NDLWPA Director’s Comments

By Luke Lillehaugen, Northeast Director

Hi, my name is Luke Lillehaugen. I’m from Brocket, N.D., and I am currently in my third year as one of the northeast directors for the NDLWPA. Along with my dad, we currently run about 90 commercial and registered Katahdin Hair sheep, with the hopes of expanding to about 250 ewes in the next couple of years.

It is an exciting time to be involved in the sheep industry, and I have enjoyed the time I have spent on the board of directors. I think we are doing some very good things for the sheep industry in this state, such as the perpetual flock program, but we also face some challenges, such as trying to increase membership in the association and keeping the ram sales competitive and feasible with these record lamb prices.

If you have any concerns or suggestions, or just want to talk sheep, feel free to contact me or one of the other board members. Remember, it will take more than just the 12 members of the board to keep the state’s sheep industry moving forward. We are always looking for new ideas and input.

Thank you and remember, spring will be here soon – I hope!

New Member to NDLWPA Board

By Rick Schmidt, Secretary

As the new secretary of the NDLWPA, I would like to introduce myself and provide a short synopsis of our operation. Like many shepherds, I began in the sheep business as a young 4-H member with a few crossbred ewes. In the FFA years, I began raising registered Suffolk sheep as my SAE project. Then in 1993, I began selling market lambs as youth projects. The summer of 1997, I was able to purchase a piece of land just east of Center and began to build our sheep facility from the ground up.

Today, my wife and four girls continue to raise around 60 Suffolk ewes and market a few rams and some show lambs through the Top of Dakota Sale in Minot.

In 2006, I began raising registered Simmental and Angus cows to better utilize the grasses. We were able to do so without reducing the number of sheep on the land that we had available.

My passion always has included the sheep business. I have enjoyed teaching sheep schools and meeting many beginning producers through those programs. The current enthusiasm in the livestock industries is exciting, and sheep are generating a renewed interest with new producers and those who are looking to expand. Through my Extension position, I, along with Reid Redden and Chris Schauer, are always available to answer questions and work through any sheep questions producers may have.

The sheep business is not always easy. This winter has me thinking there are less stressful things to be doing when the snow is blowing and it’s so cold that even Knut didn’t survive. However, seeing lambs bouncing around the corrals on a sunny day makes it all worthwhile.

I look forward to working with you in the future and providing leadership for the NDLWPA and to the sheep industry for many years to come.
Extension Specialist’s Comments

By Reid Redden, Sheep Specialist
NDSU Extension Service

Two things stand out since the last newsletter was sent out in January:
• Winter 2011 was COLD!
• U.S. lamb market 2011 is HOT!

At the lamb feeding seminar in Carrington, our ASI representative made the comment that I must be doing a good job because the market has gone up since I started in July. I wish that I could take credit for the spike in price or the fact that lamb prices have continued to climb, but the facts are purely economical (supply vs. demand). The demand for a relatively small number of available lambs is strong.

Although most North Dakotans view the ethnic market as a niche industry that does not impact our industry, the price of conventional lamb industry lamb is escalating because of a shortage of lamb caused primarily by the ethnic consumption of one-third of the domestically produced lambs at half their traditional market weight.

Fortunately, the weak U.S. dollar and growing demand for lamb internationally has consumed much of Australia’s lamb exports. Although the market is great today, the U.S. lamb industry needs more sheep to maintain the critical mass needed to support the lamb and wool infrastructure.

ASI has launched the 2+2+2=Rebuild program. That encourages producers to increase their herd by at least two ewes per 100 ewes, increase the average birthrate to two lambs per ewe and increase the lamb crop weaned by 2 percent by 2014. ASI hopes this program and the high lamb market will stop the decline in sheep numbers that has been occurring since the 1950s and stimulate growth. Although, prices of $100-plus for cull ewes and $200-plus for ewe lambs are hard to pass up, I highly encourage you to maintain your sheep numbers and contemplate expansion.

