



PRAIRIE SHEEP UPDATE

FALL & WINTER 2002

Communicating across the Prairies

This summer has been a struggle for farmers all across the Prairies. Prices are low for most livestock, stocks of red meat are high, drought has impacted the supply, quality and price of winter feed in many areas.

All summer producers have been debating what to feed livestock when the grass and hay crops quits growing. A series of fact sheets dealing with odd and unusual feeds were developed to try to deal with producers' most common questions (see www.agric.gov.ab.ca/drought/livestock).

The general consensus is - it's a lot easier to feed sheep when you have lots of cheap alfalfa hay and barley. In the long run, however, producers have commented that learning how to use screenings, greenfeeds, crop residues and by-products could be a realistic means of reducing winter feed costs even when the rains return. A producer from the North has contributed some winter feeding ideas.

In Alberta producers have been developing extended season and stockpiled forage

grazing programs. This year is a dramatic step backwards. Calculating feed and the cost of feeding for 300, or more, days will be a challenge.

Producers who are trying different production and marketing techniques have interesting experiences to share. Let us know what you or your group are doing.

The business of sheep production is being looked at in new ways all over the world. In an Alberta marketing information package, I was interested to note the comments of producers who are now direct marketing. Two of them feel that their farms are in a much better position to weather drought than neighbours' who are marketing through traditional commodity markets. There are some excellent marketing workshops being developed - note the last page for details.

Enjoy the newsletter - Sue & Wray

Points to look for:

- FRONT PAGE COMMENTARY
- PRODUCTION
- MARKETS
- SHEEP BUSINESS
- RESEARCH
- PROVINCIAL UPDATES

- Susan Hosford, Business Development, Alberta Food & Rural Development
- Wray Whitmore, Sheep & Goat Specialist, Manitoba Agriculture & Food

IN THE CORRAL...

Wray Whitmore, Manitoba

Controlling Internal Parasites in Sheep

Internal parasites can be a significant problem in a sheep operation. Parasites result in production losses, such as reduced growth, which can be expensive. Nursing and weaned lambs grazing pasture during the summer are very susceptible.

Parasites can be found in the stomach, intestine, liver and the lungs of sheep. The types of parasites found in Prairie sheep include roundworms (nematodes), flukes (trematodes) and tapeworms (cestodes).

Roundworms have a typical life cycle. The adult female lives in the intestine of sheep. The eggs they produce are passed out through the manure to contaminate the environment. The eggs hatching of larvae occurs quickly during warm, wet weather. There can be several moultings before the final infectious larvae are ready to infect sheep. The worm larvae crawl on to grass where they wait to be eaten by a grazing sheep. When the worm is eaten, the larvae penetrate the lining of the stomach or intestine of their host where they undergo changes leading to adulthood. Once adult female worms have matured, they start to produce eggs.

Larvae that have been eaten in late summer or fall can burrow into the intestinal wall and remain dormant over the winter. This dormancy period ensures survival of the worm species. During the winter, the number of egg producing adults in the intestine is generally low. Dormant larvae are stimulated by length of daylight, changes in weather, the stress of pregnancy and the process of giving birth. The reactivated larvae emerge and quickly develop into mature worms.

At four to six weeks after lambing, the new mature worms begin to produce very high numbers of eggs. These eggs are passed out in the manure where they contaminate the environment, usually in favorable weather conditions. These worms can infect young lambs, which are very susceptible to parasitism. This sudden increase in egg production is called the spring rise or the post-parturient rise.

The burrowing, migrating and the maturing larvae along with blood sucking adult worms can do a lot of damage in a short period of time. The losses in production can be expensive quite quickly. Signs of parasite infestation in lambs is diarrhea, dehydration, anemia (from blood loss), general unthriftiness and in some cases fluid accumulation under the lower jaw (bottle jaw). A fecal sample should be collected for a worm egg count test. Once an infestation is diagnosed, the animals should be dewormed to prevent further damage and the damage from becoming permanent.

A rule of thumb for deworming a sheep flock is pre-breeding (usually after the winter feeding program has started), pre-lambing (this makes sure that the good feed going to lactating ewes is used to produce milk) and pre-pasture (helps to reduce pasture contamination which is important in intensive operations). It is important to remember that the more pasture you use in your sheep production system, the more parasite problems your sheep may have. Lambs must be watched closely, as parasite infestation can cause them a lot of problems quickly. Remember to watch for coccidiosis also, as it is unaffected by dewormers.

