

## **Lamb and Wool Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes** **April 27, 2017**

The annual Lamb and Wool Program Advisory Committee met on April 27, 2017, starting at 5:40 p.m. at Minnesota West Community and Technical College, Pipestone Campus. Committee members present included: 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, Laurie Johnson and Philip Berg. Management Dean Paul Lanoue was also present. Randy Dombek was unable to attend.

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. This was instructor Laurie Johnson's first advisory committee meeting so Mike asked everyone to provide a short introduction.

Minutes from the 2016 advisory committee meeting were mailed out and Mike reviewed changes made based on comments from the 2016 meeting. Mike discussed the following 3 items identified by the committee last year.

- Increase use of Facebook as a promotional tool. Program ran Facebook ad to promote the 2017 Lambing Time Short course.
- Enterprise analysis – Lamb and Wool instructors provided all members with a program booklet which contained inventory and enterprise analysis input forms. Members were encouraged to complete the input forms
- Lastly, committee identified keys to the future at the last advisory committee meeting. To further support the advisory committee comments the Lamb and Wool instructors surveyed program members. Survey results were provided to advisory committee.

Mike reviewed the Lamb and Wool activities and credit sales for the 2016/2017 year. A program booklet was handed out to each member. The Lamb and Wool program had 1.95 instructors (0.45 – Mike, 0.50 Laurie and 1.0 Philip). Laurie is a full time instructor but began employment during the second semester. Mike discussed the credit sales areas (Full Member, Intermediate, Small Flock, Long Distance and Special). Average age of program members is 48.

Philip discussed the Sheep for Profit School which will be held July 5-8, 2017. This is a professional management and business school for the sheep industry. The school is limited to 20 operations. The school will be intense and combine lecture, group discussion and visit two outstanding Pipestone area sheep operations.

Laurie discussed the Lambing Time Short Course and Bus Tour which was held February 10 and 11, 2017. She was impressed with the attendance and the topics discussed. Laurie thought an evaluation will help to enhance the program. Management Dean Lanoue commented on feedback from an attendee of the program. The attendee commented on the quality work and thorough discussion during the Lambing Time Short Course. The committee commented on the importance of breaks to allow individuals to discuss and network with each other.

Laurie then presented the results from a producer survey on program delivery. An outstanding response, 50 out of 73 producers returned a survey (68%). Survey results were distributed to committee members.

Supper was served at 6:40 p.m.

Lamb and Wool instructors asked the committee for feedback on the program delivery survey. Listed below are items identified and discussed by the committee.

- Evening meetings - Steve Schreier commented on the evening meetings and the importance of producer discussion. Producer members like time to discuss issues as identified by several comments in the survey. Russ Gundermann commented on the diversity of producer member experience (new and long term members) and the difficulty to present educational materials to both extremes. Lila Schmidt supported the need for discussion time (peer learning). Committee asked if some long term members may be a good option to lead/facilitate discussion. Discussion topics could include current issues, things that are working and things that are not working. Wes Moser asked how many producers attend evening meetings. Mike reported that the number attending has remained steady over the past 10 years.
- Recorded Webinars – Lila Schmidt commented that this delivery method ranked low but the survey comments showed interest and a need for those unable to attend the scheduled meetings. Laurie Johnson commented that evening meeting discussion cannot be duplicated in a Webinar. Steve Schreier thought the concept of the online recordings was good and that with technology advancement will continue to increase its acceptance and utilization. Dr. Held commented that individuals are getting responses quicker and easier because of cell phones, texting, and email resulting in a reduced attendance at evening meetings.
- Sheep Central – Received low marks and many comments on the difficulty to access. Dr. Held commented that producers have a wide range of technology knowledge. Excellent resource but difficult to access.
- Other comments on delivery method survey – Dr. Goelz commented that the Lamb and Wool program is doing things well and staff continue to think outside the box and look for ways to be more interactive. Probably need to find a mix of delivery methods. Producers value program and are willing to pay to be enrolled. Dr. Held encouraged Lamb and Wool program members to pull the survey data apart based on responses from member enrolled for 10 years or less and greater than 10 years.

Management Dean, Paul Lanoue discussed the Lamb and Wool program. Excited to have Laurie on staff. Survey evaluation excellent and very important for program direction. Programs of Excellence are very valuable to Minnesota West Community and Technical College. Paul indicated the Lamb and Wool program was on track with current budget and he plans to continue the same budget for the next fiscal year. Management Dean Lanoue then presented Mike Caskey a plaque in recognition of his service to the Lamb and Wool Program.

Mike Caskey talked about the Advisory Committee Positions and noted that currently, there are two open positions. Mike asked the committee for possible committee members and or areas or specialties that should be included. Committee came up with the following areas that would enhance the committee: Ag Lender, Feed Manufacturing, Young Producer, Farm Business Management Instructor, MN or Iowa Lamb and Wool Association Leadership.

Hot topic of the year was antibiotics. Veterinarian Feed Directive (VFD), Veterinarian Client Patient Relationship (VCPR) and Antibiotic Free Lamb (ABF) were topics at most meetings. Laurie Johnson discussed the antibiotic free (ABF) survey results. Survey was completed on March 3, 2017. Learned a lot in a very short time period. Instructors were surprised by the number of producers willing to produce ABF lambs. Some producers found that they did not need to give routine antibiotics at processing. Others found it difficult. Dr. Goelz asked the question about what premium is needed for the producer risk. Each year has different challenges. Operations will need to make their own choices. Meat products are being differentiated – market strategies. Competition from imported ABF lambs.

Philip Berg reported on the future challenges addressed by program members at the last evening meeting held on April 4. Fifty-four challenges were identified that night and program members narrowed the list down to 18 future challenges. Currently, program members are being surveyed to identify their top three challenges for future sheep production. This list of challenges will be used by Lamb and Wool instructors for future program development. The Advisory committee further discussed the following challenges.

- Labor and Efficiencies
- System Approach
- Infrastructure
- Balancing Family and other farm enterprises
- Capturing pricing closer to East Coast markets

Rob Rule asked if the Lamb and Wool Program needs growth in the program. Philip Berg responded that to maintain the program needs approximately 3-4 new students/producers annually. Philip referred the committee to the handout that documented the successful enrollment of 3-4 new students/program members per year.

Wes Moser asked about the ASI Lets Grow program and where should the Lets Grow committee focus their resources.

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

Meeting was adjourned at 9:58 p.m.