

# LAMB & WOOL

A Newsletter For The Iowa Sheep Industry / March - 2008



## Sheep Producers or Business Managers?

**BY: MARSHA SPYKERMAN**

Early in February I attended the Pipestone Lambing Time Shortcourse and Bus Tour at the Minnesota West Community College, Pipestone, Minnesota. The brochure stated that today's sheep producers need to focus on producing and marketing a high lambing percentage while keeping the cost of production as low as possible. All of this must be accomplished with the least possible labor input. The shortcourse and tour was designed to help producers recognize and effectively deal with common lambing problems and a great deal of information was covered in a short time. Sessions on Friday evening and Saturday morning were conducted by Mike Caskey and Philip Berg, instructors, Pipestone Lamb & Wool Program and Dr. J.D. Bobb and Dr. J.L. Goelz, from the Pipestone Veterinary Clinic. Saturday afternoon we toured two operations running 800 ewes each.

A great deal of the focus of the Pipestone Lamb & Wool program is geared toward running ewe flocks of 800 - 1200 head, making maximum use of facilities and equipment and implementing labor saving practices. Lambing management to produce high lambing percentages and survival rates is also at the center of the Pipestone program.

Caskey discussed ways to make lambing time easier. Number one on the list is preparation; number two is planned lambing. He stated that planned lambing is better referred to as planned breeding and something we need to really take control of. We don't need to lamb 400 ewes, non-stop and end up so worn out

that our lamb mortality numbers are unreasonable. Caskey shared that "the practice of lambing for two weeks and then taking two weeks off has done more to save lambs and allow producers to expand their sheep numbers than any other practice."

Lambing barns are insulated and a temperature of 32 - 40 degrees is maintained by the number of sheep in the barn and ventilation fans that turn on when the temperature reaches 40 degrees. On the tour the number of ewes in the drop area seemed quite intense but each night gates or panels are used to divide them into groups of about 25 - 30 ewes. The center of the building is warmer and the best location for lambing jugs; 6" PVC piping, with holes cut strategically, is used to water ewes in the jugs to save labor. Pregnant ewes are fed their full day's rations between 10 a.m. and noon because studies have shown that fewer night births will take place if you follow this feeding schedule. Late afternoon or evening feeding is not advised unless you enjoy making those 2 a.m. checks.

Only 10 percent of your time is spent lambing but since it is so intense, during a short period of time, it seems higher than that. Up to 65 percent of your time is spent feeding so it is important to make use of labor saving methods for feeding sheep. Producers on the tour were feeding turn-out ewes with lambs, free choice pelleted soy hulls mixed with DDGS. In addition to saving labor during lambing, this allows for a higher stocking rate so better use can be made of the

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## ShortCLIPS by Dan Morrical



### What I have been up to.

Recently I feel like the song, "I've been every where man". This semester has been very busy with trips to Michigan, Las Vegas, Indiana and Pipestone. I have nine upper classmen in my advanced sheep production course. We traveled to Iowa Lamb and on up to the Pipestone Lambing School. The picture shows how cold it was. Wind chill during the afternoon farm visits was in the -20 range. Drove home from that trip with blowing snow on the roads and some black ice. Fortunately there were no issues with traction.

Last week we traveled to the McNay sheep farm for hands on experiences for the class. The most common comment about the ewes at McNay was how ugly they are. Of course the mature are currently dropping 2.44 lambs per ewe lambing and ewe lambs are at 1.82. Those numbers makes these ewes beautiful not ugly.

After the two hours at McNay we headed to Washington, Iowa and Premier 1. I really wanted Stan to discuss entrepreneurship with the class. The students were very impressed with his knowledge of run-

ning a business. While there we also looked at several groups of sheep that were breeds the students had never seen, specifically Katadin, Border Leicester and Dorpers. It was a long day but all students felt both road trips were worthwhile.

While at the Pipestone Lambing Workshop the new information on self feeding ewes on soy hulls and distillers was the most interesting to me. Also on the farm visits was the use of hoops for ewes. The hoop pictured in this article is 38 by 100 with 250 ewes and their lambs being housed in the area. Ewes seem to do extremely well on the ration. The biggest complaint was the amount of fecal matter produced and bedding needs being greatly increased. Lambs also seem to consume the mixture very well which was reducing creep feed intake.