Depending on where you live, the climate can work in your favor or against you in controlling internal parasites. Warm, wet summers are ideal for parasites (not central Alberta in 2002). Dry environments are not good for parasites. I have talked to a veterinarian who lives in a dry area that is not good for parasite growth. He is able to minimize or eliminate deworming because of where and how he raises sheep. A deworming program should be based on parasite life cycle, weather conditions and individual farm management practices. Sheep producers should use their veterinarian to evaluate composite fecal samples to determine parasite type, parasite load and the effectiveness of their deworming program.

There are many different ways to deworm a sheep flock. There are products that can be fed, drenched or injected. The pour-on product for cattle does not work on sheep. The active ingre-

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IN THE CORRAL...

Wray Whitmore, Manitoba

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dient in the dewormer gets trapped in the wool follicle and so not enough gets into the animal's blood. The active ingredient concentration in the blood is not high enough to be effective.

There are conflicting thoughts on rotating dewormers or sticking with one. Some people have the notion that it is best to use a different dewormer each time. This is based on the thought that the parasites cannot become resistant to different kinds/types of dewormers. The alternate thought is that by using a different dewormer each time you will end up creating a super parasite that is resistant. Consult with your veterinarian for further advice on which dewormer to use.

New Executive Director at National Sheep Organization

(Ottawa, Ontario) The Board of Directors of the Canadian Sheep Federation (CSF) is pleased to announce the appointment of Jennifer Vollmar as Executive Director beginning June 1, 2002. Jennifer comes to CSF with several years of experience working in and managing non-profit organizations in the National Capital area.

"We are delighted to have Jennifer join the Canadian Sheep Federation", said Fred Baker, Chair, of the national organization. "With 46% growth in the industry since the last Census of Agriculture, our industry needs to build stronger links between our provincial organizations as we move to implement a system of identification for the national sheep flock and the program that has become known as the On-Farm Food Safety initiative". Baker also notes Ms. Vollmar's abilities, as a manager working for diverse boards of directors will be an asset for the Canadian Sheep Federation.

Ms. Vollmar replaces Richard Stern who retired from the Federation at the end of May, noted Baker, "The industry owes a debt of gratitude to Richard, for his years of service to the Canadian sheep industry and we wish him the best in his retirement".

The CSF is the national organization representing over 13,000 Canadian producers as the national advocate for member provincial sheep organizations in the areas of flock health, marketing and promotion, inter-provincial communication and liaison with governments.

Canadian Sheep Federation **Report on the National Identification Program** **November 3, 2002**

Legislation and Implementation Date

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency under the Health of Animals Act will enforce our National Identification Program. The legislation governing our program has been approved by the CFIA and has been forwarded to the Department of Justice. Once approved here, the legislation will be passed back to the CFIA for comments. It then must be posted to the Gazette for public comment before it is finalized.

This process is anticipated to take most of 2003. Therefore, the new implementation date for the program will be January 1st, 2004.

Contract with CCIA

The Canadian Sheep Federation has chosen the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency to administer the database for our program. A contract between the Canadian Sheep Federation and the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency that outlines the terms of the agreement for an initial two year period has been drafted and approved by our Board of Directors.

Tags

The CSF is in the process of selecting the approved tags for the program. All tags must meet our criteria for readability and retention. They must also be tamperproof and inexpensive for producers.

We have selected a metal Ketchum Kurl-Lock tag as one option. We will also be selecting

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Wray Whitmore, Manitoba

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plastic tags as an alternative for producers. These tags will also be able to support bar-codes. Finally, we are investigating RFID tags manufactured in England. We hope these tags will meet our requirements so that we can provide producers with a cost-effective option for electronic identification.

Communication

The CSF will receive funding from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada for our communication strategy. Throughout 2003, the CSF will be distributing information to all provinces that will explain how the program will work. Producers will also be able to access information on our new website that will be launched in the new year.

**Sheep Bytes is available from the
Alberta Sheep & Wool Commission
403-948-8533**

Nutrition seminars will be held in both Alberta and Manitoba where producers will have the opportunity to bring in their feed sample analyses and learn how to develop rations for their flocks using SheepBytes.

What do you need to do?

