A MESSAGE FROM YOUR DSANA PRESIDENT, LAUREL KIEFFER

ALL COLORS ARE COMING IN FULL IN WISCONSIN after a very wet and warm fall. Our first frost was between two and three weeks later than normal. The weather has certainly provided challenges for many throughout the United States. I send well-wishes to those of you for whom the weather has caused you serious loss. For others who are on seasonal milking, I hope you are able to find some time to rest and regroup in preparation for the next lambing and milking season. There are a few thoughts and updates I’d like to share with this fall’s newsletter.

The LaCaune semen importation process is underway – delayed, but underway. We expect the semen to be arriving in the U.S. sometime in January 2017. This means we miss the 2016 fall breeding season, but it does mean that the semen will be available for those wanting to do off-season breeding. Tom Clark and Yves Berger continue to monitor and do what they can to expedite the process.

The symposium is coming up soon – December 1-4. If you haven’t yet registered for going to Cornell University in Ithaca, NY, I hope you will do it soon. It looks to be another fine opportunity to learn and network.

Now is the time to pay DSANA dues for 2017. Your $50 annual membership gets you the following current member benefits: quarterly newsletter, access to imported semen, discounted rates on symposium registration, American Sheep Industry newsletter and membership, networking through our Facebook page and website. More benefits are in the making.

The board is currently working with a grant writing consultant to identify and access funds to create and conduct an industry survey, and make recommendations on growth and development. More on this will be shared at the DSANA annual meeting at Cornell.

Finally, October marked the closing of the University of Wisconsin’s Spooner Sheep Dairy Research Station. The flock dispersal was completed in early October. It is certainly difficult to grasp what it will be like moving the sheep dairy industry forward without the support provided by the University of Wisconsin through research and genetic and program development. Sincere gratitude and thanks go to Yves Berger, David Thomas, Rusty Burgett, Phil Holman, and so many others for the work they have done throughout the years to create a sheep dairy industry. What I know is that those of us interested in having a viable and growing industry will need to become ever more involved.
22nd Annual Dairy Sheep Association of North America Symposium

By Michael Thonney | 2016 DSANA Symposium Chair

The 22nd Annual Symposium will be held on the Cornell University Campus in Ithaca, NY starting with an informal reception the evening of Thursday, December 1.

With coffee and breakfast items available at 7:30 a.m., the symposium will officially begin at 8:00 a.m. on Friday, December 2 in the Morrison Hall with virtual tours of local pasture-based dairies followed by a tour of Shepherd’s Way LLC, a large sheep and goat dairy farm located 30 minutes north of Ithaca near Locke, NY. After lunch back at Morrison Hall, we will be welcomed by representatives of the College of Agriculture & Life Sciences and the Department of Animal Science. The remainder of the afternoon will be devoted to presentations on genomics and genetic evaluations of dairy sheep. This will be followed by an early evening dairy sheep cheese and yogurt tasting supplemented with New York wines, soft drinks and hors d’oeuvres.

Coffee and breakfast items will start Saturday morning off at 8 a.m. The morning program will begin with presentations on parlor design and best practices for milkling dairy sheep. This will be followed by a presentation on prevention and treatment of mastitis and then on factors affecting sheep cheese quality. Right after lunch there will be an explanation of the Canadian GenOvis online record keeping system followed by a producer discussion of record keeping experiences. After the break, we will discuss a project that will have just begun at Cornell to identify optimal levels of fermentable fiber in diets for milking sheep. A social hour and banquet will be held on Saturday evening.

The program on Sunday morning will start with a professor of veterinary medicine reviewing prevention and treatment of diseases of dairy sheep. After a morning break, symposium participants will choose between a demonstration of how to do on-farm sheep necropsy or a presentation on feeding dairy sheep. This will be followed after lunch by a presentation on integrated control of internal parasites. The program will end with presentations on setting up a farmstead sheep dairy.

Morning and afternoon breaks will feature coffee, soft drinks, snacks and opportunities to talk with vendors in the trade show.

The complete program and registration for the symposium is available at www.dsana.org.

Information about Ithaca is available at www.visitithaca.com. The Ithaca airport is served by Delta, American Airlines, and United Airlines. Alternative airports are Syracuse, Elmira, and Binghamton (all about an hour away from Ithaca).

