

New Bolton requests sheep producers' help in study

KENNETT SQUARE — School of Veterinary Researchers at the University of Pennsylvania Medicine have requested the help of eastern Pennsylvania

sheep producers in implementing a study to improve veterinary services to the sheep industry

The study will address the foremost health problems in eastern sheep—parasites, nutrition and economics

In December 1978, University veterinarians, in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Sheep and Wool Growers Association, distributed surveys to sheep producers and veterinarians in Pennsylvania

From the survey returns, flock management practices and veterinary services to the sheep industry were assessed. Findings indicate that both management and health care should be improved in several areas.

For the sheep industry to prosper, veterinary services and drug costs should be evaluated. For example, the average costs for veterinary care in the state was \$143 per year, or about \$1.40 per sheep. Cost of over-the-counter drugs averaged \$88 per flock, or \$1.32 per sheep.

These expenditures did not correlate however, with decreasing death rates or culling rates. Death rates remained about the same in flocks regardless of how much money was spent. These results indicate that not all expenditures are appropriate economically.

Both producers and veterinarians are unaware of the services resulting in greatest returns to the producer in terms of such factors as survivability of lambs, highest growth rates or maximal conception rates. Parasites and worming can be used as an example.

Greatest returns per dollar spent may be attained when lambs are wormed repeatedly at intervals of a certain number of weeks. Worming more frequently may result in no further gain by lambs but greater costs. Worming less frequently may save money but significantly depress rate of gain and result in diminished returns at time of sale.

Only 11 percent of producers determined parasite burdens with fecal

examinations. Worming sheep with little knowledge of degree of worm infestation, number of sheep affected or species of worm involved can be ineffective and costly.

Other examples could include benefits, i.e. returns over costs, from vaccinations, feed supplements and mastitis treatments.

Nutrition and feeding management were other areas needing further attention. Incidence of diseases usually prevented by proper feeding was relatively high. Stiff lamb disease was reported in 22 percent of flocks, and pregnancy disease in 16 percent of flocks.

Since feed costs represent a large fraction of money spent in any livestock enterprise, improvement in feeding management in farm flocks should aim to improve health and maximize productivity. Feeding programs which neglect diseases that are linked to a nutritional component are not likely to be the most economical in the long run.

In the survey producers and veterinarians were asked to list the most pressing problems in the state sheep industry. Parasites were the number one problem according to 60 percent of producers and 70 percent of veterinarians.

To effectively treat parasite burdens in sheep, the worms should be characterized from that particular locale because species of worms, their life cycles and effective treatments vary with climate, geography and management practices.

Parasites have been studied intensively in

Australia, New Zealand and Great Britain, and to some extent in western range areas of the US. Little work has been done in the East. So it is not surprising that parasites remain a problem in this area.

Nutrition was listed as a major problem in Pennsylvania sheep by 25 percent of producers and 57 percent of veterinarians. The survey showed veterinarians were more aware of parasite-nutrition interactions within flocks. Any investigation into parasite control should encompass nutritional interactions.

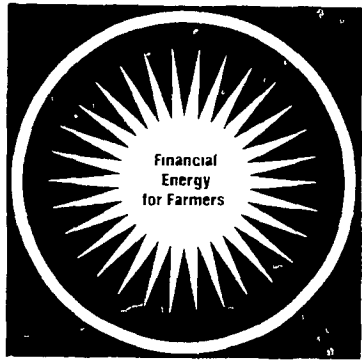
As a result of the survey findings, a proposed study concerning sheep farms in southeastern Pennsylvania has been requested. The study will be funded in part by Agway, Inc., Syracuse, NY. It will examine parasite burdens, feeding practices and economics of farm flocks.

The study will entail monthly visits to farms for 8 months, then one visit every 8 weeks for the remaining 4 months.

During the first visit, thorough histories will be obtained on flock management, diseases, ewe and lamb performance and cost of maintaining the flock. Fecal samples will be collected from a representative number of sheep within each flock and parasites identified. Feeds will be sampled for nutrient analyses.