Small drop areas with 25 or less ewes per group was one method to reduce mis-mothering in heated lambing units so that shepherds could sleep through the night. The main focus for growth in the Pipestone program is developing systems that allow one family to run 800 to 1000 ewes rather than

400. Enthusiasm for the sheep industry was very high with almost 100 people attending the Lambing School.

The students really enjoyed their tour of Iowa Lamb. I think the most important information for the day was that over 50% of their profits are made in the six weeks before Easter. The other observation I would make from my 20 plus years of working with Iowa Lamb is that they are more conscious of getting more value from the lamb. For example, they can sell whole heads to Mexico for \$.75 per head. However with some process, they were generating almost \$10 per head by selling parts separately. Parts would include brains, cheek meat and tongues.

### New Grafting Technique

One of the most interesting grafting methods was one producer who cross tied his recipient ewes in a jug. Now he did indicate that for the first half hour you had better be there in case the ewes ran out of air. However, you must agree it is high portable and not very costly.

## COMMERCIAL BREEDING STOCK FOR SALE

**Purebred Dorset Ewes** - Out of our Dew Drop stud. These ewes will go on to be show quality yearlings or terrific brood ewes. Priced to sell. M.H.W. Farms, 4283 Hwy 117 N, Colfax, IA. Bob Maher 515-674-3029, email: bnlmaher@aol.com or Monte Wilson 515-674-4217, email: mnkwilson@hotmail.com. (2/08)

**Ram Lambs & Rams** - 1/2 Ile de France x 1/2 Romanov ram lambs \$500; Breeding age Dorper and White Dorper rams starting at \$400. Volume discounts available. Complete shedding rams available. S. Mitcham, Crane Creek, 3061 160<sup>th</sup> St, Sumner, IA 50674, 563-578-5665 or 563-578-8193, sam@netins.net, netins.net/showcase/sam/ccd.htm or ccidf.htm. (12/07)

**PB Border Collies** - Born end of January, 2008 out of working parents. Tony DeGroot, 712-395-0639

Free listing for ISIA members. Ads must be limited to 50 words and will run in four issues (date in parenthesis indicates first issue). Ads may be re-submitted for an additional four months at a time. Send ad information along with name, address, phone and email to the ISIA office at 5771 230th St., Sibley, IA 51249, or info@iowasheep.com by the 25th of the month for publication in the following month's newsletter. Newsletter is published 11 times/year with a July/August issue.



Top Row Left to Right: ISU Advanced Sheep Production Class; Different grafting technique. Middle Row Left to Right: Hoop building with ewes and lambs; large groups were penned off at night. Bottom row left to right: Katodins and paint yearling; Students giving IP belly injection.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**March 15** – 6:30 p.m. – Annual Greene County Lamb Producers Banquet, St. Joseph’s Parish Center, 501 N. Locust, Jefferson, IA. For more information contact Steve Karber, 515-386-8216 or Randy Hedges, 515-386-4740.

**March 22** – Delivery date for the Illinois Ram Test – 84 day test. Sale date will be July 12, 2008. For more information contact Mark Hoge, 309-298-2537, 309-255-2735, or [MD-Hoge@wiu.edu](mailto:MD-Hoge@wiu.edu)

**March 25** – 6:30 p.m. - Madison County Annual Meeting and Lamb Banquet, Madison County Fairgrounds, Winterset, Iowa. \$5.00 at the door pays membership and meal.

**April 12** – Delivery date for the Illinois Ram Test – 63 day test. Sale date will be July 12, 2008. For more information contact Mark Hoge, 309-298-2537, 309-255-2735, or [MD-Hoge@wiu.edu](mailto:MD-Hoge@wiu.edu)

**April 17** – 7 p.m. - Iowa Sheep and Wool Promotion Board conference call meeting. If you would like to participate call 712-736-2109 for call-in instructions.

**April 26-27** – Heartland Llama Show, Hamilton Co Fairgrounds, Webster City, Iowa. For more information contact Karen Miller at 641-939-5158 or [karfield@netins.net](mailto:karfield@netins.net).