Blocks of rooms for December 1 are available at the Ramada Hotel & Conference Center ($99.95, 607-257-3100, 3.2 miles from campus), the Best Western University Inn ($125 to $135, 607-272-6100, 1.1 mile from campus), and The Statler Hotel (130 Statler Drive, 0.7 miles from Morrison Hall); contact Barbara Jones at bjj6@cornell.edu for special rate of $190 per night (+$12 for parking) plus tax.

Howard Wyman Sheep Industry Leadership School debuts in Oregon Willamette Valley

The 31st Annual Howard Wyman Sheep Industry Leadership School sponsored by the National Lamb Feeders Association will debut March 12-15, 2017, in Albany, Oregon located in the heart of Oregon grass seed country. The school was moved from summer to spring to allow participants to get the most out of seeing the area’s unique grass fed lamb production and marketing systems in operation. Planned visits within the 70-mile radius of Albany include a startup sheep dairy in Jefferson, a three-year old on-ranch harvest facility, a fiber mill in Lebanon, vineyard grazing and winery tour in Eugene, plus a unique variety of large and small sheep growing operations. An optional tour to the Oregon Coast that ends up at Portland International Airport is available for those wishing to stay an extra day.

Tom Nichols, past manager for the Sheep Research Center at Oregon State University and current president of the Oregon Sheep Growers Association, is directing the 2017 School.

“Other than the Imperial Valley in Southern California, we are the only place that has this unique grass-fed system,” Nichols said. “It is the perfect place for producers who are trying to develop a grass-fed system to visit and spring is the time to do it. One evening we will spend around the barbeque with the grass seed growers and sheep producers detailing the way they work with each other and on the day we hear about sheep grazing in the vineyards, we’ll be adding a tour of the winery.

The first Howard Wyman Sheep Industry Leadership School, held in Fort Collins, CO, has rotated between Sioux Falls, SD, San Angelo, TX, Greeley, CO, Columbus, OH, Philadelphia, PA and Dixon, CA over the last 30 years. Known for its intensive program balancing classroom time, site tours and one-on-one exchanges, the program also offers participants opportunities to listen to industry leaders, academic experts, as well as make connections with other producers representing different parts of the country.

Cost to the individual participant consists of their transportation to and from the selected school site plus a $200 per person registration fee. NLFA provides meals and lodging for the participants, as well as the cost of the site tours and program supplies. Cost for the optional Oregon Coast Tour will be announced later.

Participants must be 20 years of age to apply. The application process consists of a written essay. A group of approximately 24-26 participants will be selected for the school. Deadline for registration is January 6, 2017.

For more information, contact NLFA or visit www.nlfa-sheep.org.
Are you ready for lambing season?
Preparation now can lead to success this spring.

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

Lambing season can drive a shepherd’s long-term success. The health, growth and early performance of a lamb crop determines the number of feeders for marketing and the quality of replacements entering the flock. With so much riding on lambing season, be sure to plan in advance to provide optimal care to your next crop of lambs.

Set goals.
Before the first lamb hits the ground, analyze past performance of the flock and set goals. Setting tangible goals and determining a path for achieving these objectives can help you build on past flock performance.

Consider the following goals:

- **200 percent lamb crop:** Mature and well-conditioned ewes should be able to care for at least two lambs. To achieve this goal, extra lambs (triples and quads) and those from younger or under-conditioned ewes may be better cared for away from the ewe.
- **Less than 5 percent pre-weaning mortality:** The industry target for pre-weaning mortality is less than 5 percent. However, it’s estimated that nearly 20 percent of lambs die before weaning, with 80 percent of those losses occurring during the first 10 days.

Create a colostrum feeding strategy.
Colostrum, or the first milk of the ewe, is the first protection lambs receive against environmental pathogens and bacteria; however, not all ewes are able to produce the quality or quantity of colostrum required for early protection.

Test quality of colostrum with a colostrometer and monitor the amount of colostrum consumed. Provide colostrum at a rate of at least 10 percent of a lamb’s body weight by 18 hours of age. Serum immunoglobulin levels should be above 10 mg/ml.