- **See the last page of this newsletter for feeding and nutrition seminars in your area.**
- **Call for registration information and SheepBytes purchase price if you don't own it and would like to.**
- **Sample all the feeds to be used for wintering rations**
- **Bring all analyses, on all feeds, to the seminar.**

Using Peas in Sheep Rations

Many producers are looking at using field peas in sheep rations. The nutrient content of peas make them a good feed for sheep. The typical nutrient analysis of peas is:

moisture, 10.0%
crude protein, 23.4%
crude fibre, 5.5%
starch, 54.0%
rumen bypass protein 22.0%

For young calves, the average daily gain, dry matter intake of concentrate and hay, and feed conversion efficiency were not different for the no-pea control and pea based concentrate in feeding trials. Peas are lower in bypass protein content compared to more common protein supplements such as canola meal, soybean meal or alfalfa. Peas have been used as an alternative to soybean meal in the diets of lactating dairy cows.

With a bushel weight of around 60 pounds, the energy content of peas is similar to wheat. Peas, are characterized by a slowly degradable starch. In a high grain rations, the rumen degradation rate of pea starch is much slower than wheat, barley or oats. This would help control acid production in the rumen, which is beneficial to animal health. The use of peas in dairy cattle rations has shown an increase in butterfat % which indicates good fibre digestion and a healthy rumen.

The use of peas in ewe or lamb rations depends on cost. It is important to compare the price of protein in peas, to the price of protein in canola meal or soybean meal. Talk with a feed company nutritionist to work through the protein cost calculation.

If peas are competitively priced, it may be desirable to partially process them (i.e. break each pea kernel into 4-5 pieces) before mixing them with whole grain. This makes the separation of grain and peas, which can be a problem, less likely. Some years and some varieties of peas are more palatable than others, cracking increases intake and reduces waste.

SHEEP BUSINESS ...

Sheep producers have a wealth of experience, information and wisdom. With dwindling rural communities and busy lives, there are fewer opportunities for producers to pass on what they have learned. This section is the discussions and feedback from producers. It may not apply to your particular operation, but it might just ...

Winter Feed Planning in the Peace Trevor Jones, MSc, Fairview, Alberta

About 10 years ago we changed to late May and early June lambing on carryover grass with our 350 Polypay ewes. This has allowed us to graze the ewes on fall and winter pasture following early October weaning. It takes very little grain in December to put them in good condition for breeding after New Year's. Preparing the ewes for lambing starts in early May. Shearing is done in mid-April, and by late April the flock is grazing carryover grass, with grain fed on the ground. Protein and energy levels are crucial to having strong lambs at birth. The "Ewebytes" computer program is simple to use, and once analyses of the feeds are entered, necessary supplements can be decided on based on both requirements of the ewes and on cost.

With little or no hay this year, we will be using more than the usual amount of fescue seed crop straw and aftermath. Barley and pea straw will be purchased from our grain growing neighbours. Grain will be in short supply at inflated prices, so we are now arranging for grain and screenings.

At all times, our sheep have access to a complete, calcium-phosphorous and trace mineral mix with added vitamins AD and E. (Peace Country One-Stop) Even with this we will be top dressing grain with vitamin ADE premix.

With straw and grain this winter we will have to correct low calcium levels by "pasting" the grain troughs with limestone and water periodically. This allows for a steady intake of calcium along with grain.

The key to the success of this kind of management is in providing space for the sheep. All roughage is fed in wintering fields, and grain is

spread in bunks in a separate, large pen. Fortunately we have left a lot of brush shelter on the wintering quarter section.

If barley and pea straw become the predominant feed, we are considering using anhydrous ammonia treatment to increase protein levels and palatability. This was done in other heavy straw feeding times with cattle, but to my knowledge, not for sheep. Straw bales are sealed in plastic after laying down plastic pipe with perforations every foot. Anhydrous is infused at a specified rate. This treatment can only be done to low protein straws. Toxic compounds result if hay is treated and can produce the effect in calves referred to as "bovine bonkers". (Get nutritional advice before using. An excellent website is www.agr.gov.sk.ca/DOCS/livestock/beef/feeds_and_nutrition/chaff.asp)

For years the Fescue seed crop researchers have maintained that if the re-growth following seed harvest is cut right back to ground level before November, the seed crop yield can be improved the following year. We have not had much success previously convincing our neighbouring seed growers that they should allow us to harvest the aftermath. This year however, several growers are allowing grazing. The crop will be treated as similar quality hay. In the past our sheep have done well in mid pregnancy on well-preserved fescue straw and grain, so we look forward to using aftermath.