[netins.net](http://netins.net).

**May 3** – Kimm Suffolks 20th Annual Production Sale at home farm. See what we can offer your flock at: [www.breedingsheepage.com/kimm](http://www.breedingsheepage.com/kimm). Bob Kimm, 1636 W Ave, Dysart, IA 52224, 319-476-3875, [bbkimm@fctc.coop](mailto:bbkimm@fctc.coop).

**June 14** – Iowa Sheep Industry Association Annual meeting, Adel, Iowa in conjunction with the 4th Annual Iowa Sheep & Wool Festival.

**June 14-15** – 4th Annual Iowa Sheep & Wool Festival, Dallas County Fairgrounds, Adel, Iowa. Check at [www.iowasheep.com](http://www.iowasheep.com) for details and schedules as they become available.

**July 12** – Sale day for Illinois Ram Test. For more information contact Mark Hoge, 309-298-2537, 309-255-2735, or [MD-Hoge@wiu.edu](mailto:MD-Hoge@wiu.edu) or visit: [www.wiu.edu/ramtest](http://www.wiu.edu/ramtest).

*Do you have an event that you would like to place in the Lamb & Wool newsletter? Please send information by the 15th of the month preceding publication date of newsletter. Submit via email at [info@iowasheep.com](mailto:info@iowasheep.com) or phone 712-736-2109.*



NATIONAL LAMB FEEDERS ASSOCIATION

## 2008 Howard Wyman Sheep Industry Leadership School will meet in California

For the first time since 1995, the California sheep industry will be the focus of the Howard Wyman Sheep Industry Leadership School, when the 23rd annual Leadership School meets July 13-16, 2008 in Dixon, CA. "This year's program will examine the sheep industry in a world of increasing costs, raising questions of whether we are ready for \$200 per barrel oil prices and \$7 per bushel corn," Robert T. Rutherford, Professor and Sheep Specialist at Cal Poly and coordinator for the 2008 Leadership School said. "We will also focus on animal health and not animal disease and discuss what must be done to provide incentives for the production of what the consumers desire. Hopefully we won't have to see a sheep industry where lamb and wool are byproducts."

The National Lamb Feeders Association sponsors the Leadership School for sheep producers, lamb feeders, and individuals involved with sheep-related businesses who are interested in what they can do to expand and improve their individual operations. The two and one-half day program will include field tours to vegetation management, range ewe, forage feeding, and feedlot operations, and a tour of a disease diagnostic lab and a commercial lamb processing plant.

### 2008 Leadership School

Speakers include leaders from the major sheep organizations, graduates of the California Ag Leadership Program, leaders from the world of lamb marketing, and land rehabilitation facilitators. Participants will be expected to actively engage in case studies and problem solving involving real-world situations.

Interested sheep men and women with all levels of experience in the sheep industry may apply by completing a brief application and submit a short essay explaining their experience in the sheep industry and what they would like to learn. The selection committee will review the essays and select a class of 25 participants, age 20 or older to attend.

**Applications must be received by May 1, 2008 and no fee is required.** However, once selected, applicants will be notified and asked to submit a registration fee of \$100 to secure their placement. NLFA covers the other program costs, including food, lodging and tour expenses. Participants are responsible for their own travel to and from the Dixon, CA site.

To request an application, call the NLFA office (503) 364-5462 or visit: [www.nlfa-sheep.org](http://www.nlfa-sheep.org).

## ISIA Board Conference Call Meeting



The Iowa Sheep Industry Association conference call board meeting was called to order at 7:00 by President Ben Johnson

on February 11, 2008. Board members present were: Larry Daniels, Ben Johnson, Erlene Leonard, Leland Shipley, Steve Bernhard, Jim Timmins, Gary Erickson, Dan Morrill, and Executive Director Marsha Spykerman.

Motion made, seconded and approved (MMSA) to approve the minutes from the previous meeting. MMSA to acknowledge the treasurer's report as presented by Erlene.

