A MESSAGE FROM YOUR DSANA PRESIDENT, LAUREL KIEFFER

THANK YOU TO MIKE THONNEY AND THE FOLKS at Cornell University for providing us a very informative and well-organized symposium. I was particularly delighted to see a large delegation of sheep dairy producers and processors from Canada. I came home with many ideas on things to modify in my operation. Spending time on the Galton farm was informational in understanding what managing a large operation involves. Thank you to the Galtons and staff for being so open and willing to share details with us.

The annual meeting discussions provided the board with an opportunity to hear from the membership. Many ideas were generated for educational topics for individual farms. There were also many conversations on what, as an industry we need to focus on collaboratively.

The educational topics will be addressed through the 2017 symposium, the DSANA newsletter and, with our new affiliation with American Sheep Industry, through the ASI webinar series. We are very excited to be working with ASI to move forward on enhancing educational opportunities for sheep producers.

The DSANA board met at the symposium to establish five working groups intended to address the most pressing topics that surfaced from the symposium: Genetic Improvement; Semen Importation; Record Keeping; Marketing; and 2017 Symposium. An overview of each of these working groups and their board membership will be highlighted in another article in this newsletter. If you have questions or information you’d like to share regarding any of the topics, please contact the work group chair.

One long-range goal of the board is to secure funding to be able to hire an organizational administrator. As an all-volunteer organization, many things that would greatly improve the viability of the industry just don’t get done. Taking the leap to hiring an administrator will require some creative thinking and outreach to a diversified funding base. If you have not paid 2017 DSANA dues, please do so now. Your annual investment of $50 is vital to providing a foundation for grant match and showing corporations that there is a viable, if small, sheep dairy industry throughout North America. Pulling together will benefit all. Moving forward, anyone who has not paid membership dues within the past three years will be dropped from the membership list. As DSANA works to create a more viable presence, we hope you will want to be an active player.

I wish you a successful lambing season, success in selling your amazing sheep milk products locally, regionally, and across North America, and success in working together to grow this industry.

Laurel Kieffer
DSANA Board of Directors
President
DSANA Workgroups Formed: Moving forward at the membership’s direction

By Laurel Kieffer | DSANA President

The 2017 Annual Meeting gave DSANA members an opportunity to get acquainted with people from across North America through small group discussions pertaining to the sheep dairy industry’s challenges and opportunities. From that meeting the DSANA board has formed workgroups to continue forward momentum. Please direct any suggestions, insights, or comments to the workgroup chair. Also, contact the chair if you are interested in helping out in any way.

Genetic Improvement Working Group: Axel Meister (chair), Tom Clark, Liam Callahan, Bill Halligan, Laurel Kieffer. Focus: To create a plan of action to establish estimated breeding values within the sheep dairy industry, and identify and obtain funding to begin pilot project implementation.

Semen Importation Working Group: Tom Clark (chair), Yves Berger, Liam Callahan. Focus: To continue the semen importation project begun in 2016. 900 straws are expected to arrive in the U.S.A this spring. All producers importing semen are required to be current DSANA members, will be required to track the progeny of all resulting offspring, and expected to participate in tracking production records of the offspring. The work group will be exploring options to continue the importation of semen in the future.

Record-keeping Working Group: Bee Tolman (chair), Sarah Hoffman, Liam Callahan, Kendall Russell, Chris Buschbeck, Laurel Kieffer. Focus: To identify what production metrics and records North American sheep dairy producers should/could use to create a common genetic and production database program for the industry.

Marketing Working Group: Eliza Spertus (chair), Mike Histon, Marie-Chantal Houde, Terry Felda. Focus: To improve the communication viability of the website, Facebook and other social media; expand DSANA membership; explore developing literature for improving consumer awareness of sheep milk products.

Symposium 2017 Working Group: Marie-Chantal Houde and Axel Meister (co-chairs), DSANA board. Focus: To schedule, organize and host the 2017 DSANA symposium.

Updates to any of these working groups will be posted on the DSANA website or Facebook page. The DSANA board encourages your participation.