To provide more efficient use of feed this year, we will be extra diligent de-worming the flock after freeze-up, and will be asking our feed dealer to add Bovatec to our mineral mix for winter feeding. This will be a trying winter, and it will be vital to inspect the sheep daily for general health and body condition. The old stockman's adage that "The eye of the master fattens his cattle / sheep" should be heeded well by all flock owners.

Trevor Jones has extensive experience and training in sheep production. He was an instructor at Fairview Agricultural College, a Beef Specialist for Alberta Agriculture, and runs his own flock of sheep in the beautiful Peace.

MARKET LINKS ...

Susan Hosford, Alberta

'If you have no customers for your product you have a hobby, not a business. You can build the best gizmos in the world, but it's your hobby if no one wants to buy them.'

MARKETING ... working together ...

'Chefs Collaborative and Stonyfield Farm Map Out 'Guide to Good Eating' Chefs and Yogurt Producer Make Sustainable Cuisine the First Course

BOSTON, Sept. 30 /PRNewswire/ -- Chefs Collaborative and Stonyfield Farm announced today the launch of A Guide to Good Eating, a new wallet-sized card to help diners locate Chefs Collaborative restaurants across the United States. Chefs Collaborative members believe that the source of their ingredients -- the way they have been grown, raised, or caught -- significantly affects the flavor and quality of their food. The Guide to Good Eating also outlines the mission of the 1,000 member organization -- to improve the quality and taste of the food we eat by inspiring chefs and consumers to follow sustainable practices.

Chefs Collaborative, the nation's only professional culinary organization that provides tools for running economically healthy, sustainable food-service businesses and making environmentally sound purchasing decisions, joined forces with longtime friend and supporter Stonyfield Farm, the nation's largest producer of organic yogurt, to produce the guide. "There is nothing like tasting delicious, peak-season ingredients from local sources," said Peter Hoffman, Chefs Collaborative national chair and chef and owner of Savoy, in New York. "Our members recognize the importance of using these local, seasonal, and artisanal ingredients, and they celebrate these foods in their restaurants. With the Guide to Good Eating, chefs are finally able to tell their patrons that they can have similar dining experiences at Chefs Collaborative restaurants throughout the country."

"Teaching customers the connection between the delicious food they eat in restaurants and the role that farmers and producers play in that

process is a big challenge," said Gary Hirshberg, Stonyfield Farm president and CEO. "In the early days at Stonyfield, we used our lids to reach our consumers with a simple message about our family farmers and our environmental mission, and the connection to wholesome food. With the Guide, we are doing the same-offering a quick link between having a great dining experience, learning about Chefs Collaborative values, and encouraging more people to seek out Collaborative restaurants. Simple. We know that once diners try these establishments, the palate does the convincing," Hirshberg added.

Chefs Collaborative and Stonyfield Farm will unveil A Guide to Good Eating to the public on October 5 in New York at "A Growing Concern," presented by the Baum Forum. Following the event, the Guide will be available in a limited release through the Chefs Collaborative national office (call 617-236-5200), select Chefs Collaborative restaurants throughout the United States, and www.stonyfield.com.

'Marketing is getting the right goods and services to the right people at the right place at the right time of the right price with the right communication and promotion.'

EVERYONE IS NOT YOUR CUSTOMER

Every lamb buyer is not your customer-- in fact, some days it seems like very few are willing to buy and eat lamb. There is a critical realization in marketing - you don't want every everyone as a customer. You need to focus your marketing, sales and promotion on those who want to buy your product.

Why would consumer A choose your lamb over your neighbour's, or over the frozen product in the grocers' meat section? Talk to your customers.

'If the internet is to have a truly substantial impact on the farm sector, then it will need to provide opportunities for farmers to buy more cheaply and sell more profitably.'

'Farmers and the Internet - Groves & DaRin, Rural Industries Research & Development Corporation, Australia, 8/14/02

MARKET LINKS ...

Susan Hosford, Alberta

For the first time in over a decade, domestic consumption of lamb in Australia has increased. Continued gains this year suggest that the gains will be maintained. Peter Barnard of Meat & Livestock attributes this to innovative, targeted and opportunistic marketing.

Source: Australian Farm Journal www.farmonline.com.au

Reading Can Be An Unfair Advantage ...

'New Thinking Needed by Today's Agricultural Producers' - R. Weigel, Stockman Grassfarmer, 2002

'Technical knowledge and skills will be essential with the growing complexity of agriculture. Skills needed to be successful in the future are more likely going to be the human/personal skills—skills like negotiation ability, creativity and innovation, vision and strategic thinking.'

'Traditional production strategies that served producers so well in the past will not be enough to ensure future success. Already agriculture is shifting from production-driven to consumer-driven. It is moving from a commodity industry to specialized products.'

'Strategic thinking is sometimes difficult for producers who are used to a systematic, logical thinking process.'

To improve strategic thinking skills ...

1. READ ... READ ... READ - Ask questions of yourself - What will the future hold? What do I want for the future of my operation? What product do I have that consumers will want to buy? What do I have to do to succeed?
2. Study other farmers in your area ... study the consumers in your area. What changes do you see? What opportunities might be available if your local consumer is—growing older, has fewer children, is of an ethnic or religious background that has different consumption habits.
3. Visualize problems and planning - write it down. Project yourself and your operation into the future - where do you want to be? What will it take to get there? Come up with as many ideas as possible—don't discard any of them.
4. Map your operation - Business planning is also called writing future history.

Farm Direct Marketing

K. Engel, 'Whaz Up?', September 2002

"I feel that because I am direct marketing, my farm is in a much better position to weather this drought than my neighbours who are strictly raising commodities", says Ron Hamilton, Sunworks Farm, Camrose, Alberta.

The Hamilton Family own a quarter of land which they farm following holistic management principles. They have been certified organic since 1996. They use a variety of different production and marketing alternatives in raising 12,000 broilers, 800 turkeys, 600 laying hens, 60 geese, 100 hogs, 25 steers and a small cow/calf herd all on their own pasture.

Ron is a producer member of the Farm Direct Marketing Team. The team is made up of members from both government and industry.

Farm direct marketing is a significant contributor to the growth of agriculture and the food industry. This type of marketing is familiar to nearly all producers. Numerous lambs are marketed through farm gate and farmers' market sales of freezer lamb.

There are numerous initiatives across the Prairies where producers and producer groups are moving their products directly to consumers. If you are looking for information on marketing quality meat products to consumers try:

www.agric.gov.ab.ca/economic/mgmt/diversification/dm_checklist.html

BOOKS for the Business of Sheep ...

1. 'In Search of Excellence' by Tom Peters
2. 'Building Your Dream: Planning Your Business' by Dr. Walter Good, Manitoba

Food For Thought ...

Generation 'Y' are the children born between 1975 and 1985. They have minimal cooking skills due to the change in lifestyle brought about by both parents working. Food-service (restaurants, take out and quick service chains) has been a part of their daily lives. As young adults beginning their careers, they presently spend 50%-55% of their income on food-service - the largest % of any generation.

MARKET LINKS ...**Sheep and Lamb Market Report****U.S. Markets:**

Source: *Livestock Marketing Information Center, Colorado, USDA*

Inventory:

USDA's mid-year sheep and lamb survey showed that the number of sheep and lambs has continued to decline. As of July 1, 2002, USDA estimated that there were 8.1 million sheep and lambs in the U.S., 2 percent below a year ago. Over the last 12 months, the rate of decline in U.S. sheep and lamb numbers was similar to what occurred during the 12-month period ending July 1, 2001. USDA estimated that the 2002 U.S. lamb crop could be down about 4 percent from the 2001 level.

As of July 1, the number of breeding sheep and market lambs in the U.S. posted year-to-year declines of 2 percent. Regionally, only the far-western states (Arizona, California, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon and Washington) did not have year-to-year declines in breeding sheep numbers. The number of replacement lambs being held back by producers indicates that the U.S. breeding flock will likely continue to decline during the second half of 2002.

Slaughter and Prices:

The lamb industry is not suffering from a backlog of over-finished animals as it did a year ago. In addition, forced sales of lightweight lambs in drought-impacted states have further moderated slaughter lamb weights. Year-to-year declines in lamb slaughter and lamb weights are expected for the balance of 2002. Last year, lamb prices collapsed in the early summer and continued to erode in the fall. This year, higher prices began to materialize in the spring and prices likely will peak this summer at more than 30 percent above a year ago. Prices paid by a South St. Paul, Minnesota plant for lambs 110+ lb rose by 36 percent from April to August 2002. A smaller U.S. lamb crop is likely again in 2003. Year-to-year declines in U.S. lamb production are expected to support even more strength in

slaughter lamb prices next year. How much slaughter lamb prices increase will depend on several factors, including: 1) whether or not feeding operations again begin to delay marketing rates and create burdensome supplies of over-finished lambs; 2) how much imports of lamb meat increase; and 3) supplies of other meats and poultry.

Manitoba Markets:**Inventory:**

After extensive inter-censal and post-censal revisions *Statistics Canada* reported that the total number of sheep in Manitoba decreased by 6,000 head or 7.1 percent from July 1, 2001 to July 1, 2002. Manitoba has 6.2 percent of the Canadian flock. The Manitoba flock was at levels of 200,000-300,000 head during the 1930s and World War II, but slumped to 13,600 head in January 1977. The July 1, 2001 flock of 84,000 head was the largest for the time of the year since 1949. The number of ewes in mid 2002, at 37,200 head, was down by 4.9 percent from the year before, when ewe numbers reached the highest level since the late 1940s. The number of market lambs on Manitoba farms on July 1, 2002 was 30,100 head, a decline of 1.3 percent from a year ago.

Lamb Prices:

There are a limited number of lamb sales in Manitoba each month, so prices quoted could vary depending on the quality and number of animals for sale. For the first half of 2002, depending on the weight, average auction market prices for lambs were down by \$12-18/cwt from the same period in 2001. The lighter the lamb, the smaller the percent decrease in price. For January to June, 2002, average prices for lambs under 80 lb decreased by 9 percent from last year to \$114/cwt, while prices for lambs, 95-109 lb, were 15 percent lower at \$99/cwt and those over 110 lb, fell by 20 percent to \$96/cwt. Although local lamb prices continued to decline seasonally in August, prices were above the

MARKET LINKS ...

2001 level for the first time this year. The forecast 3-4 percent improvement in U.S. lamb prices over last year's poor prices in the second half of the year could lead to higher prices in Manitoba in the next four months.

Feeder Lambs:

Lambs will soon be coming off pasture with the majority headed for further finishing before going to market. In Manitoba lambs typically weigh 60-70 lb off the grass. Feeder lambs are sold through auction markets as well as directly to feedlots and brokers. Lambs headed for the eastern market will be fed to approximately 100 lbs and those destined for U.S. markets will be sent at weights over 110 lb. Prices for under 80 lb lambs are usually seasonally lowest in the fall due to the large supplies.

Janet Honey and Marni Donetz
Market Analysis and Statistics Section

Alberta Markets

Lamb Prices:

The system of collecting local market prices and weight range sales information is presently under review. Other than Canada West's published price, exact numbers are not available, but trends have been noted.

Over the summer it was noted that there were high numbers of ewes at all sales across Alberta. Ewe prices have been low in most sales. September 17 the annual Dawson Creek Sale sold 643 cull ewes with a selling average of \$20.22/head; breeding ewe group averages ranged from \$24.14 to \$65.83. Breeding ewe and ram sales have been limited and prices reflect the lack of feed and larger than usual number of ewes going to market.

Light lamb prices faced some pressure due to large numbers being sold and concern over feed supplies.

Finished lamb prices in July and early August were in the \$70.00 to \$80.00 range. In mid August, for a short period, prices increased \$75.00 to \$85.00.

Lamb prices in the Fall normally meet with seasonally larger supply pressures. Early September prices lowered slightly and in late September moved to the \$64.00 to \$75.00 range. Canada West Foods quoted \$.80-\$.88 / cwt. for early October.

This year large numbers of lambs entered the sales earlier due to drought and feed shortages. The slump in prices is about two weeks earlier than average and is anticipated to last into November/December. Local sale prices vary depending on numbers of lambs and buyers in attendance.

The bulk of live Alberta lambs continue to move to Eastern markets. Some producers have shipped limited numbers of heavy lambs into the US market.