Keep a colostrum replacer on hand during lambing season in case ewes are unable to produce the necessary colostrum. Colostrum replacers are one way to reduce variation in quality and provide proven protection to newborns. If feeding a colostrum replacer, select one that is formulated and USDA-approved (to prevent failure of passive transfer) specifically for lambs and kid goats.

Determine which lambs should be fed milk replacer.
Feeding a milk replacer can help provide consistent nutrition to the entire lamb crop, especially those that the ewe is unable to care for. The option also allows dairy sheep producers to market ewe’s milk.

Determine which lambs should be fed milk replacer as soon as possible, considering the following lambs which require additional care:

- Lambs in dairy sheep flocks
- Orphan lambs
- Weak lambs unable to nurse
- Unclaimed lambs
- Third and fourth lambs in sets of triplets or quadruplets
- Weaker or smaller lamb of twins
- One of the twins from a ewe lambing at less than one year of age

*Are you ready for lambing season? • continued on p. 4*
Select a lamb-specific milk replacer.

Research milk replacer options and select a milk replacer formulated specifically for sheep. Lambs require different nutrient levels than other livestock, so milk replacers created for other species may not provide adequate nutrition.

The fat content of sheep milk is much higher than cow’s or goat’s milk and the lactose content is lower. Selecting a milk replacer that provides these higher nutrient levels can better help lambs meet their full potential. In fact, research from the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s Spooner Agricultural Research Station has shown that successfully raising lambs on milk replacer can increase the net return per ewe for the flock due to increased growth rates compared to sheep milk and non-sheep milk replacers.

To best match the nutrients in ewe’s milk, select a lamb milk replacer with an enhanced fatty acid profile and a balance of 25 percent protein and 30 percent fat. The ingredient Digestarom® has also been shown to positively support gut health.

Assist and monitor lambs from birth through weaning.

Create a schedule for lamb management. Consider the following steps and tips when raising young lambs:

- Provide an adequate quantity of colostrum to newborn lambs as soon after birth as possible.
- Remove lambs from sight or hearing distance of ewe as soon as possible after birth.
- Provide a warm, dry, draft-free place to start nursing lambs.
- Assist lambs in nursing for the first few feedings as needed.
- Avoid placing younger lambs with older lambs. Older lambs tend to push smaller lambs away from feeding.
- Hang a light over the milk replacer self-feeding devices for added visibility and warmth.
- Start lambs on high-quality starter feed at 2 weeks of age and provide a clean, fresh water supply in front of lambs at all times.
- Wean at 30 days or 25 pounds of weight when lambs have begun to eat starter feed routinely. At weaning time, each lamb should have consumed at least 20-25 pounds of Ultra Fresh® Optimum lamb milk replacer powder. This usually occurs around 30 days of age.

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

Be sure to visit with Land O’Lakes Animal Milk Products at the upcoming DSANA Symposium!

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TWO YEARS AGO AT THE DSANA SYMPOSIUM IN Chehalis, Washington, attendees toured Black Sheep Creamery’s (BSC) farm followed by a discussion about starting a wool and yarn sideline to the creamery. If you listened closely, you might have heard Meg Gregory, co-owner of Black Sheep Creamery, mention her dream of an actual yarn store.

Approximately eight attendees came to the cheese making workshop held in Black Sheep’s cheese room. It was small, crammed and one doorway separated it from the milking barn. That barn accommodated eight ewes and it took about three hours to milk approximately 80 head.

And if you listened closely to Brad Gregory, the other half of Black Sheep Creamery, you might have heard him say that the tear-down was starting “as soon as everyone goes home.”

In the weeks and months that followed, Black Sheep Creamery went through a massive and oftentimes gut-wrenching, emotionally trying expansion. The reasons behind it are familiar to anyone in the dairy business – it’s virtually impossible to survive, much less profit, milking less than 250 head of sheep. The Federal Department of Agriculture wanted the milking barn separated from the cheese making facilities and Meg wanted a yarn store.

Initially, the plan was to partner with another local sheep dairy. The two farms would hire a manager, lease the sheep to a separate entity and buy back the milk. To accommodate 200-plus head, a third farm would be leased allowing for adequate grazing.

It was proving difficult to lease that third property and spring was rapidly approaching. In the end, Brad and Meg purchased a building in historic downtown Chehalis apart from the partnership. The building had originally contained three separate storefronts and would require extensive renovations to open as a combined cheese processing facility, coffee house and yarn shop.

