



Le Journal de l'Association des Producteurs d'Ovins Laitiers d'Amérique du Nord

## PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

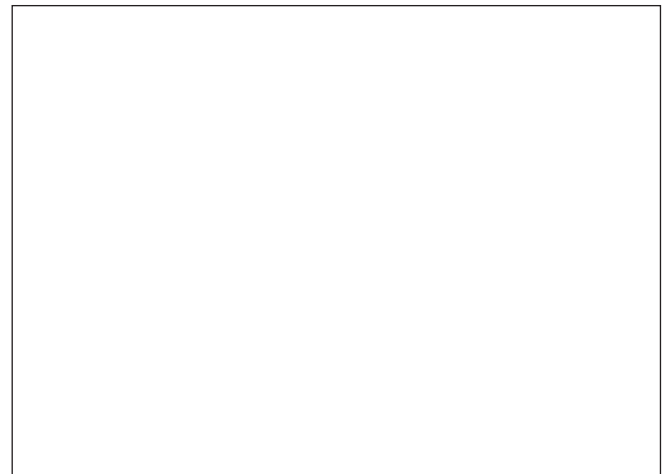
# 2012 Beginnings

**H**APPY NEW YEAR! Congratulations to Cindy Callahan for her work in coordinating an outstanding Dairy Sheep Association of North America Symposium in (not so sunny) Petaluma, Calif. I was thrilled to witness the enthusiasm and growth potential for the dairy sheep industry on the west coast. As always, it was memorable and valuable to connect with friends (old and new) from across the United States, Canada and Mexico. Thank you to Bill Halligan (Nebraska) for his leadership as president of DSANA for the past two years and his important role in making the California symposium a success.

I am honored to be elected to serve as president of DSANA. As our industry continues to expand, I believe there are several compelling reasons for strengthening our association.

1. **Dairy sheep producers and processors** live throughout North America. Many states in the U.S. have less than five producers in the entire state. This geographic spread makes it difficult to build local or regional networks. DSANA can play a strong role in providing timely information to producers, advocating for changes and improvements in policy, and serve as a vehicle for member communication.
2. **There are several current topics impacting** the dairy sheep industry including genetic importation protocols, dairy sheep registry, sire referencing, new product development, and opportunities to establish and share best practice farm operations and business practices.

There are several structural items I hope the board will address throughout the coming year including a review of the bylaws and mission, financial and organizational structures, develop an ongoing symposium committee, develop protocols for honoring our members, and continue to enhance electronic communications.



It is important to recognize that for the past 17 years, the University of Wisconsin College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (UW-CALS) has had a significant impact on the dairy sheep industry through research, genetic improvements, and ongoing supports - especially in the founding and maintaining of DSANA and the Great Lakes Dairy Sheep Symposium. The Spooner Agricultural Station continues to be the only facility in the United States dedicated to dairy sheep research and genetic improvements.

I highlight this important connection between DSANA and UW-CALS because in order for our industry to continue to grow, I believe we must continue to have access to valid research and pertinent new technologies. UW-CALS and their funders have allowed producers across North America to learn from dairy sheep experts spanning the globe. I know that our dairy sheep operation would not be in existence today if not for University of Wisconsin efforts and support. I hope you will express your appreciation to decision makers when the opportunity arises.

As our industry grows, a strong DSANA that represents the voice of its membership, has an opportunity to expand partnerships with academia, government agencies and private businesses to create an agenda that moves us forward. This means building new relationships and expressing gratitude for those who have supported us along the way. We can do things together that we cannot do alone.

I wish you a rewarding New Year with just enough adventure and challenge to keep things interesting!

# 2011 Great Lakes Dairy Sheep Symposium: Learning opportunity for all

2011 symposium attendees shared some feedback:

*"The chance to visit with other producers is unlimited at the symposium. The opportunity to learn from each other and network, especially for marketing our genetics and rams, is an untapped resource for our members."*

**- Bill Halligan • Bushnell, Neb.**

*"We enjoyed the people; they're our kind of folks. It was nice to network and have our questions answered, especially on starting up a sheep dairying operation. There was a lot of discussion on sheep health, breeding, and general issues that come up when raising sheep – whether you're a meat or dairy sheet producer; they were relatable."*

**- Mark & Becky Bappe • Riverton, Wyo.**

**C**URRENT AND POTENTIAL dairy sheep producers, as well as cheesemakers using sheep milk to craft their artisan cheese attended the 17th Annual Great Lakes Dairy Sheep Symposium. The event was held, for the first time, in Petaluma, Calif., this past November. More than 120 attendees made the trip to West, representing 20 U.S. states, Canada and Mexico. Over half of those dairy sheep producers and industry professionals present call the host state of California home.

The symposium was organized by a dedicated team of Dairy Sheep Association of North America (DSANA) members and would not have been possible without the support of the entire organization.

The three day event consisted of educational presentations by industry-leading DSANA producers, university researchers, dairy sheep industry experts, marketing specialists and cheese makers. DSANA's annual meeting was also held in conjunction with the event.

The annual business meeting included the election of new board members and the name change for the annual symposium. Historically,

the dairy sheep industry has been concentrated around the Great Lakes region, but as the industry evolves and expands to areas throughout North America, the decision was made to remove "Great Lakes" from future symposia and instead rename it the "Dairy Sheep Association of North America Symposium".

An exciting part of this year's event was a tour of three local dairy sheep farms and farmstead cheese operations. Locations included: Bellwether Farms owned by Cynthia and Liam Callahan; Haverton Hill operated by Joe and Missy Adiego; and Weiauch Farm & Creamery run by Carleen and Joel Weirauch. DSANA would like to send a big 'Thank you' to each one for opening their farm and operations to attendees and for providing an opportunity for hands-on learning and networking.

If you weren't able to join us at the 2011 Symposium, plans are already underway for 2012 DSANA Symposium, set for the first week of November in the New England states. Stay tuned to future newsletters for more information. ■

*Haverton Hill, owned by Joe and Missy Adiego, was one of several tours held during this year's annual symposium*

## Presentation highlights from this year's Great Lakes Dairy Sheep Symposium

DSANA was honored to have so many dairy sheep industry researchers, companies, resources, producers and enthusiasts as part of the program. