

## **Lamb and Wool Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes April 27, 2016**

The annual Lamb and Wool Program Advisory Committee met on April 27, 2016 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, Steve Schreier and Lila Schmidt. Staff members present included: Mike Caskey and Philip Berg. Management Interim Dean Paul Lanoue 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 introduced Interim Dean Paul Lanoue and asked committee members to provide a short introduction, to help Paul become more familiar with members of the committee.

Minutes from the 2015 advisory committee meeting were mailed out and Mike reviewed changes made based on comments from the 2015 meeting. Mike indicated that he contacted a couple of local banks and asked about funding for scholarships. Banks would have interest in providing producers additional loan dollars for participation in the program but they would not be interested in supplying dollars to individuals who were not clients of their bank. Last year the committee also asked about taking some of the outreach programs on the road. Instructors were approached by two groups (Utah and Missouri) who expressed interest in educational programming. The Sheep for Profit School would be the best fit for this delivery. Cost of the program and staff time is a concern. The Pipestone Sheep production model was also discussed last year so Mike asked the committee for thought of what should be an important part of the model. Low labor, productive ewes and management of costs were discussed. Year round production of quality lamb is important for the infrastructure of sheep production. Without a year round supply of quality products the sheep industry will continue to shrink and will lose more of the infrastructure. Dr. Goelz thinks the program is very close especially with the feeding, housing and labor demands of a year round lambing system. The difficult part is to identify sheep that will comply with year round lambing.

Dr. Goelz and Russ Gundermann were appointed for another 3 year term on the advisory committee. Mike asked committee if they had ideas for an addition advisory committee member.

Philip handed out an informational booklet and Mike reviewed the 2015/2016 Lamb and Wool program. The bulk of credit sales is from the member producer program (approximately 80%). Approximately twenty percent of the instructor's time is devoted to distance and on-site educational programs. The 2015/2016 credits sold would support 2.45 instructors which is exactly, what Minnesota West college is working to accomplish through the current search for an additional Lamb and Wool Instructor.

Farm visits are still the single most important part of the Lamb and Wool program as viewed by the enrolled producers. Advisory committee also saw value of the farm visits. Mike discussed the program member options. Philip referred the Advisory committee to pages 14 and 15 which described the program options. Mike reported to the committee that there was less discussion group time during the evening meetings this year. Travis Hoffman, Ph.D. was a guest speaker at the last evening meeting. Dr. Hoffman discussed instrument grading and how he thought it would be implemented in the future. Mike pointed out that the small focus group meetings was still a highly valued part of the program. Producers like sharing ideas and networking with other producers with common production goals. Mike asked the committee if they thought there would be value for the small focus groups to have hands on activities. Some ideas have been body condition scoring and live lamb evaluation.

Mike reviewed the producer numbers served/credits sold for the history of the program. The program is currently credit based and prior to 1993/1994 program year the program was fee based. Mike provided a history of the instructors for the Lamb and Wool program. Instructors included: Dwight Holloway, Al Riley, Mike Caskey, Gary Overgaard, Larry Miller, Larry Mrozinski, Dean Risa, Jeff Petersen, Dale Carter and Philip Berg

Dinner was served at 6:40 p.m.

Philip handed out information on the distribution of program members based on year enrolled in the Pipestone Lamb and Wool program. There were 9 new members enrolled this year which is a larger enrollment than usual and only 4 leaving the program. Philip also discussed the distribution of credit sales and pointed out that 80 % of credit sales come from the member producer program and the remaining 20 % come from short courses and outreach educational activities. Goal is to recruit and retain at least 4 new students annually.

Philip reviewed the on-line and distance delivered programs. Currently there are 5 on-line courses offered through the Lamb and Wool program as well as a recorded lambing time management course. Philip referred the committee to pages 16 and 17 of the handouts which summarized the on-line course offerings and the number of students enrolled each year. Generally, a spike in enrollment the first year online course was offered. Largest online enrollment is in the Introduction to Sheep Management course. Introduction to Sheep Health and Ewe Ration Formulation courses are also very popular. Wool Characteristics and Properties has had minimum enrollment.

This past year the Lamb and Wool program had two successful on-site educational course offerings. Last July there were 27 individuals who completed the Sheep for Profit School. Philip shared a map plotting where individuals traveled from to attend the Sheep for Profit School. Individual from 13 states attended this year's program. Philip also discussed the annual Lambing Time Short Course and Bus tour and handed out a map that plotted where individuals traveled from to attend.

Recruitment for on-line courses and on site educational programs is very important. Instructors work hard to promote course offering and annually develop a targeted promotional plan. Philip reviewed the Lamb and Wool Promotional plan. Ads are placed into 4 major national publications as well as targeted state association. News releases are emailed to sheep breed associations, state organizations and regional agricultural publications. Additionally, thousands of emails are sent targeting sheep producers. Advisory committee supported promotional plan and encouraged instructors to continue to explore new ways to reach sheep producers. Interim Dean Lanoue Paul suggested Facebook advertising and encouraged instructors to contact Amber Luinenburg. Committee members also encouraged testimonials to aid with the promotion of the program. Many of the new producers know a program member who shared the benefit of the program. Referrals from existing program members is our best recruitment for new members.

Mike asked the committee for comments and suggestions for the best way to construct educational delivery. Blend of delivery methods is beneficial. The small focus group meetings have worked well and encourage instructors to look for additional ways to implement this delivery method. Mike presented the existing delivery methods and identified enterprise analysis as a weakness. Many producers have the information and are uncomfortable submitting data. To get more data, instructors need to commit more time to train and help producers submit enterprise analysis. Best results occurred when Dean Risa (former instructor) dedicated time to help producers collect data. The advisory committee recommended devoting time at evening meetings to enterprise analysis and encouraged instructors to send out a January 1 inventory worksheet. An advisory committee members asked why individuals join the Lamb and Wool program and the committee agreed that individuals join to improve production. Financial decision are a big part of the education program delivery and enterprise analysis would help producers plan for the future.

Interim Dean Paul Lanoue thanked the committee for their commitment to the Lamb and Wool Program. Lanoue informed the committee that Dr. Terry Gaalswyk is the new President of Minnesota West Community & Technical College. The new president is a strong supporter of management programs. Since Paul was hired there has been several addition Farm Business Management Instructors hired. Dr. Gaalswyk has a strong belief in management programs and is committed to growing the Lamb and Wool program to 2.45 instructors.

Mike asked advisory committee for keys to the future of the Lamb and Wool program. Following are comments from the committee.

- Lambing every month of the year.
- Need financial success
- Successful expansion
- Facility cost and utilization
- Important to provide a high quality product year round
- What is the idea number of sheep per unit of labor

- How can labor per unit be reduced
- Need to fully employ labor

The selection process for a new Lamb and Wool instructor is underway with an anticipated July 1 start date for the new instructor.

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

Meeting was adjourned at 10:12 p.m.