

Lamb and Wool Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

April 30th, 2015

The annual Lamb and Wool Program Advisory Committee met on April 30, 2015, 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 Lila Schmidt. Staff members present included: Mike Caskey and Philip Berg. Management Dean Brad Schloesser was also present. Steve Schreier 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 2014 advisory committee meeting were mailed out and Mike reviewed changes made based on comments from the 2014 meeting.

- **On-Farm Session** – Introduced Shearwell Farm Works Software. Conducted hands on workshop at Mark Van Roekel farm. Three current Shearwell program member users demonstrated the Psion hand held recorder. Excellent way for producer's to work together to implement new technology.
- **Quick Evaluation Averages:** Performance benchmark information collected from cooperating producers and shared with all program members. Mike handed out the latest benchmark.
- **Farm Focus Group sessions** – Members and advisory committee members value this educational delivery method and reached the highest attendance of program members. Last year the advisory committee encouraged instructors to implement a second farm focus session at a different time if possible. Instructors are still looking for ways to incorporate a second session. The most logical time period would be the July/August time period.
- **Small Group Discussion:** Based on advisory committee recommendation, time was spent at half of the evening meetings for small group discussion/interaction. Most of the discussion topics focused around future sheep production systems. The discussion time was excellent for young people who are planning for future sheep management systems.
- **Building Relationships:** At single site events program members introduced themselves and share information about their sheep operation.

Dinner was served at 6:40 p.m.

Mike then reviewed the Lamb and Wool Program credits sold and the history of credits sold. Approximately, 80 % of the credits sold where member producers and the remaining 20% were obtained through a variety of educational outreach programs. Program recruitment was discussed by the committee. Outreach educational programs as well as word of mouth from existing program members have worked best for program member recruitment. National advertisements and news releases have worked the best to reach individuals to enroll in online educational course offerings. Advisory committee

suggested to approach industry organizations and asked for program sponsorship for new members as a way to reduce tuition cost for the first year of the program. Lila Schmidt asked if program members could invite potential student to evening meetings and to the Farm Focus group meetings. Instructors encourage members to invite potential students to evening meetings. The Farm Focus group meetings are designed to share ideas and build relationships with other program members so instructors discouraged inviting potential students. Larger group at the Farm Focus group meetings would reduce discussion as some producers would be less willing to share. Retention of program members is high. Difficulty expressing the value of the program until enrolled.

Dr. Held asked Dean Schloesser about the value of traditional aspects of the program compared to workshops, electronic delivery and other distance delivery options. Instructors need to sell credits for existence. Philip shared information that approximately 80 % of the credits required over the past 10 years have come from producer members and the remaining credits have come from other outreach programs. Dr. Held asked if there would be a way to utilize YouTube video in educational outreach efforts. People are willing to invest less time for education.

Rob Rule asked if it would be possible to take some of the outreach program on the road and present this information in other regions. The Sheep for Profit School would be the best program to offer off site but would be difficult to duplicate the farm tours. Suggested to make a virtual farm tour but would miss the interaction with progressive sheep producers. Suggested that producer members help with the training. Key to taking programs on the road is to have someone at the desired location to help organize and promote the event.

Philip discussed internet courses and other distance delivered courses. There are currently 5 online courses and 1 recorded webinar available. Philip also discussed the onsite course offerings (Facility Tour, Lambing Time Short Course and the Sheep for Profit School). The Facility Tour was offered last year and the Sheep for Profit School will be offered this July. These two programs are only offered every other year.

The next items discussed were farm visits. Each farm visit is very different. The goal of the farm visit is to help producers become more successful. Farm visits are a two-way street with instructors sharing topics they want to discuss and ideas that have worked for other producers and producers having questions specific to their operation. Farm visits are a valuable part of the program and is the most expensive delivery method. Advisory committee members expressed the importance of the farm visits.

Advisory committee members value the newsletter. This is an excellent way to provide a snap shot of the industry as well as provide timely, meaningful management information. Information provided in a quick read format that supports other information delivered on a farm visit or during an evening meeting. Karla Gundermann liked the small group discussions at the evening meetings and other advisory committee members valued the new topics discussed.

Dean Schloesser provided the following comments:

- President recognized article on the Lamb and Wool Program.
- Dean Schloesser encouraged individuals to tell community and state leaders about the importance of the Lamb and Wool Program.
- Program promotion is high cost and encouraged instructors to incorporate more testimonials.
- There will be a new President for Minnesota West Community and Technical College.

Mike asked the committee how the Lamb and Wool program fits into the Lets Grow initiative. Committee provided the following comments:

- How can innovation and excitement be transported?
- Improving production efficiencies
- How can efficiencies be delivered
- How can an impact be made in 3 years
- Do grant dollars fit with the Lamb and Wool Program? Difficult, because of the need to sell credits.
- Need to provide education, but also need to be paid for it
- Package a model (Pipestone Lamb and Wool Production System) Why successful:
 - Critical mass caused – support and infrastructure to be in place
 - Producers need mind set to become better
 - Leadership –
 - Thinking toward the future
 - Make a big splash, make a hero, that leads to technology adoption
 - Build system to be successful
- Used technology/research to build production system to where we are today
- Producers willing to make change and promote success
- The right people that lead producers to the future
- Hog production change 1970 to present. National organizations did not force the change the change was caused by a successful model.

Instructors believe in the “Lets Grow Initiative” but not sure how the Pipestone Lamb and Wool program can fit.

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

Meeting was adjourned at 10:22 p.m.