Special thanks go out to all the producers who have been in contact with me during this past nine months. That really helps me know what problems you are dealing with and what successes you are experiencing so I can help the North Dakota sheep industry. Please feel free to call me with any questions, comments, suggestions and/or concerns at (701) 231-5597. I’m looking forward to a great 2011.

What’s Happening at “The Ewe”

By Skip Anderson, NDSU Shepherd

As I write this, another lambing season is winding down here at NDSU. It certainly has been another successful one with plenty of healthy lambs. The feeling of excitement flows from the barn as some of the standout ram lambs and ewe lambs start to make their presence known, and with the incredible lamb prices, each and every lamb has a tremendous amount of value. As a result of these great prices, the sheep industry has a great amount of positive energy, which will continue to pave the way for us as producers to showcase our terrific product, American lamb.

As we progress through 2011, we are continuing to finish the barn renovation project and have outlined a few additional improvements we will be making this summer. We are moving into the last phase of the project involving the sheep lots south of the buildings. We will be adding more concrete and reconfiguring some of our pen design and feeding system.

The improvements that have been completed are working well, and the new lambing room continues to provide a great environment for newborn lambs to get the right start. Those of you who have seen the improvements have responded with a tremendous amount of feedback about the changes, and I encourage those who have not seen them to visit. We always are excited to have guests at the unit to show what we have been doing and to “talk sheep.”

This fall, sheep Extension specialist Reid Redden, along with graduate student Christen Jackson, conducted a research project on estrus synchronization using our registered Hampshire and Columbia ewe flocks. The project was designed to examine the use of CIDRs. The final data for the project are being collected and analyzed. Based on my observation and lambing data, I’m seeing some real promise in using these CIDR devices as a valuable tool in our industry.

As many of you know, this past year, the NDSU sheep flock was under quarantine for foot rot. The North Dakota state veterinarian’s office issued the quarantine. We are happy to report the quarantine was lifted on Sept 14, 2010, based on numerous inspections from the state veterinarians.

Since correcting the problem, we have seen a tremendous amount of improvement in the overall general health of the flock. Working through the problem took many countless hours of foot trimming, soaking and pasture rotations. Since then, we have implemented a proactive standard operating procedure that has proved to be a success. If you, as a producer, are experiencing any foot issues, please contact us because we would be happy to share our plan with you.

In closing, I would like to thank those who continue to support the sheep
program at NDSU. We are looking forward to what the spring and summer has in store. Again, if you are in the Fargo area, please stop by the unit for a visit. You are always welcome!

2011 Ram Sales and Tests

By Reid Redden, Sheep Specialist
NDSU Extension Service

Early this winter, I mailed questionnaires to recent ram sale buyers to identify what buyers are looking for when buying. Buyers ranked production records as their No. 1 criterion that would most impact their buying decision, followed by visual appraisal. Among records, buyers ranked weaning weight and type of birth as the top two production traits. Farm production records and expected progeny differences (EPDs) were ranked first and second as the type of records that buyer would prefer to see for sale rams. The Hettinger Ram Test, wool traits and success at shows were ranked third, fourth and fifth, respectively.

Based upon questionnaire responses and my recommendation to the Jamestown Ram Sale Committee, two changes are going to take effect in 2011:

- We will be calling for ram sale consignors to provide on-farm records for type of birth, 60-day lamb weights and/or 120-day lamb weights. We then will compile these records into one data sheet for buyers to use as a decision-making tool. Although cross-flock comparisons cannot be made, buyers can identify the best ram within each flock or identify flocks that are excellent in certain traits that fit the buyers’ goals, such as twinning rate, maternal influenced growth rate (60-day weights) or postweaning growth rate (120-day weights).
- We will not be supporting a spring ram test at the Hettinger Research Extension Center. This test is not going to be held this year for a couple of reasons. First of all, centralized ram tests can be effective if a large group of similar rams are tested, but differences in age of rams, mature body size and body condition prior to entry will skew the data. Secondly, ram tests are costly to the ram consigner due to harvested feeds and rate of intake needed to conduct such a test. Ram consigners rarely recoup the expense of testing rams. Furthermore, centralized ram tests were not as highly valued as on-farm production records. Finally, we are promoting the inclusion of farm production records in the upcoming 2011 ram sales. Sending rams to a centralized test would remove them from their on-farm contemporary group, and within-flock comparisons no longer can be evaluated. Sheep producers will benefit more from identification of genetics that excel in their farm environment than in a centralized ram test environment.

