

Hettinger Research Extension Center



Research Focus - in brief

- Sheep breeding, feeding management and disease control
- Value-added beef nutrition
- Multi-species and winter grazing systems research
- Agricultural economic research
- Native grassland and pasture improvement

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The Hettinger Research Extension Center (HREC) conducts applied research and education in agriculture and environmental science that enriches the lives of North Dakotans and supports economic development.

Location

The HREC is located west of the city, on the north side of US Highway 12. Hettinger is at the center of a four-state region-North and South Dakota, Montana and Wyoming-that accounts for 21 percent of the U.S. sheep population and beef production is the primary industry of the area.

Operation

The center includes 1,165 acres and uses 3,400 acres of additional land owned by cooperators.

The center maintains over 1,000 sheep for basic, applied and demonstration research. The center holds the North Dakota Sheep School and one-day lambing workshops to help producers improve their skills.

Crop research is closely associated with the Dickinson Research Extension Center. It identifies crops suitable to the area, propagates seed stocks, develops profitable systems and conserves natural resources.

Advisory Committee

A Hettinger advisory committee guides the staff at the center. Its 15 members represent beef, sheep, swine and crop producers as well as consumers and business people from the region.

Research

- Develop the best technology in breeding, feeding, management and disease control pertinent to production of sheep in the state and incorporation of sheep production into best management natural resource preservation.
- Conduct research designed to increase productivity of all agricultural products of the soil while maintaining or improving the soil resource base in southwestern North Dakota by the identification of adapted crop species and superior crop cultivars; propagation and distribution of selected seed stocks; develop profitable cropping systems that achieve the necessary balance between profitability and conservation of natural resources.
- We provide research in agricultural economics that assists producers in agricultural risk management and development of drought strategies. Currently staff is compiling a database of resources available in the region to support ruminant animal production in the four state regions.

Research at the Hettinger Research Extension Center takes a team approach involving NDSU campus faculty, Experiment Station researchers from across the state, industry representatives, producers, other government agencies, and scientists from across the country. Adams County's office of the NDSU Extension Service is located at the Center.

Disseminate research results and information for the benefit of the state and to provide suitable outreach of NDSU to the state constituents.

Research findings are distributed through published reports, Extension programs, and Center field days that involve NDSU with the Hettinger community. Sheep and Beef Day is the second Wednesday of each February, and Crops Day is the third Thursday of each December. Summer crop tours occur in July.

Research focus

Livestock research and education

Sheep Research and Education

The HREC sheep research program aims to develop the best available techniques in breeding, feeding, health and management.

Located at the center of 25 percent of the nation's sheep industry puts the center in a unique position to help the industry.

Programs and research includes:

- Research and educational programs focusing on labor-reducing confinement, easy rearing strategies and ways to reduce losses from predators.
- Selling breeding stock to producers.
- Reducing lamb mortality
- Out-of-season breeding in sheep.
- Accelerated lambing programs for increased profits.
- Testing North Dakota's new and emerging crops as feed resources for sheep.

Beef Research and Education

The Southwest Feeders project is an integrated research and extension program designed to enhance economic development in the region. This program is demonstrating the benefits of livestock feeding to producers through hands on feeding trials utilizing locally raised forages and grains. The facility is designed to be multi-species serving also the sheep industry with feedlot research.

Agricultural Economics

A major focus of this program is supporting on going crops and livestock initiatives by providing economic evaluations of on-going research at HREC.

North Dakota Sheep School

The center sponsors a number of sheep schools and one-day lambing workshops. The purpose is to help producers improve their skills, thereby lowering costs and increasing production.

The sheep management school consists of three full days of classroom and hands-on work where the producers learn the basics of sheep production.

Crop, livestock and rangeland management

Future directions

The HREC will move to direct future research focus to agricultural development initiatives and sustainability of the region including:

- Carbon sequestration
- Shared use of grazing resources between livestock production and wildlife
- Utilization of by-products of the ethanol industry, reducing input costs of beef and sheep producers
- Continue the development of learning centers and the delivery of distance education to constituents of southwest North Dakota
- HREC will continue study of multi-species co-grazing of sheep and cattle to control leafy spurge and enrich the plant community
- The center will work to develop management for low-input pasture lambing systems under North Dakota conditions
- Crop research adapted to the region, including crop variety testing and grain seedstock production, herbicide response and weed control in southwestern North Dakota, reduced tillage systems and cooperative soils studies, winter wheat production and alternative crop opportunities.
- Studies to evaluate the impact of row spacing on plant production and other factors on corn production in southwestern North Dakota.
- Economics work focuses on optimal production and the interaction between crop and livestock enterprises