

Sheep and Goat News – January 2013

From the Extension Learning Farm, Canton, NY

By Betsy Hodge

The sheep all came back to the main farm in early December. We managed to catch them on one of those weirdly warm days when we had lots of interns on hand to help. We built a corral out of the big panels from our cattle handling system. Of course, we had two steers to catch, too, so we needed a strong corral. We put the corral up for a few days and put a round bale in it to teach the sheep and cattle that it was a good place to hang out. I took corn down and fed them in a line on the ground for a few days as well. The pre-training paid off and we caught most of the sheep on the first round. We took several loads back to the main farm and then caught the rest of them and took them back.

One challenge we had was that someone had killed an animal in the trailer and there was blood on the floor and bedding. We realized this after loading the first group of sheep with great difficulty. Between loads Charlie and Ron scraped out as much as they could and we threw some clean hay in the trailer. That helped a lot. The steers loaded the easiest of all and then all that was left was to move all the corral panels back to the main farm.

The sheep were in good body condition considering they were still on pasture in December. The ewes with lambs we had brought back earlier were in OK body condition. The fall lambs were weaned December 7th. We are missing 4 of them...we assume to predators. Of the rest of them, the singles look great and the twins look OK and the triplets look hungry (even though their total weaning weight was about 130 pounds). The twins and triplets had sort of big bellies. I assume this was from eating so much forage and not getting as much milk as their single cohorts. Their weights weren't bad but they just didn't have that smooth, pudgy look.

We had to bring them up slowly on grain because they hadn't had any until that time. They were also quite spooky, having been at the other farm and having less human contact. They are all gaining well on hay and some grain to balance. We tried to feed them first cut round bales but found out that they were caramelized about a foot inside the bale. It was very dark brown and smelled like burned sugar. The lambs would pick at this part but had a hard time pulling the bale apart. There isn't much nutrition in the caramelized part anyways because that is an indication the bale heated and made the nutrients less available. We switched to the lower testing second cut bales until we can look through our first cut bales and find some without the caramelization problem.

We cooperated on a load of lambs, sheep and goats to New Holland on December 15th for the sale on the 17th. Turns out there were 4000 sheep and 4000 goats there that day which meant prices were down and shrink was up. Even though we got top of the sale prices for the 4 small lambs we sent to test the sale, we didn't even get \$100 dollars a lamb. As a matter of fact I think the net per lamb was about \$63.00. Our shrink was 11%. I think many people were anxious to unload extra animals before the holidays to save on hay and labor. Prices were up at New Holland on New Year's Eve. They are still not very exciting, but better than they were. Hopefully we will see some increase during January and February. With Easter falling so early, the demand for lamb should be strong. I heard several people mention that they had lambs to go in February so keep me posted and we will watch the prices.

Speaking of marketing, I will be hosting a 3 session marketing class called **Strategic Marketing Workshops for Livestock Producers**. **Dates and Times: Each session runs from 6:30-8:30 PM, Tuesdays, February 5, 12, and 19, 2013. Classes will be taught by Webinar with discussion to follow.**

Session 1: Introduction to Strategic Marketing: Identifying a Target Market

Session 2: Communicating with Customers

Session 3: A Guide to Marketing Channel Selection

If you direct market your lambs or goats you should take this course. It will help you direct your energies towards the type of direct marketing that fits your situation the best. I am hoping to take it myself, so join me. Pre-registration is required but you can pay the day of the course. \$30.00 per farm. Sign-up with our Extension Office (315-379-9192)

For the beginners out there we will be offering **Sheep and Goat 101** . If you are new to sheep and goats or thinking of starting up a sheep or goat farm, this is the class for you. There will be lecture time, and some hands on. There might be a follow up session in April to cover kidding and lambing. Kids and families welcome.