2010-11 Dakota Rambouillet Ram Test Final Report

Christopher Schauer, Dave Pearson and Megan VanEmon
NDSU Hettinger Research Extension Center

The Rambouillet Ram Testing program was established primarily to identify differences in wool traits for rams managed under the same environmental conditions and plane of nutrition. Secondly, it was established to measure the postweaning growth rate as indicated by weight gain. An added feature is the evaluation of animal carcass merit using real-time ultrasound technology.

Three Rambouillet ram tests are conducted in the U.S.: Texas, Wyoming and the Dakota Ram Test at the Hettinger Research Extension Center.

In addition to growth performance for 140 days, the following traits are measured: fiber diameter and variability from core samples of the fleece, staple length, clean wool production, face and body skin fold scores, and structural soundness. These data are combined to generate the following index:

\[ \text{Index} = 60 \times \text{(average daily gain in pounds)} + 4 \times \text{(365-day adjusted staple length in inches up to 5.5 inches)} + 4 \times \text{(365-day adjusted clean wool in pounds)} \pm \text{fiber diameter and} \]

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**Figure 1:** Traits ranked most valuable (1) to least (5) valuable by ram buyers

**Figure 2:** Performance records ranked most (1) to least (5) valuable by ram buyers.
variability points according to the following schedule:

**Fiber Diameter (micron):**
3 (22 - actual microns) = + points up to 9
3 (actual microns - 22) = - points up to -6

**Variability:**
22.0 +/- actual coefficient variation x 1.25 up to a maximum of +/- 5 points

The top 30 percent of the registered Rambouillet rams at each test location, as indicated by index, are eligible for the certified ram classification. In addition to the above requirement, a ram must meet acceptable standards for body type, amount of body skin folds, freedom from anatomical weaknesses and wool defects, including extremely hairy britch or excessive amount of belly-type wool. All certified rams must have a minimum of 4 inches of staple length, 9 pounds of clean wool, a core wool grade of 23.77 or less and a maximum of 2.7 face cover score, and must have gained at least 0.55 pound per day on the test.

The 2010-11 Dakota Rambouillet Ram Test had 41 rams consigned from 12 different producers. The 2010-11 test’s top 12 rams (the 30 percent eligible for certification) were the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test ID</th>
<th>Owner</th>
<th>Flock ID</th>
<th>Scrapie ID</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Jim Forbes</td>
<td>2354</td>
<td>WYBU-0335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Paul Erk</td>
<td>B-0175</td>
<td>SD1257-5711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Jim Forbes</td>
<td>2353</td>
<td>WYBU-0334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lenard Chapman</td>
<td>5553</td>
<td>SD2073-2369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lenard Chapman</td>
<td>C-736</td>
<td>SD2073-2371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Cook Sisters</td>
<td>5065</td>
<td>SD1359-0328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Matt Rabel</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>WY6019-0130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Paul Erk</td>
<td>B-0116</td>
<td>SD1257-5569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Patrick Rambouillet</td>
<td>0145</td>
<td>SD3228-0145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Lenard Chapman</td>
<td>C-777</td>
<td>SD2073-0509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>TW Schalesky</td>
<td>SL686</td>
<td>SD1361-50496</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two rams of the above 12 were acceptable for certification: Test ID #s 20 and 28, from Paul Erk and Matt Rabel, respectively. The entire test results are available on the Hettinger REC website at www.ag.ndsu.edu/HettingerREC/ram-test. Additional information is available from Christopher Schauer at christopher.schauer@ndsu.edu.