Record-keeping

Over the last few years, DSANA has been trying to determine how to develop a common, industry-wide record-keeping system that record not only genetic and progeny information as well as but actual dairy production information. Laurel Kieffer addresses this issue in her President’s Message. The Record-keeping Working Group is now working to collect information on the following points, with the intention of proposing a collective system for North American sheep dairy producers to participate in:

A. Metrics that producers could/should use
   1. Milk production
      i. How often during the season, or at which DIM
      ii. How many times during a metering day (i.e., morning milking only, both milkings)
   2. Components
      i. Which components to measure
      ii. How often to measure components to recognize individual animal differences
   3. Udder conformation
      i. Existing grading systems
   4. Non-dairy production metrics (i.e., lamb information)
   5. For all of the above, differentiate between necessary/bare minimum/helptul-though-not-essential

B. Equipment used to measure milk production
   1. What meters are available, and at what cost
   2. What available meters are aligned with international standards

C. Equipment or services used to measure components
   1. What services are available and at what cost
   2. What equipment is required of producers to collect samples for component testing

D. Software used to record farm data
   1. What packages are currently available
   2. Pros/cons of each pkg, cost of each pkg

E. Data-processing group
   1. Which group could we work with (i.e., GenOvis, DHI, …)
   2. What are the pros/cons/services of each?
   3. Ease of data transfer from individual farm software package to larger data-processing system
   4. Cost to producers and/or DSANA

F. Record-keeping systems currently in use by DSANA members and North American dairy sheep producers
   1. Conduct a survey to help us understand what systems producers are currently using
   2. What proposal will result in the best transition for individual producers (whether they are currently milk-recording or not)

DSANA members (and other sheep dairy producers who are not yet members!) will receive a survey in the upcoming months, regarding what milk-recording systems they are currently using (equipment, metrics, timing, etc.). This information will be very valuable to the development of an industry-wide recording protocol.
ASI meeting in Denver
— January 26th & 27th
By Bill Halligan  |  DSANA Treasurer Director

The American Sheep Industry (ASI) annual convention was held January 27-28 2017 in Denver Co. As associate members, DSANA was eligible to send a representative to the Genetic Stakeholders meeting. DSANA’s Board of Directors asked Bill Halligan to attend the convention and report back to our organization.

At the Genetics Stakeholders meeting the National Sheep Improvement Program (NSIP) was discussed. The main speaker was Rusty Burgett whom many of us in the dairy industry met and worked with at University of Wisconsin Sheep Research Center in Spooner, WI. The main emphasis in Rusty’s presentation was growth rates for lambs in range operations. There was also a presentation on how to make blackface rams live longer in range conditions.

Rusty spent much of his free time introducing me to sheep research professors from across the country. As always, Rusty was a great deal of help and knowledge. We talked about the possibility that a module could be added to the NSIP that would evaluate milk production for dairy rams.

After meeting with these researchers, Rusty and other members of the Genetics Stakeholders Working Group regarding DSANA’s importation of Lacaune semen, I think we need to take one straw from each ram and collect a DNA signature. Doing so would allow us to:

- Prove if future rams are descendants of one of the imported rams;
- Have trace-ability if an undesirable recessive gene is identified in the future; as well as being able to identify and trace highly desirable genes.

We also discussed the how-to’s of storing this DNA for future reference. Unfortunately, there seems to be no one common or preferred method. Perhaps the sheep industry is not as far along or well developed in this area as it is for cattle DNA storage. Regardless, I recommend DSANA buy one straw from each ram and store it in liquid nitrogen until the best practices are developed for the extraction and record keeping of ram DNA.
WHILE THERE MAY NOT BE A CEREMONY OR A cap and gown, lamb weaning is essentially a graduation. Lambs are growing up and transitioning to the next stage of their lives. This may be an exciting time, but it can also be stressful for both you and your lambs. To make the transition as smooth as possible, it’s important to have a weaning plan in place and avoid putting additional stress on your lambs.

Here are six suggested steps for a low-stress weaning transition.

1. Make sure lambs are ready.
The biggest indicator that lambs are ready for weaning is dry feed consumption. At weaning, lambs should consume at least 0.75 pounds of starter per day and have consumed a total of at least 25 pounds of lamb-specific milk replacer powder. Lambs typically reach this benchmark around 35 pounds of body weight.

When lambs are ready for weaning, you should be too. Make sure to have a weaning plan in place 2-3 weeks before starting the weaning process. Know when and how the weaning process will take place and prepare for any challenges that may arise during the transition period.

2. Offer creep feed.
To prepare for weaning, offer free choice creep feed (starter grain) starting at one week of age and plenty of fresh, clean free choice water. A high-quality starter grain of at least 18 percent protein is ideal for lamb rumen development. Start by feeding small amounts at a time to keep starter fresh and to reduce waste. As lambs begin eating starter feed, provide more at each feeding.