While we are on the topic of meetings, **save February 23rd for our annual grazing meeting**. This year it will be held in Malone (we hope to rotate to different locations every year). ANCA and FCI are helping to sponsor the program. Jenn Colby, The Pasture Program Coordinator for the UVM Ag Sustainability Program will be a featured speaker as well as local speakers on research trials and demonstrations that have been done in the North Country. There will also be break-out sessions for sheep and dairy. Hugh Sutherland from Quebec will lead the sheep break-out session. Hugh has about 700 sheep. He also milks a portion of them. Some of you have been on a tour to his place and know he is very nice about sharing his information and has a lot of good experience to share. There will be a charge of \$30.00 which includes lunch and snacks.

Minerals were a hot topic at the last sheep and goat week meetings. Both veterinarians mentioned that there was more research on the need for the correct minerals in sheep diets to maximize their immune responses. Your best bet right now is to provide a good commercial formulation meant for the species you have (sheep minerals for sheep and goat minerals for goats). Most formulations have about 30% salt which regulates the amount of the other minerals the animals get. Don't feed other sources of salt or your animals won't eat enough of the loose minerals.

We received a grant to coordinate with another grant Cornell received to study the effectiveness of copper oxide particles to control parasites in lambs and to study some treatments for deer worm. I will keep you posted on how this goes and give you more details on copper oxide particles next month. It will be great to have some data from the North Country included in the study. It gives Tatiana Stanton, from Cornell, a good excuse to come and visit us again as well.

Don't forget that your animals need water, even when there is snow. They can get by on snow but they will drink plenty of water if you provide a tub with a tank heater. Getting around in deep snow can also be a challenge for sheep and goats. Use your tractor, snowmobile or snowshoes to make some paths for them (and you). Although you may be tempted to close your barn up tight when it is cold, remember that sheep and goats need fresh air and closing things up can cause respiratory problems, especially when the temperature swings up and down.

The good news is that the days are getting longer and by the time you read this we will already be halfway through January. Hope to see you at some of the meetings this winter. Don't forget to register with our office or with me on email (bmf9@cornell.edu)

Calendar of Events

Strategic Marketing Course for Livestock Farmers - February 5, 12 and 19th - \$30.00 per farm – See article below. Pre-registration required. Extension Learning Farm

North Country Pasture Meeting –Friday evening February 22nd, Copenhagen (Ron Kuck 788-8450 or rak76@cornell.edu) and Saturday February 23rd 10:30 am Malone 911 Building, Bare Hill Rd. Jenn Colby, Pasture Program Coordinator for the UVM Center for Sustainable Agriculture, break-out sessions for sheep and dairy, reports on some North Country farm trials. Contact Betsy Hodge at 315-379-9192 or bmf9@cornell.edu \$30.00.

Sheep and Goat 101 – Saturday March 9th, 10:00-3:00, A beginners basics course for those new to sheep and goats or wanting to get started in sheep and goats. Lectures and hands on activities. Kids and families welcome. \$10.00 per person or \$20.00 per family. Please register with the office – pay at the door.

Pre-season training for Direct Marketers – March 23rd – Food Safety for different venues and marketing channels. Insurance – do you need it and what kind do you need. Save the day! More details coming.

Bed & Breakfast Owners Guide to Working with Local Farmers – April 11, 1-4pm Extension Learning Farm. We are looking for farmers interested in working with B & B owners and vice versa. Most details coming. Save the Date!

Cornell Cooperative Extension offers Strategic Marketing Workshops for Livestock Producers around New York State.

The demand for locally raised meats and livestock products continues to grow. Strategic and specific marketing efforts can help you take full advantage of the local foods market. If you want to sharpen and focus your marketing skills or just don't know where to begin developing a marketing plan, Cornell Cooperative Extension can help!

Cornell Cooperative Extension has developed a series of workshops that will teach the basics of strategic marketing, including how to identify a target market and focus your farm's marketing efforts. You will also learn how to choose the markets that meet the needs of your farm, such as CSA, farmers' market and wholesale. Each participant will develop components of a marketing plan and create marketing materials.

While this series is tailored specifically to the marketing of meats and other livestock products, it will benefit any farm looking to improve their marketing efforts.

The series costs \$30 per farm (up to 2 people). For more information, contact the Cornell Cooperative Extension office at 315-379-9192. Classes will be held at the Extension Learning Farm in Canton.

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