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**Flock Health: Ovine Progressive Pneumonia**

By Neil Dyer, Director, NDSU Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory

Ovine progressive pneumonia (OPP) is a viral disease of sheep that causes chronic pneumonia and wasting. This emaciation sometimes is referred to as “thin ewe syndrome,” however, the infection also may cause respiratory disease, mastitis, neurologic problems and arthritis.

Adults of any age can be affected, but it typically is seen in 2- to 3-year-old sheep. Affected animals may continue to eat but will show signs of exercise intolerance, rapid breathing and coughing. Those ewes that do lamb often have small, weak offspring.

Transmission of the virus occurs through ingestion of colostrum by lambs, nose-to-nose contact between animals and, rarely, via the uterine circulation in pregnant ewes. Death after prolonged disease is the usual outcome.

Differentiating this disease from Mannheimia pneumonia, lungworms, caseous lymphadenitis and adenomatosis is important. In a live animal, the best samples to submit for a respiratory workup include a nasal swab, a whole blood sample and a serum sample. If an animal has died, then tissue samples can increase the chances of identifying the problem. Contact your veterinarian for assistance with this process.

Two types of serologic testing generally are available: the agar gel immunodiffusion test (AGID) and the enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA). The AGID is simple and inexpensive; however, the ELISA is more able to detect animals with early infections.

In lambs, any antibody acquired from the ewe in colostrum should be out of the blood by the time the lamb is 6 months old; therefore, a positive test in a lamb less than 6 months old is regarded as inconclusive. The lamb should be retested after it reaches 6 months of age. Negative tests should be repeated in a few months to insure that an animal maintains its negative status. A positive test will have more meaning in an animal with clinical signs of respiratory disease, but it is not conclusive evidence that the cause is the OPP virus.

Not all sheep testing positive for the OPP antibody will develop clinical disease; therefore, knowing when to cull animals becomes difficult. However, because an infected animal can shed the virus into the environment, removing any antibody-positive animals from the herd is best.

Antibiotics can be used to treat secondary infections, but no treatment or vaccine is available for OPP. While completely avoiding the possibility of infection is impossible, producers can do some things to minimize risk. For example, use your own buckets and tubs to feed and water your stock. Minimize nose-to-nose contact between your stock and other sheep. When possible, transport your own animals to shows and sales. Accurate health papers and animal identification are important.

Control is managed through two general methods. Producers may test for antibodies and cull any positive reactors from the herd. Alternatively, lambs may be removed from ewes before they nurse and be reared using colostrum from seronegative sheep or heat-treated sheep colostrum, and then raised on milk replacer, milk from seronegative ewes or heat-treated sheep milk.
NDLWPA Board of Directors Minutes
Prepared by Rick Schmidt, NDLWPA Secretary

Wyman Scheetz called the Board of Directors of the North Dakota Lamb and Wool Producers Association to order Jan. 13, 2011 at 11:00 a.m. at the Gladstone Inn, in Jamestown, N.D.

The following members were present: Wyman Scheetz, Lyle Warner, Luke Lillehaugen, Matt Benz, Dean Swenson, Paul Klose, Julie Mangnall, Rick Schmidt, Todd Sears, Mark Sheppard, Nathan Robbins, Brad Gilbertson, and Reid Redden.

Motion by Lyle to have Brad Gilbertson replace Curt Stanley as the Northwest Director as Curt has military commitments that will affect fulfilling his term on the board. Luke seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Rick read the minutes of the Nov. 20 and Dec. 23 BOD meetings. Two points were brought forward. Reid and Wyman felt that it may not be necessary to visit with Extension Administration about the newsletter and Wyman will be staying in Reno four days instead of three. Wyman mentioned that airfare was a lot cheaper with the four night stay and will pick up the extra night. Motion by Paul, second by Mark to approve the minutes. Motion carried.