At the start of weaning, lambs should be consuming at least 2 percent of their body weight daily in high-quality creep feed. Lambs should also have access to free choice clean, room temperature water. This can help them become accustomed to drinking water and prevent dehydration during weaning. Providing a multi-species electrolyte can also help reduce stress and prevent dehydration.

3. Decrease amount of milk replacer.
Abrupt removal of milk replacer can be stressful on lambs and can cause digestive issues. For a smooth weaning transition, gradually reduce the amount of milk replacer fed over a period of 4-7 days. Step down the total volume of milk replacer offered by reducing the number of feedings and/or dilute milk replacer with additional water to lower the level of milk solids.

If you are weaning lambs off the ewe, it can be challenging to limit the amount of milk consumed. Reduce access to the ewe and ensure lambs are consuming the proper amount of starter and water before completing the weaning process.

Weaning essentials: one step at a time • continued on p. 5

By Dr. Tom Earleywine, director of nutritional services for Land O’Lakes Animal Milk Products

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Lamb Nutrition Column sponsored by LAND O LAKES® ANIMAL MILK PRODUCTS CO.

Weaning essentials: one step at a time  • continued on p. 4

4. Provide consistent grouping.
Lambs that are group-housed during the pre-weaning phase form hierarchies and close bonds. It’s important to keep this consistency in lamb groups during weaning by avoiding transitioning lambs to larger groups. Introducing new animals into the group dynamic can put added stress on young lambs. Avoid any major group changes 2 weeks before and 2 weeks following weaning.

When grouping lambs, consider smaller groups with lambs of similar size and age. The more consistent the animals within a group, the better. Larger, dominant animals can limit feed and water access to other lambs when competing for bunk space. If there are dominant lambs in several of your groups, consider placing them together.

Group size can also play a role in reducing disease challenges. Small group sizes with adequate space of 15-20 square feet per lamb may help reduce respiratory challenges in young lambs.

5. Keep environments clean.
Providing a clean and sanitary environment is important during any stage of lamb development, and is especially critical during weaning. A clean, dry environment with good ventilation and drainage can help reduce the potential for disease challenges during the weaning process. This can not only help keep animals drier but can also help save on bedding costs.

Pay close attention to areas surrounding waterers and feed bunks. Proper drainage in these spaces is essential as they are high traffic areas. It’s also important to keep these areas as clean as possible to minimize the possibility of disease transfer from animals eating and drinking from the same feeders.

6. Perform pre-weaning procedures.
For young lambs, change can be stressful. For that reason, work to make one change at a time. Health practices, like deworming, castration, vaccination and tagging, should occur pre-weaning when young lambs are consuming more nutrients from milk replacer.

For each of these practices, it’s important to steer clear of other stressors occurring at the same time. Avoid moving pens, altering feed, performing multiple procedures simultaneously and any other major changes when performing procedures.

All told, these six steps can help lambs graduate from milk replacer and transition to the next stage of life. With preparation and a low-stress weaning plan, lambs can seamlessly transition through weaning and become successful members of the flock.

For more information on lamb nutrition and management tips, visit www.lolmilkreplacer.com or contact Dr. Tom Earleywine at (800) 618-6455 or email TJEarleywine@landolakes.com.

Recommended lamb feeding program

• Day One: Feed LAND O LAKES® Colostrum Replacement for Kid Goats and Lambs.

• Day 2-30: Feed LAND O LAKES® Ultra Fresh® Optimum lamb milk replacer and provide ample water supply to lambs at all times.

• Day 14: Start lambs on high-quality starter feed. Do not feed hay the first 3 weeks.

• Day 30: Lambs are ready to wean when they weigh 25 pounds and are eating ample quantities of starter feed. They should have consumed at least 20-25 pounds of Ultra Fresh® Optimum lamb milk replacer powder. This usually occurs around 30 days of age.
Interview with
Samantha Kane, ACS, CCP, Cheese Cave Team Leader

By Terry Felda | DSANA Editor and Director

In December 2016, I went back to visit Philadelphia, where I lived before venturing into sheep dairying. I discovered sheep cheeses while living there and working for two cheese shops. The first was a small independent “the Cheese Shop” and the other was Whole Foods.

Since then, I have had an affinity for gourmet foods shops and good cheesemongers. It was a delight to meet Samantha Kane, a young woman working for one of the oldest and, in my mind, one of the best upscale food marts on the east coast.

