

Herd-Management Plan Will Increase Profits

SAN ANTONIO, TX — A herd-management program that includes a breeding-soundness examination of rams and the use of vasectomized rams to prepare ewes for breeding will significantly improve the profitability of a lamb producer, according to Don E. Bailey, D.V.M., of Roseburg, Ore., executive secretary of the American Association of Sheep and Goat Practitioners (AASGP).

Bailey was one of several speakers representing the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) and three other national veterinary organizations, including AASGP, at a meeting of the Livestock Publications Council in San Antonio.

Bailey estimated that instituting breeding-soundness examinations for rams would reduce the cost of breeding per ewe from \$10-\$15 to \$3-\$4, because producers would not have to use as many rams per ewe during breeding.

He said exposing ewes to vasectomized rams also can improve reproductive efficiency by inducing ovulation before mating with a fertile ram. Vasectomized rams also are being used to identify ewes that are not pregnant for culling.

Intensive management practices and innovative veterinary techniques can enable sheep producers to double or even triple lamb production per ewe, Bailey said.

"Some farmers now produce well in excess of 200 lambs weaned per 100 ewes mated, and the more ambitious are aiming to produce one pound of lamb per ewe per day over a 365 day period," Bailey said.

Sheep have a gestation period of only five months, but unlike cattle or swine, they tend to be seasonal

breeders, and most ewes lamb only once a year, he explained. Some ewes will lamb twice yearly or at least three times every two years. Another strategy is to induce multiple births, he said.

Cross-breeding with certain breeds can have dramatic effects on flock reproductive performance by extending the breeding season, Dorsets for example, or by stimulating earlier onset of puberty and increased ovulation rates, Finnish Landrace, for example.

Breeding soundness evaluations of rams are important, because even temporary infertility can have a dramatic negative effect on reproductive efficiency. These evaluations also assure the timely culling of rams affected with various infectious diseases that influence semen production.

New techniques now available through veterinarians include a pregnancy diagnosis that tells farmers which ewes are pregnant and how many fetuses each is carrying to facilitate extra feeding of ewes carrying multiple fetuses. Embryo transfer and artificial insemination are techniques with great potential for improvement of reproductive efficiency, but the sheep industry has been slow to adopt them, often because of technical problems, Bailey said.

Other new techniques sheep practitioners now are able to offer producers include estrous induction, synchronization of cycles to get all ewes in a flock lambing at the same time, and induction of parturition to control the timing of deliveries. Two promising new techniques now being used successfully overseas have yet to be approved in the U.S.: use of androstenedione as a vaccine to increase the ovulation rate and

melatonin, a hormone that advances the breeding season.

Bailey highly recommended veterinary investigation of abortion outbreaks in sheep flocks, noting that several effective vaccines or management changes are now available to prevent recurrences.

"Upwards of 15 to 20 percent of

all lambs born die before weaning. Once a veterinarian determines the cause of these losses, it is possible to reduce mortality significantly by implementing preventive measures," Bailey said.

He said a sheep herd-management program can be organized by seven distinct sea-

sons in the sheep raising year: pre-breeding, breeding, pre-lambing, lambing, post-lambing, fattening in the pasture, and weaning. The result of following a herd management program with the advice of a veterinarian will be increased profitability for the sheep farmer, Bailey said.

Equestrian Center To Host Horse Show

NUREMBERG (Schuylkill) — Ravens Run Equestrian Center, at Valley of Lakes Resort near Hazleton, will hold a riding clinic conducted by renowned horseman Joe Boyle on Sunday, October 2, beginning at 2:00 p.m.

Boyle holds qualified judge holding cards in American Paint Horse, Appaloosa Horse Club, Pinto, Palomino and POA. He also is approved by the American Judging Association. Classes to be offered include horsemanship, showmanship, western riding and hunt seat. Admission to the clinic is \$5 for gallery seating and \$25 if horse and rider participate in one

of the sessions conducted by Boyle.

Ravens Run Equestrian Center is a complete horse facility offering boarding, training, showing, lessons, sales, horse-drawn carriages and sleigh rides. Additionally, the center, located just south of Hazleton off Route 924, provides a multitude of amenities for the discerning horseman, including private secured facility, a new indoor

arena measuring 60' by 160', a new 40' by 100' barn that encloses 28 box stalls, 4,500 private acres of trails, and an on premises tack and feed store. Presently under construction is an outdoor riding arena. For more information on the riding clinic and facilities, telephone 717/384-4066, or write Ravens Run Equestrian Center, Valley of Lakes, Nuremberg, PA 18641.



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