Mark presented the Treasurer’s report, balances of $4,157.21 in checking, $28,840.27 in savings with a total net worth of $32,997.48. Motion by Matt to approve the Treasurer’s report, second by Todd. Motion carried.

Reid just sent his first Sheep Industry newsletter. NDLWPA will pick up postage, while Extension as agreed to cover the cost of designing the newsletter.

Reid and Wyman visited some of the Starter Flock operations over Christmas. The youth really appreciated the follow-up.

Reid asked if the NDLWPA asked the BOD to put together an advisory board for the NDSU Extension Sheep program. Mark moved to develop an advisory group of a maximum of five people on behalf of NDLWPA, second by Matt. Motion carried. Wyman and Reid were asked to select the names of the board where Wyman will appoint a chair and vice-chair.

Reid and Dean reported on the Feedlot School which took place on Jan. 8, 2011 in Carrington. There were approximately 30 participants, which all felt was a very good number, especially considering inclement weather. The School focused solely lamb feeding and included a visit to the Brent Kuss farm.

Reid asked if he could send a survey to all of the bidders and/or buyers from the Jamestown and Hettinger sales to see if there are ways to improve the sale, find if they are happy with the purchases and what is important to them when purchasing seedstock. The board agreed to provide the necessary information.

Old Business:
• Convention Recap – Convention was well attended
• Valley Wool Growers – Lyle moved to donate $500 to purchase lamb for the School Lamb Promotion Project. Second by Julie. Motion carried.
• Wildlife Services – Wyman will visit with Phil Mastrangelo about the support requested from NDLWPA
• State Livestock Zoning Meeting – Wyman mentioned some talking points about some recent zoning meetings that he attended.

New Business:
• Jamestown and Hettinger Ram Sales – Sale committee for Jamestown will be Brent Kuss, Wyman Scheetz, Nathan Robbins, Mark Sheppard and Don Osborne. The Hettinger Sale committee will be Mark Sheppard, Wyman Scheetz, Adams County Fairboard and HREC.
• Ram Test – NDLWPA will support the ram test in the capacity desired by HREC. Reid asked if he could include questions about the test rams. Do they select those rams or not and if the information is valuable.
• Shearing Contest – The NDLWPA supports the shearing contest at the North Dakota State Fair, but asks that more emphasis be placed on quality and less on speed.
• Membership Recruiting – membership is up and ND received 2nd place behind Hawaii for the most new members. Julie moved to give $100 to the person who recruits the most new members in 2011, people who were not members in 2010. A line be added to the membership form as to who recruited the new member. Second by Todd. Motion carried.
• Wyman will check into having a booth at the KFYR Agri-International Ag in the Classroom.
• NDDA Ag Day March 21. Motion by Matt to Budget $300 for the event and materials. Second by Julie. Motion carried.
• Lamb at the convention – Shipping costs were very expensive this year to get the lamb from Iowa Lamb. Wyman will visit with Butcher Block Meats in Mandan for the 2011 convention.
• Mark was given permission to have the Tax Reporting forms completed.
• Motion by Julie to adjourn. Meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.
As most of us are well aware, lamb loss is a significant problem that occurs in spite of the best management. This problem affects us as proponents of animal welfare (we wouldn’t be in this business if we didn’t care for the animals) and as business people (number of lambs weaned is the best predictor of flock profitability). Research of Midwestern flocks reports losses from 5 to 25 percent of lambs born alive, with an average loss of 20 percent. In addition, the research reports that lambs born as twin and triplet births are twice as likely to die as singleton-born lambs. This poses a problem because most producers are selecting for genetics to increase their lamb crop, which inadvertently increased the rate of lamb loss.

Starvation, diarrhea and pneumonia consistently rank in the top three reasons for lamb loss. Most shepherds are well-versed in treatment and prevention of the aforementioned problems that commonly affect young lambs; however, why some lambs are more susceptible than others is not clear. What is clear is the fact that low-birth lambs are twice as likely to die as normal lambs.

