

Keystone Shepherds Symposium

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health was practicing veterinarian, Dr. G.F. Kennedy, also an active working member of the Pipestone Sheep Project. Dr. Kennedy manages a flock of purebred Rambouillet and Dorset ewes. The areas of concentration Dr. Kennedy spoke of included preventive health practices for the lambing ewe and the newborn lambs and basic skills required for being your own "doctor" during those most unpredictable moments. Treatment and prevention practices were also covered on some major sheep diseases.

On the topic of foot rot, a major problem among today's sheep flocks, Dr. Kennedy stated that if not properly taken care of many sheep may be lost. The three important environmental factors that must be present for the two foot rot bacteria to live include a reduced oxygen supply, which may be caused by a buildup of manure on the foot; a temperature of 50 to 70 degrees Fahrenheit, and the presence of the bacteria itself. Prevention and treatment techniques Dr. Kennedy discussed included the essential vaccine *Bacteroides Nodosus*.

It is also important to sort the flock and cull those sheep with chronic lesions, while the non-infected sheep are being kept on a clean pasture. Other methods of treatment discussed were the immediate treatment of overgrown feet and the installation of foot baths. The addition of zinc sulfate to the sheep's diet prior to the infection season has also proved to be beneficial in preventing an outbreak of foot rot as well as vaccinating against this harmful bacteria to prevent its occurrence.

Forage Programs

Dr. Sid Bosworth, Pennsylvania State University, Extension agronomist and Tom Calvert together presented the audience with valuable information concerning sheep forage programs. Dr. Bosworth concentrated on "Establishing and Managing the Brassicas as a Sheep Forage." Many years ago man planted the brassicas and took them to the sheep, today's concept has changed in that, the sheep are now going to the brassicas.

Brassicas are used by today's modern shepherd to extend the grazing season, as a supplemental feed for the high producing animals in the flock as well as for flushing ewes. Not only are brassicas beneficial to the animal, but they help in reducing soil erosion, and give the animal firm footing when the ground is soft. Brassicas also seem to reduce insect problems.

Of the four species of brassicas there are two that have a short growing period and two that have a long growing period. Having the short growing period are the rape and turnip. These two species have a maximum growth period of 90 to 100 days and yield approximately three to four tons of dry matter. The kale and swede are in the long growing period. Kale's maximum growth period is approximately 180 days and five to six tons of dry matter can be yielded.

Dr. Bosworth suggested that to establish brassicas the farmer must first select a site that is well drained since brassicas don't grow well in damp areas. The soil should have a pH of 6.0-6.5. The desired grazing time is directly related to the seedling period. If the desired grazing time is August or September then the seedling period is in the spring; when grazing in October or November the seedling

period is during mid Summer. If the brassicas are in the seedling stage by late summer they will have enough time to be ready for grazing in the late fall or early winter. Brassicas are an excellent form of very lush, low fiber forages for sheep today.

Sheep Nutrition

Harold Harpster, animal scientist, spoke of just how nutritionally versatile sheep are. A goal of today's shepherd should be to have a 100-pound sheep 100 days from birth. This can be attained with support from the industry's programs, products and people.

Mr. Harpster stated that, "We must be efficient in order to move sheep on the market in comparison to the other red meat industries."

Optimum versus maximum performance was the main area of concentration that Harpster presented to those in attendance. Roughages such as haylage, silage and alfalfa hay should be well balanced with corn which is high in energy and is economically wise. Other important dietary components, include concentrates, sorghum, barley, corn, wheat, oats and rye. It is important to remember that lambs can be fed higher roughage levels than cattle and still have a maximum gain.

Looking into the future the shepherd may have to consider new growth techniques. Such growth techniques include growth stimulants, growth hormone and growth hormone releasing factor. Studies to date show that with these futuristic techniques sheep have resulted in gains of 1.10 pounds/day, or an increase of 1.4 percent over normal growth.

In order to decide which feeding program will achieve optimum growth, today's sheep producer must look at the current market demands.



Brenda Fox (left) of MTS Travel, discusses the upcoming Australia and New Zealand tour with 1987 Lamb and Wool Queen Gwendolyn Gray.

Sheep Housing

Mike Caskey, Pipestone Sheep Project, spoke of some of the current sheep shelters, feeders, equipment used by today's serious sheep breeder. In order to have a healthy producing flock of sheep they must have proper shelter from the elements. Many of the sheep breeders often utilize older buildings before building a brand new facility.

One option in utilizing an older building, according to Caskey, is to have an expanded metal floor installed. Although this technique may not be successful for young lambs it is exceptional for the well started lamb. Caskey stated that if the temperature inside these buildings is kept at 32 degrees Fahrenheit fewer health problems will occur.

The most ideal feeding system is the 16-foot feed bunk. A farmer is able to feed hay and grain in this unit. Not only is the system the most ideal feeding mechanism, it is versatile and economical as well. Two other feeders discussed included the five-sided feeder and the six-10-foot fence line feeding panel.

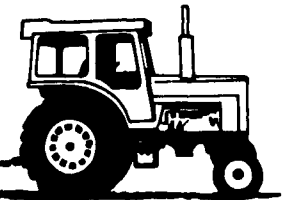
Caskey stressed the importance of "trying to minimize labor without increasing the expenses."

Those who attended the symposium were given the chance to receive information on lamb and wool promotional and educational materials, wool crafts, sheep fencing, handling equipment and facilities, computer programs, nutrition, marketing, and health products through the many

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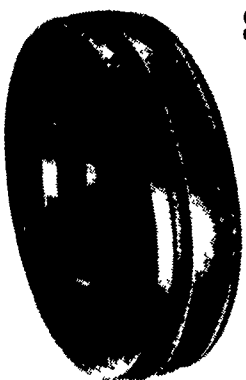
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