Director's report by Marsha. She attended the ISU Winter Sheep Programs, participated in a conference call meeting of the Iowa Livestock Health Advisory Council, attended Iowa Ag Awareness Coalition meetings, the NWISP Annual meeting, Iowa Sheep & Wool Promotion Board meeting, American Sheep Industry Association Annual meeting and the Pipestone Lambing Time Shortcourse. In addition to routine activities, work continues on the Festival. Marsha also reported on some of the meetings she attended at the ASI annual meeting.

ISU report was given by Dan with a follow up on the ASI annual meeting. He has also been conducting interviews for open positions at ISU.

After some discussion on a beginning flock proposal, MMSA to table action on this until our April meeting.

MMSA to donate \$75 to the Iowa Show Lamb Camp for their family dinner.

MMSA to nominate Dr. Dan Morrill for the ASI Production Education and Research Council. He has served on this council for two years.

MMSA to nominate Steve DeGroot to the ASI Lamb Council if he is willing to serve.

MMSA to decline donation request for trip for pre-vet students.

MMSA to add ISIA's name to the ASI letter requesting predator control funding for the Eastern region of the U.S.

Festival was discussed. Larry reported that the Iowa Jr. Extravaganza will take place on June 14. The Iowa Club Lamb Association will be sponsoring an Open Market Lamb Show and the ICLA Showback Show on June 15. Marsha reported that ISIA will be the recipient of an American Lamb Board grant for the third year. An auction at the festival was discussed and it is felt that we need ten to twelve items to make a decent auction.

The next meeting will be a face-to-face meeting, March 31, 2008 at 11:00 a.m. at Dublin Bay restaurant in Ames. Meeting adjourned.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Gary Erickson, Secretary*

# Larsen Quints

This photo was sent in by ISIA members Brian and Sally Larsen from St. Anthony, Iowa. One of their ewes gave birth to five very nice lambs and is reported to have a good supply of milk for the lambs. They have had quintuplets in the past but weren't able to save all of them. Brian, Sally and their three sons are in the process of lambing about 350 head of sheep; they also raise crops and have a pig nursery as well.



## Trip to the Barn

*Reprinted from the February, 2008 issue of the Idaho Wool Grower Bulletin*

Its two in the mornin', time for the check;  
 The middle of lambin', 'n' a cold ol' trek.  
 Is it worth it ya wonder as you stomp through the snow?  
 Its winter, you idiot; yes, the wind's sure to blow.  
 When ya git to the barn, pause 'n' listen a spell;  
 You wonder what's happenin', this trip to compel.  
 The sound, though it's weak, brings yer blood all aglow;  
 The ewe, she's a bleatin', brought life here to show.  
 We make this cold trip through the wind, rain 'n' snow;  
 Hundreds of times a year, the ritual you know.  
 'N' all for the bleat of the new life we'll hear.  
 The world's come to life, its time fer a cheer.  
 With this trip to the barn, we wonder at the babe we hold.  
 Why we're picked out so special, this event to behold.  
 Life just so precious 'n' we give it our care.  
 We ain't much for church but he hears our prayer.  
 So when I git up fer the two o'clock check;  
 There's more to the trip than just a short trek.  
 There's a new life a comin' 'n' I know it's a blessin';  
 Not many kin say that, I'd say, just a guessin'!

## Illinois Ram Test

*\*Editors note: If anyone is interested in sending rams to this test station and wondering about transportation, please contact Daryl Mickelson at 515-229-2182 or [mickelsonhamps@prairiei-net.net](mailto:mickelsonhamps@prairiei-net.net).*

Having a good lambing season and producing the kind of lambs you wish everyone could see? The Illinois ram testing program offers you the opportunity to get the most comprehensive set of production available from any testing program and provides exposure of your sheep to potential buyers.

This facility is equipped with the latest technology, including a FIRE (Feed Intake Recording Equipment) system that allows daily weighing of sheep and feed. Each lamb will be tagged with a small tag that also holds a miniature radio transponder inside it. When the lamb comes up to the feeder, the electronic equipment in the feeder reads the transponder tag. It weighs the lamb and the amount of feed present. When the lamb leaves the feeding area, it again reads the transponder tag, and re-weighs. This information is then sent to a central computer for storage. This gives the ability to get feed efficiency information on each lamb. It also allows the opportunity to check daily feed consumption of each lamb.