Canada West Foods continues to slaughter 1100-1400 of lambs per week with an annual total of about 60,000 or one third of the lamb crop. Of the lambs slaughtered at CWF approximately 70% are sold as boxed fresh lamb primal cuts (loins, legs, shoulders), 30% are sold by carcass. 50% of fresh lamb sales go to Ontario, 30% to Quebec and about 20% sells in Alberta.

Source: AAFRD, Canada West Foods

Cover or Content?

Some 56% of consumers have purchased a product they would not normally have purchased because of "exciting new packaging," according to a survey by Hunt's, a unit of Omaha, NE-based ConAgra Foods Inc. This was noted by the *Omaha World-Herald*, which gave a roundup of some of the latest food packaging innovations.

RESEARCH ...

Susan Hosford, Alberta

Vinegar Wipes Out Thistles Organically

Beltsville, Maryland, ARS News Service

Some home gardeners already use vinegar as a herbicide, and some garden stores sell vinegar pesticides. But no one has tested it scientifically until now.

Agricultural Research Service scientists offer the first scientific evidence that it may be a potent weedkiller that is inexpensive and environmentally safe – perfect for organic farmers.

Jay Radhakrishnan, John Teasdale and Ben Coffman, Beltsville, Maryland, tested vinegar on major weeds – common lamb's quarters, giant foxtail, velvet leaf, smooth pigweed and Canada thistle – in greenhouse and field trials.

The researchers sprayed the weeds with various solutions of vinegar, uniformly coating the leaves. The researchers found that five and ten percent concentrations killed the weeds during their first two weeks of life.

Older plants required higher concentrations of vinegar to kill them. At the higher concentrations, vinegar had an 85-100% kill rate. A bottle of household vinegar is about 5% concentration.

Canada thistle, one of the most tenacious weeds in the world, proved the most susceptible; the 5% concentration had a 100% kill rate of the perennial's top growth. The 20% concentration can do this in about two hours.

Spot spraying of cornfields with 20% vinegar killed 80-100% of the weeds without harming the corn, but scientists stress the need for more research. If the vinegar were sprayed over an entire field, it would cost about \$65.00/acre. If applied to local weed infestations only, such as occur in row crops, it may cost only \$20-30.00/acre.

*The researchers use only vinegar made from fruits or grains, to conform to organic farming standards. I tried 7% pickling vinegar on the fall rosettes of Canada thistle (mowed over the summer). It was amazing how fast the thistles died and dried. It won't kill the roots, but will seriously hamper winter survival with no top growth.

Wormer Rotations

N. Herron, Intervet, U.K.

Recent research has highlighted a trend in the use of sheep wormers in the U.K. that could lead to increased levels of resistant worms. A survey indicated that the levamisole-based groups of wormers has fallen to less than 10%, suggesting that producers are not using correct rotations. Too heavy a reliance on one, or both, of the other groups of anthelmintics - avermectins (Ivomec) or benzimidazoles - leads to resistance problems.

Resistance management strategies advise:

- rotating wormer groups
- avoid the use of the same group year after year
- quarantine all new sheep until they have been treated for worms to prevent entry of resistant worms.

A new strategy for parasite control from Merial Animal Health:

F.I.G.H.T.

F - Full dose on an empty stomach

I - Integrated control - don't just use dewormers to control worms, use pasture management and proper nutrition

G - give it a rest - rotate dewormer families

H - hold new sheep in quarantine and treat

T - test - periodically monitor worm levels by having your veterinarian do a fecal exam

Ewe Response to Experienced and Inexperienced Shepherds

Notman, Hill and Savage-Roberts, Faculty of Applied Science & Technology, Writtle College, Essex

Bringing in help for lambing is a common practice in most sheep rearing areas. The behaviour of ewes being managed by an experienced stock-person, or by inexperienced students at the College was studied. The handlers were new to the flock of sheep. Close-circuit television and video equipment was used to observe the behaviour of ewes under the two types of handling without the handlers being aware of the observations.

RESEARCH ...

Susan Hosford, Alberta

Ewes initial behaviour patterns were classified from most stressed to least stressed, when the handlers walked by the pen:

1. Ewe moved to face handler
2. Head turned to face handler, but no body movement
3. Ewe remained eating
4. Ewe remained lying down
5. Remained in position without facing handler
6. No apparent change in behaviour

The ewe response movements were recorded and studied when the two types of handlers entered the pen. The responses from most stress to least stress were:

1. Flight as far from handler as possible
2. Flight away from handler
3. Move away
4. Don't move
5. Move towards handler

Response to the inexperienced handler was easily identified, the main one being a high incidence of turning to face the person and increased moving away. With an experienced handler there was little change in ewe behaviour.

