profit School and the Lambing Time Short Course and Bus tour. The handout contains pictures, educational articles, building designs and other useful information. Philip handed out a copy of each of these program handouts for the committee members to view and comment on. Philip reminded the committee that the Facility tour is held once every two years and alternates years with the Sheep for Profit school.

Mike asked for input on program delivery methods with the following comments:

- Small Focus Farm Meeting were highly valued and supported.
- Important to foster group interaction and networking.
- Evening meetings are filled with information.
- Key to program is hands on activities
- Market update emails are effective and useful
- Introduction at evening meetings was encouraged especially at single site programs.
- Conference call session – need to explore a different time and try again.
- Consider providing additional information in routine email
- Technology was discussed on how individuals receive information. Committee suggested to poll producers to determine how they would like to receive information.
- Suggested to find a system to send out meeting notice (email/text) based on calendar
- Online course opportunities: Labor management, Grazing programs, LRP, Marketing.

Management Dean Brad Schloesser provided an update on the Center of Agriculture. A new project coordinator was just hired, a Logo was developed and shared with the committee and a website <http://www.centerofagriculture.org> was recently launched.

Dean Schloesser asked the committee to critically think of how we continue to enhance and grow the Lamb and Wool program. Where do we find/recruit new instructors who are knowledgeable about the sheep industry? Land Grant Universities are not replacing their sheep specialists and there are less people directly involved in sheep production.

Dean Schloesser challenged committee and instructors to explore new way to provide continuing education through online course offerings and other distance delivery

methods. What parts of the Lamb and Wool Program can be delivered through distance delivery methods.

Closing comments from the committee:

- Young people do not want to raise sheep the same way as in the past and are looking for low labor systems (8-5). Time off (evenings and weekends) very important to next generation.
- Have ewe production records available on their smart phone
- Very little research at Land Grant Universities
- Producers are the source of Labor Saving ideas
- Efficiencies – unit size – semi load

Mike provided an overview of what he saw happen through the 40 years of the program.
Beginning – Production based education based on University data/research
Middle – Refined management systems based on University data/research
Ending – Producer innovation

Mike asked the committee for suggestions for the Pipestone Lamb and Wool Program Hall of Fame and for an additional advisory committee member. Committee members were encouraged to contact instructors with possible individuals.

Mike and Philip thanked the committee members for their input and contribution to the Lamb and Wool program.

Meeting was adjourned at 10:02 p.m.