

Field and Feedlot



Northwest Area Extension

May 2004

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Northwest Iowa Sheep Producers Bus Tour

Dennis DeWitt, ISUE Livestock Field Specialist

The Northwest Iowa Sheep Producers Association and Iowa State University Extension have put together an informational, educational and fun two-day tour for sheep producers. The tour will be leaving from Reading Bus Line, Inc., 19771 McCall Avenue, Reading, Minnesota on Friday, June 18. Passengers will be picked up at yet to be determined sites in Iowa. Passengers will be returned to pick-up locations late Saturday evening, June 19.

The tentative agenda for Friday June 18 includes:
6 AM leave Reading, Minnesota for other pick-ups.

Boone Tanning Company tans and dyes about 4000 shearling sheepskins with the wool attached per month. These tanned sheep skins are shipped around the country for businesses to further process into medical pads, paint rollers, buffing pads, saddle pads, car seat covers, garments, floor rugs, etc.

We will have a lamb lunch at the **Dairy Barn**, Grinnell, the 2004 lamb restaurant award winner.

Premier1, Washington, Iowa has been providing fencing, sheep and goat supplies, clippers and shearers and expert advice for more than 25 years. We will visit this site and have a discussion with Stan Potratz, owner.

The Gordon Shelangoski family farm features a low cost, grass based operation consisting of a 300 Dorset/Dorset cross ewe flock. Lambing takes place in the late spring utilizing the lush intensively grazed pastures. Gordon will share his experience with guard dogs, hoop houses and his newly acquired Isle De France genetics.

Lodging will be at the **Super 8 Motel**, Washington, IA. The rooms are \$40 plus tax. You will need to make your own reservations by calling 319-653-6621 and letting them know you are with the NISPA tour to get this reduced room rate. If you are alone and want to share a two-bed room with someone, please indicate that to us so we can help you make that arrangement.

Saturday, June 19 Tour Details:

Windrush Farms is located 5 miles north of Oskaloosa. Susan and Vern Thorp have a 1000 acre diversified farming operation of row crops, hay and livestock. The beginning Dorset ewe flock came from the Poynters in Illinois with an infusion of bloodlines from Mississippi State. Full blood and percentage Boer Goats have been the latest addition to Windrush. Susan is President of the Iowa Meat Goat Association and co-chair of the Iowa State Fair show and September show. All of the livestock work is done with the help of the Australian Kelpies. These dogs are used daily with livestock chores, gathering from pastures, moving stock and working in the barns. There will be much to see and do here!

McNay Outlying Research and Demonstration Farm of Iowa State University is near Chariton, Iowa. Dr. Dan Morrical, ISUE Sheep Specialist, will show us the 225-prolific white faced commercial ewes grazing with one of the tallest Akbash Guard dogs you will ever see. We will tour the 26-pen sheep barn that will have the lambs on feed. Dr. Morrical will discuss the research going on with distillers dried grains, phase feeding lambs in the feedlot, expanded metal flooring for bonus babies and light priming for breeding rams.

On the way back to the tour pick up points we will be stopping for a mid-afternoon lamb meal at either The Machine Shed, West Des Moines or at Perry.

The Iowa Farm Bureau and NISPA are contributing to help defray the cost of the charter bus. Your cost will be \$25 per person plus lodging at the Super 8 Motel and all your meals and incidentals.

Pre-paid reservations of \$25 will be accepted on a first-received basis. Make checks out to: Northwest Iowa Sheep Producers Association and mail to Dennis DeWitt, 1600 15th Street, Spirit Lake, IA 51360.

The best way to make a personal contact is by email to: dewitt@iastate.edu or calling 712-336-3488.

Iowa Brands Registration Program

Dennis DeWitt, ISUE Livestock Field Specialist

Iowa's law for marking and branding livestock allows the use of hot irons, cryo-brands or electronic identification devices (Code of Iowa, Chapter 169A). Iowa will not register a brand that is in conflict with another brand, even if a different location on the animal is requested. Iowa has 3,562 registered brands in active status. In 2003, Iowa issued 86 new brands. Brand fees are \$25 for five years.

Instructions for applying for a brand are:

1. Keep it simple.
2. No lower case or cursive letters.
3. Single letters, numbers or characters are not recommended.
4. Do not use the letter Q.
5. One location required with each brand.
6. Three standing separate letters, numbers, or characters or combinations thereof, are not recommended on the rib location.
7. Brands should consist of at least 2 and not more than 3 letters, numbers, characters or any combination thereof. NO combinations of numbers only.
8. Jaw, neck, horn, hoof and breech brands are not recordable.
9. Ear notches, dewlaps or wattles are not recordable.
10. Brand recording fees are \$25 every five years.

Further information is available on the Internet at:

<http://www.agriculture.state.ia.us/iowabrands.htm>

If you do not have Internet access or have questions about the brand registration program, contact:

Mary Fischer, Brand Recorder
Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land
Stewardship, 502 E. 9th Street, Des Moines, IA
50319-0053 or Phone 515-281-3325.

Spring Soil Moisture Levels

Joel DeJong, ISUE Crops Specialist

The spring soil moisture assessments have been

completed as of April 15. We measure moisture levels at many different sites in NW Iowa each spring and fall to monitor the amount of water the soil is holding for crops to use during the next growing season. In NW Iowa this spring, most sites were at or above the long term soil moisture averages.