Experience with this type of system in bull testing stations has shown this to be extremely helpful in detecting

health problems before the animal may actually appear to be ill. In addition to growth rate and feed efficiency, you will receive ultrasonic scan data for ribeye area and ribfat, plus scrotal circumference.

It's all too easy to think that our own sheep are pretty good, or that they're good because someone gave them a blue ribbon at a county fair. Performance testing doesn't play politics or give you a misleading picture of things – it shows what your sheep can do when compared to sheep from your fellow breeders under the same feeding, health and management conditions.

Enter your best rams in this new program. A good number of people will see your rams on test and at the sale. Think about what type of sheep you want to represent you! Entries are due at your earliest convenience. Pictures of the rams will be taken in May at shearing time and will be put on the website, along with the traditional 21, 42, 63-day progress weigh points and the final performance indexes.

Delivery date for the 84 day test is March 22, 2008 and for the 63 day test delivery date is April 12, 2008.. Sale date will be July 12, 2008. For more information contact Mark Hoge, 309-298-2537, 309-255-2735, or [MD-Hoge@wiu.edu](mailto:MD-Hoge@wiu.edu) or visit [www.wiu.edu/ram-test](http://www.wiu.edu/ram-test).

## In Sympathy

The Iowa Sheep Industry Association received word of the death of John P. Miller, Urbandale, Iowa. Mr. Miller, a 1947 graduate of Iowa State University, was a member of the West Des Moines United Methodist Church and ran the church stand at the Iowa State Fair for many years (which is located just north of the Iowa Sheep Industry Association Foodstand). He was co-owner and manger of the Peterson Sheep and Cattle Company. He was well known for raising sheep in Clive. John was Past President of the Lamb Feeders Association and the National Livestock and Meat Board. Survivors include his wife Millie of Urbandale, one son, two daughters, seven grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

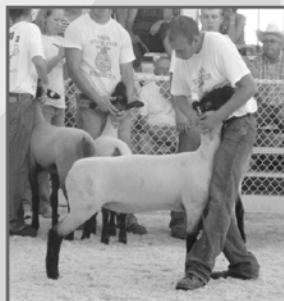
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### Honey Baked Leg of Lamb

4 to 7 pound American Lamb leg, boneless

Directions:

Combine marinade ingredients. Reserve 1/4 cup for basting. Place lamb in large sealable plastic bag and pour marinade over lamb. Seal tightly and refrigerate four hours or overnight. Remove lamb from marinade and discard marinade. Place lamb on rack in baking pan. Bake in 325 degrees F oven for 20 to 25 minutes per pound, or until desired degree of doneness: 145 degrees F for medium-rare, 160 degrees F medium or 170 degrees F for well. Baste. Remove lamb from oven, cover lightly and let sit for 10 minutes. Internal temperature will rise approximately 10 degrees.

Marinade Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup dry white wine or chicken broth
- 1/3 cup honey
- 1/2 cup finely chopped onion
- 1/2 cup finely chopped fresh mint or 3 tablespoons dried mint
- 2 tablespoons grated lemon peel
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper

*This is a recipe that was found in the ISIA "archives". It appears to be an entry in a cooking contest at one of the symposiums ISIA held several years ago.*

### Lickin' Good Pickled Lamb Cubes

*Mr. Robert J Kolarik, Springville, Iowa*

- 2 lamb shanks
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- 2 Tbsp. butter
- 1 medium onion, sliced
- 1 Tbsp. mixed pickling spices
- 1/2 cup cider vinegar
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. pepper
- 1 tsp. paprika
- 1 tsp. sugar
- 1/4 cup pimento, chopped
- 2 green onions, chopped
- 1 envelope Knox unflavored gelatin

Dissolve gelatin in 1/4 cup water. Rub lamb shanks with powdered garlic or use garlic cloves. In a Dutch oven, melt butter and add shanks, browning on all sides. Cover with water and cook until lamb is tender and comes away from the bone. Remove meat from water and cut into small pieces. To 2-1/2 cups of the water, add the medium onion and mixed pickling spices. Simmer 20 minutes. Strain and reserve liquid. Add remaining ingredients and lamb pieces to reserved liquid and mix well. Pour into an 8" x 8" pan. Chill in refrigerator until firm. Skim off any fat that may come to the top. Cut in cubes and serve as an appetizer with crackers.