It was concluded that handling and management are important functions affecting the welfare of the animals. Inexperienced handlers may disrupt animal behaviour, leading to increased stress.

Training anyone who is going to handle sheep is important. Handlers must develop an understanding of how to work with sheep to reduce stressing them during handling.

Making Lamb a Safer Product Through Improved Slaughter Techniques

LeVALley, Duffy, Belk, Tatum, Sofos, Smith, Kimberling, Dept. An. Sc, Colorado State Univ., Fort Collins

With increased focus on Food Safety and the implementation of HACCP in slaughter plants, increased effort is being made to reduce bacterial contamination of carcasses.

This study looked at the traditional dressing system which hangs inverted carcasses for dressing with systems where carcasses are hung by

the front legs. The second system has been shown to produce carcasses with lower visible and bacterial contamination than in traditional systems where the carcasses are dressed while hung by the hind legs. In the 'heads up' system the opening cuts are made in the forequarter region rather than in the hindquarter region (the area associated with high contamination). The pelt is then pulled from the forequarter down, keeping the contamination around the hind leg and anus from being spread across the carcass.

While the use of innovative new technologies on the slaughter floor will help reduce microbiological contamination levels, the pre-slaughter condition of the lamb is still one of the most important factors in contamination of the carcass. There is need for producers to be even more careful about keeping lambs clean, and in removing manure contamination (tags) before sending lambs to market.

Affect of Nutrition in Pregnancy on Lamb Survival

D.J. Mellor, 'Integration of perinatal events, pathophysiological changes and consequences for the newborn lamb', Br. Vet. J. 144

Nutritional influences may be considered under four major headings:

1. Effects on the placenta
2. Effects on the fetus
3. Effects on the mammary glands
4. Effects on the newborn

Inadequate nutrition in ewes impedes the growth and development of the placenta, the fetus and the mammary gland (udder). The largest effect is apparent during the period greatest growth of the particular tissue.

For the placenta that maximum growth period is between 30 and 90 days of gestation; for the fetus it is after 90 days; for the mammary gland it is after 120 days.

A number of associated physiological disorders in the ewes result from the associated nutrient deficiencies. These can lead to lamb deaths before, during and shortly after birth.



AROUND MANITOBA...

More Changes:

In the last issue of the Prairie Sheep Update, I mentioned a couple of outlets that sell sheep supplies for the Canadian Co-operative Wool Growers. One important outlet was missed. The missed outlet was Feed Rite. Feed Rite is a dealer for the CCWG here in Manitoba and can be used as a source of sheep supplies.

The Manitoba Grazing School is going to be held at the Brandon Keystone Centre on December 3 and 4, 2002. This year's agenda includes Dr. Fred Provenza and Janet McNally, both who have extensive sheep production experience. Fred has spoke in Alberta on several occasions. Fred has done extensive research on the grazing behavior of sheep and cattle. Janet McNally is going to speak on sheep the preferred species for efficient grazing systems. Janet spoke at the last sheep symposium in Alberta and she was very good. Janet has lots of practical experience with sheep including her own flock of 200 ewes.

There are plans for a evening seminar which will include Janet and Fred, starting at 7:00 PM on Dec. 2, 2002 at the Brandon Ag-Centre. For further information contact Stephanie Cruickshanks @ 726-6384 or Jon Crowson @ 748-3873. The registration fee for the seminar is \$10.00/person.

Producer consultations on a check-off proposal have been held at 9 meetings across the province in October. A revised check-off proposal has been mailed out last week to all who attended the meetings and all producers on the Sheep Sense mailing list. There will be a petition in the fall/winter where Manitoba sheep producers will be asked for their opinion on whether the industry needs a check-off. Watch for the petition announcement, you will have to register in order to get a ballot in order to vote.

I had to wait for a delayed flight at the airport last week and I was reading the latest issue of SAVOUR, Manitoba's Agriurban Living Magazine, and I saw a good advertisement for lamb. A restaurant, The Loop, was written up in the magazine and the article mentioned that one of their signature dishes was locally sourced, juniper roasted rack of lamb. Nice to see lamb get promoted.

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