However, the sites located near Estherville, Spirit Lake, Kingsley, Sibley and Yetter were below average. There are likely other areas that are a little short - but the majority of what we evaluated was above normal. A table of sites in southern NW Iowa is at the following website:

http://www.extension.iastate.edu/carroll/crops/subsoil_spring_2004.htm, and a map of sites in the NW

corner is at this website:

http://www.extension.iastate.edu/nwaeo/Crop%20Update%20Newsletters/CropNews_JD.html .

Soils in NW Iowa can hold about 11 inches of water for the crop to use during the growing season in the normal rooting zone - which goes to five feet deep. Normal for NW Iowa on April 15 is about 7 inches. A corn or soybean crop uses 22 to 25 inches of moisture during the growing season. A reasonable amount held in reserve by the soil reduces the need for extremely timely rainfall. Rain that fell after April 15 is not included in these numbers.

Corn and soybeans don't really need a lot of moisture early in the season. Water is needed near the seed in order to germinate, and some soil moisture is needed to help develop early root systems. Daily water demand by corn starts increasing about the 15th of June, and by July 15 the need is almost doubled. Hopefully we have a well-filled soil profile by that time and a good root system to help fill that need.

For a very good discussion on water needs of Iowa crops visit the web site titled "Introduction to Crops and Weather," an overview of a couple of graduate courses taught by ISU Extension Climatologist Elwynn Taylor. It can be found at this web site:

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Information/introweather.html> .

Chapter topics include Weather Effects on Crop Yield, Growing Degrees and Applications, Weather Effects on Crops and Climate Effects on Crops. It is a really good, and interesting, study of how weather factors alter yields of Iowa crops!

Food Safety and Quality Assurance (FSQA)

By Jerry Weiss, ISUE Swine Field Specialist

Why is food safety and quality assurance a part of the 4-H program? The 15,000 Iowa 4-H'ers enrolled in livestock projects produce about 17 million pounds of

meat. Include poultry and dairy projects and that's a whole lot of pork chops, steaks, milk and eggs! 4-H'ers need to do the best job they can to be sure it is safe and wholesome since this food is consumed by the public. The purpose of FSQA is to help 4-H'ers and their parents better understand what they can do to produce the safest food possible.

Many 4-H'ers think their livestock project ends after the county fair. The FSQA program stresses how they and the livestock they produce fit into the food supply continuum. In order to become certified 4-H'ers from age 9 through 18 with livestock projects must meet the certification requirements. Good production practices are addressed in this process as well as ethical behavior in the show-ring and care of their animals. 4-H'ers exhibiting swine and beef at the 2004 Iowa State Fair must be certified in the 4-H FSQA program. Sheep and dairy exhibits must be certified by 2005, and all other food animals by 2006. Many counties are adapting these same requirements for their county fair. The United States has one of the safest food supplies in the world. As a 4-H food producer, it is the responsibility of each 4-H youth to keep and maintain that safe food supply and the FSQA program shows them how to do that.

Developing a Grain Marketing Plan

Tom Olsen, ISUE Farm Management Specialist

This article will finish the discussion of the importance of pre-harvest marketing begun in the April issue of *Field and Feedlot*.

Minimum price tools which will capture a portion of the upside potential can include using the options market. The easiest minimum price tool to use is simply to check with your elevator to see what they are offering as a minimum price for harvest delivery. There are a couple of ways to establish a minimum price or a price floor. First is the purchase of a put option. The floor established is equal to the put strike price minus the premium paid, brokerage fees, and expected basis. If the market falls, the put option will become more valuable and can be sold or exercised. The increase in value will offset the decline in the cash market. If the market increases, the put option will become worthless and you will receive the higher cash price available.

Another minimum price tool is to forward contract for fall delivery with an elevator and then purchase a call. The minimum price will be the forward contract price less the premium paid for the call and brokerage fee. A price is established by doing the forward

contract. The purchased call will increase in value if the market moves higher and that increased value is added to the forward contract price.

Key Elements of a Marketing Plan

Any marketing plan should have features that will establish sale points:

1) Pricing Targets- A minimum price is set below which no sales will be made. This may be the loan rate plus a portion of the other government payments or a cost of production figure. In the "Winning The Game" workshop, a series of 6 or so increasing prices were set. As each price level is touched, a set number of bushels are sold independent of decision dates set. This is similar to many "scale-up" marketing plans.

2) Decision Dates- Specific points in time need to be established so that sales will happen if the price is above the minimum established. In "WTG" dates are spread from March to June and matched with price levels. If a price level is met first, the sale is made and we move on to the next date.

3) Trump Cards- Invariably, producers will see market conditions change such that they want to change their sales without violating the plan. "Trump cards" or optional tools can be used. For example, rather than selling in an up-trending market, the producer elects to wait until a moving average indicator turns down, or perhaps, buys a call to lift a planned forward cash contract.

4) Baseline Prices- A marketing plan is always a work in progress from year to year. It is valuable to test the plan vs. other types of marketing. Comparing to even monthly sales or previous year's plans will help refine future plans. Also, research is available which compares the performance of professionals at:

www.farmdoc.uiuc.edu/agmas/reports/

The real benefit of developing a written marketing plan is that it provides a road map for making difficult marketing decisions. It takes discipline to follow through with action when pricing targets and decision dates are met. A marketing plan tends to reduce the amount of emotion involved because there is a plan in place. The rewards are a clear sense of direction and usually a higher average selling price.