Following visits will involve update of records, fecal samples and more feed analyses when feedstuffs are changed.

Flocks with any type of management, breed or size will be accepted. The sheep (Turn to Page C36)



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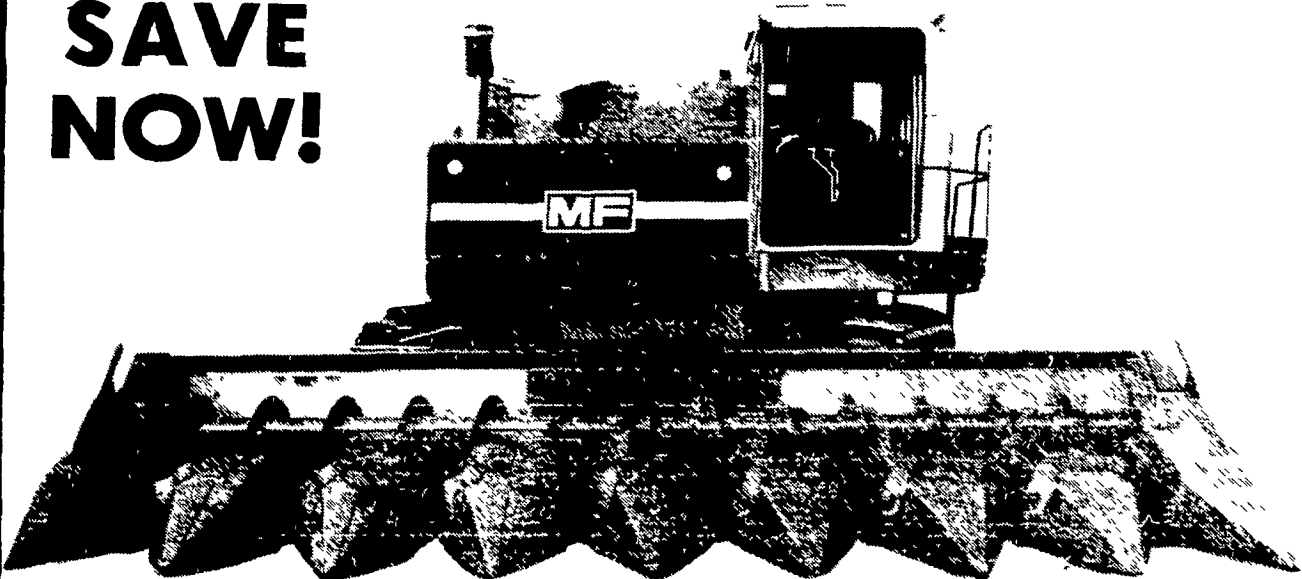
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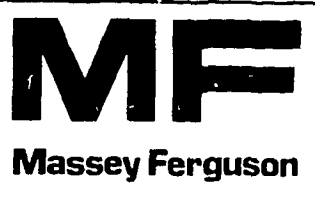


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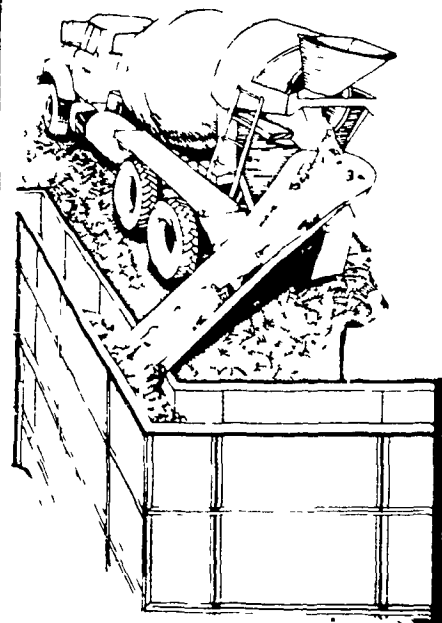
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