I asked her to address a few questions regarding what she looks for in artisanal cheeses and the people who make them.

"If you tasted the cheese blind, it should always remind you of what it is even though the flavor may not be identical."

My name is Samantha Kane and I work for a specialty food retailer in Philadelphia called Di Bruno Bros. We started in 1939, not selling much food at all, but in an effort to diversify within the Italian Market, Danny and Joe imported a wheel of Swiss Emmentaler (the one with the holes!) and put it into the front window to draw attention. It worked! And once you were inside, you became part of the fold. Tasting and sharing stories and recipes, much like today, became the draw.

In the ’90s Emilio and Bill took over, bought the business, and are now the 3rd generation owner/operators. We have truly grown into a food mecca of sorts in Philly.

I have had the pleasure of working my way into the cheese community through Di Bruno Bros. About 4 years ago, I started as a cheesemonger apprentice and worked my way up to now being the Cheese Team Leader for the largest cheese department in the company. We have 5 retail stores, a catering department, and a warehouse that handles all our importing and distribution.

My job is one of the best in the world, I think, for a few key reasons. First and foremost, I get to eat cheese all day and then talk to people about it! Secondly, the other main facet of my position is to talk to cheesemakers and distributors throughout the week about what tastes good right now, how things are aging, and then ultimately decide what to buy that week. It’s a great deal of responsibility, being the liaison between the maker and the consumer, but it’s arguably the best and most rewarding part.

Interview with Samantha Kane • continued on p. 7
My mentor said to me once, "Our job as cheesemongers is to source great cheese, take care of it, and then give it to someone who will love it the same way." What a romantic idea for cheese sales, and I find myself saying it to my team more often than they would probably like.

When sourcing out a new cheese or cheesemaker I try to keep a few things in the front of my mind. Consistency is crucial. The beauty of artisan cheese is that it changes flavor profiles seasonally and truly represents the terroir. The part that gets tricky is you still want it to hold some distinguishing characteristics to let you know it’s the same cheese, but with a different personality. If you tasted the cheese blind, it should always remind you of what it is even though the flavor may not be identical.

Availability of the item is also tough. When cheesemongers are excited about something, we really SELL it. To know what kind of timeline you have for ordering and how often it will really be available helps decide whether or not to stock it.

Lastly, how well it can hold is very important to me. Certainly, in an ideal world, a cheese would arrive at the shop and within a few days, there would be nothing left and we would reorder. Unfortunately, it is not always so easy, so knowing the way the cheese continues to age and develop plays an important role in choosing stock items.

For our customers, each store really has its own unique personality. At our Italian Market store, customers look for the story and a pairing. At our location on Rittenhouse Square, the largest of the shops, people are looking for advice on curating an experience. Our customers want to know where the milk came from, if it’s organic, who the maker is, what the cheese can go with, possible charcuterie pairings, when it should be taken out of the fridge, and best practices for storing.

As a company, our customers know that we sell a quality product, we are very picky, and we want to share it with them. Over the years, they have grown to ask all the same questions we ourselves ask when deciding to acquire it in the first place. Obviously, not every customer is this way - we still have our Monday ladies who just need some Brie or our Saturday gents that always grab a pound of Provolone - but for the most part our guests want to try what we are excited about.

I think that the artisan cheese market is going to have some very tough times in the coming years. As our country stands right now, spending money isn’t what it was, and also the potential for the cheese market hasn’t fully blossomed yet. So many folks still think eating cheese is bad for you - unhealthy, even.

Farming, especially dairy farming, is laborious and under-gratifying work. I do believe that people are trying to become more educated on how quality foods affect us and also where that food comes from. This can only be a positive movement for cheese and small producers as long as we continue this momentum and are willing to keep having conversations and educating the consumer.

I do believe that artisan cheese making can be sustainable. I think that in time, there is a strong likelihood that cheese will become a necessary staple in our diets, if for no other reason than to replace meats due to poor quality or continuously rising cost. People all over the world have been making cheese and butter for thousands of years; even in hard times, it still sustains us.

I am not sure if the industry will ever be lucrative; honestly, there are so few aspects of the food industry that are continuously profitable. However it is our responsibility as educated culinary professionals to strive to be better and bring that to the masses. It still is and always has been a labor of love derived from a unique and incomparable passion. That is really the sustaining force.
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