Some producers may struggle with dystocia associated with high-birthweight lambs, but it is not as large of a problem as seen in beef cattle. One reason in particular is overfed ewes (especially during early and midgestation) will have lighter lambs than normally fed ewes and ewes that were underfed. Not that I am condoning starving your ewes, but overfeeding can cause as many problems as underfeeding.

This brings up the concept that factors associated with lamb loss start well before birth. In fact, prenatal lamb loss ranges from 25 to 50 percent of fertilized ova. Similar to postnatal lamb loss, the greater the ovulation rate, the greater the rate of prenatal lamb loss.

Unfortunately, all the details have not been unveiled; however, some recent research on arginine supplementation has very promising effects on reducing prenatal lamb loss and increasing postnatal lamb survival. We plan to investigate the effects of dietary sources of arginine to improve prenatal and neonatal lamb survival.

**Tips for increasing your weaning percentage:**

- Flush ewes two weeks prior to breeding.
- Use a teaser ram if breeding ewes in August and early September.
- Don’t overfeed ewes (greater than 125 percent of the requirements) during early and midgestation.
- Keep minerals available to ewes throughout pregnancy; iodine deficiencies have affected North Dakota lambs.
- Vaccinate or treat ewes with antibiotics if vibrio or chlamydia has been a problem.
- Don’t breed ewes in high-mosquito areas; the cache valley virus was a problem last year.
- Consider vitamin E and selenium supplementation during late gestation and early lactation.
- Shear one month before lambing, which is the inexpensive way to increase ewe hay intake and lamb birthweight.
- Keep records on lambs.
  - Replacement ewes and rams should be twins.
  - Later-born lambs likely will be less reproductive than early born lambs.
  - Consider scoring lamb vigor at birth and record nursing assistance or treatment.

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**Lamb Empanadas**

**Combine**

- 1.5 pounds ground lamb
- ¾ c. crumbled feta cheese
- 4.5 ounces frozen spinach (squeeze out any excess water)
- 1 tsp. garlic salt
- 2 T. lemon juice + zest from ½ lemon
- 1 T. finely chopped fresh cilantro
- ½ tsp. lemon pepper
- 1 egg
- ½ c. dried bread crumbs

Using premade pie crust, cut out 3-inch circles of pastry. Place 1 tablespoon of meat filling near center. Lightly brush half-moons of edges with water. Fold in half to form a half-moon. Press the edge with tines of fork and brush tops with mixture of 1 egg and 1 tablespoon of water beaten together.

*Bake at 375 degrees for 15 minutes.*

Check out the newly updated website: [www.ndlwpa.com](http://www.ndlwpa.com)
Call for Starter Flock Applications

The North Dakota Lamb and Wool Producers Association is proud to announce that it will be accepting applications for the Starter Flock Program. This program awards 10 North Dakota youth (10 to 18 years of age) 10 yearling ewe starter flocks. For more information, visit our website (www.ndlwpa.com) or contact your regional NDLWPA board member. Applications for the Starter Flock Program are due Aug. 1, 2011.

Upcoming Events

• Board of Directors meetings
  April 14, 2011, Mandan, 11 a.m.
  Aug. 5, 2011, Jamestown, 5 p.m.
  Oct. 13, 2011, Mandan, 11 a.m.

• Jamestown Ram Sale
  Aug. 6, 2011, Jamestown, noon

• Hettinger Ram Sale
  Sept. 14, 2011, Hettinger, 1 p.m.

• Lamb Cook Off
  Dec. 2, 2011

• Annual NDLWPA Convention
  Dec. 2-3, 2011, Mandan, 3 p.m.

National Happenings

• Spring Trip to Washington, D.C.
  May 2-4
  Contact Peter Orwick
  (peter@sheepusa.org)

• National Meat Goat and Hair Sheep Symposium
  May 27-29
  Register by April 15
  Contact Mike Salisbury
  (ag@angelo.edu)