By January 2015 the new building was purchased. About 120 ewes leased from the other dairy had arrived on the farm and lambed alongside their 80 head. Installing the new hoop barn with their updated lambing facilities also included the added distraction of working around ewes in labor.

Even more urgently, the new milking barn hadn’t been finished yet. Meg and Brad ended up purchasing the other farms’ milking system, a parallel 24 headlock system with a clean-in-place component. A major upgrade from one bucket and ITP205s. But to fit all that equipment in and to address the FDA’s concerns, the barn had to be gutted and the old cheese room taken out. In fact, even with gutting the building, that 24 headgate layout had to be cut down to 22 head.

Ordinarily, the Gregory’s started milking in February with a day-1 system. Because of the construction, they had to switch back to day-30 for the first few weeks of lambing resulting in not only a loss of production, but it also didn’t allow Brad to make the fresh cheeses the creamery is known for.

Finally, in February 2015 the new milking facility was in, working and approved by the Washington Department of Agriculture (WDA). Brad said later that the WDA was really helpful in the transition.

Black Sheep Creamery – then and now • continued on p. 6
”We’ve worked alongside the WDA for a long time now. Our mutual trust and cooperation played a major role in getting this done,” said Brad.

In the old barn, it took one person to milk each shift. But between bringing in the sheep from pasture, booting up the new system and working through close to 200 ewes, 22 at a time, it now took two people to milk each shift. And that extra overhead and labor costs felt even more onerous since the building in Chehalis was getting bogged down in construction and inspection delays. It also meant that Brad didn’t have a place to make cheese. So he began driving to the partnering farm and making cheese there three days a week. When he was done, he would haul the fresh cheeses back to his farm for aging.

At the same time, Meg was coordinating labor with their part-time farm manager, running the wholesale cheese operation, raising the lambs and replacement ewes, working with Brad and their contractors on the building, designing the new yarn shop and co-writing a book called ”Black Sheep Creamery”.

Originally, the new store was to open on Memorial Day. Logistic and construction delays pushed the opening to mid-summer. The region’s oppressive drought ran the partnering farm wells dry in July.

”When Brad couldn’t make cheese anymore, we dropped everything else and focused on getting that new room done,” said Meg. “Everything else had to wait because frankly, cheese is what we sell!”

Again, city and state officials worked with the Gregory’s to get it done. The final inspection and signoff was at 9:00 a.m., and Brad was making cheese an hour later.

Their new facility has allowed Brad to catch up on and expand their hard cheese inventory, a vital step against the production losses of their well-known fresh cheeses.

Attention then shifted back to getting the store open. Emails from Meg said, ”July 4th,” then “labor day,” then “I give up. It opens when it opens.” Brick walls needed to be sealed around the coffee bar, yarn stock was back ordered, the list and sleepless nights seemed endless. Finally, the opening weekend was set. It was the weekend after the two of them came back from a long-planned and highly anticipated 10-day trip to Italy.

On Friday morning, October 23, 2015 “Ewe and I” and Black Sheep Creamery opened for business. Ewe and I is the yarn store- owned by Meg and another partner, and separate from the creamery, it leases its space from BSC. It holds a variety of yarns from locally sourced vendors including the BSC wool collection that Meg was showcasing during that Chehalis farm tour in 2014. Additionally, the store has three looms, classrooms, a children’s play area and a large welcoming space for customers and ad-hoc knitting sprees.

The coffee bar complete with a custom Italian expresso machine encourages shoppers to linger, draws in additional local traffic and fuels the owners! The open design also allows people to watch Brad make cheese and the cheese counter an opportunity to buy it. Throughout the winter, Meg and Brad plan on expanding the menu to include pastries and sandwiches. The cheese counter will eventually also sell their lamb.

There are several aspects to this expansion that should be noted and from a lender’s point of view pointed to its success. One is that there is no partnership, rather a lease agreement. That allows the Gregory’s the flexibility to change their focus as needed. Additionally, while the cheese room in the new building is ultimately the major income generator, the coffee bar creates a daily cash flow and provides additional incentive to linger at Ewe and I. And by having additional partnership support, Meg isn’t required to man the store full-time. At least, that’s the theory!
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