### SHEEP PRODUCERS OR BUSINESS MANAGERS?

*Continued from page 1*

buildings and fewer lamb injuries from lambs competing at the bunks with the ewes. One consideration is that the manure is pasty and does require more bedding.

Another way to save labor is to get rid of ewes that don't have the ability to mother. Caskey said "There is skill in keeping three lambs together; it's a genetic trait. A lot of ewes have no ability to mother or care about having lambs and we have a long history in the sheep business of keeping those ewes".

Dr. Bobb shared that the amount of colostrum a lamb requires also depends upon the temperature it is born into. If in a lambing shed at 32 degrees F, the lamb will need about 80 cc per pound of body weight during the first 18 hours of life (30 cc = 1 ounce). If it is colder the requirement will be higher. When feeding lambs with a stomach tube do not feed more than 20 cc per pound at one feeding.

Major causes of lamb mortality around lambing time are hypothermia, starvation, scours, pneumonia, enterotoxemia and trauma. Dr. Goeltz stated that when a young lamb is posted he is not surprised any more to note injuries such as broken ribs, bruises and internal damage from being hit by ewes and competing at the feed bunk with the ewes. A dry environment is extremely important so the lambs dry off faster and results in fewer incidences of hypothermia.

Deworming ewes at lambing time is good for several reasons. Worms hibernate during cold weather by burrowing into the lining of the intestine so they won't be passed out in the fecal material. At lambing time there is a hormonal shift that causes the worms to temporarily come out of hibernation and deworming at this time can really reduce the worm load during the winter months. When the ewes are in the jugs they are easily accessible and can be dewormed before moving to the blend pens. We have done this in our flock for about six years and this is the only time we deworm all of our ewes. In the fall before breeding we will check the eyelids of several ewes and on occasion will deworm a few.

Caskey said we are in a new era of livestock production and the increased feed costs will dramatically change the livestock industry with corn being the driver. He covered six "Keys to Success (or Failure): 1) Formula for profit – What is your cost???? You need to know where you are at today. 2) Superior genetics – Ten years from now the ewe will need to be a better "machine". 3) Managing feed costs – When your feet hit the floor in the morning be thinking about how to save a buck on feed costs. 4) Alliance forming – for feed, marketing, etc. 5) Controlled production – time of year, kind and quality of lambs and manage them once they are born. 6) Large scale production – is almost inevitable for profitability.

In commercial lamb production, we need to switch our thinking from simply being "producers" to being "managers" of our sheep operations with business decisions to make our operation as profitable as possible.

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### Iowa Sheep Industry Association

Ben Johnson, President  
1241 Hwy 218, Floyd, IA 50435  
641-398-3019  
[bajohnson@omnitel.com](mailto:bajohnson@omnitel.com)

Marsha Spykerman, Executive Director  
5771 230th St., Sibley, IA 51249  
Phone/Fax: 712-736-2109  
E-mail: [info@iowasheep.com](mailto:info@iowasheep.com)

### Dr Dan Morrival, Ext. Sheep Specialist

337 Kildee Hall  
Iowa State University  
Ames, IA 50011  
Phone: 515-294-2904  
Fax: 515-294-3795  
E-mail: [morrival@iastate.edu](mailto:morrival@iastate.edu)

### Iowa Sheep & Wool Promotion Board

Dave Hofland, Chairman  
3329 Tyler Ave., Hartley, IA 51346  
712-728-3103 • [hofsheep@evetek.net](mailto:hofsheep@evetek.net)

Jean Van Houweling, Executive Secretary  
PO Box 35633, Des Moines, IA 50315  
Phone: 515-287-0215  
E-mail: [j.vanhouweling@mchsi.com](mailto:j.vanhouweling@mchsi.com)

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Iowa Sheep Industry Association  
% Marsha Spykerman  
5771 230th St  
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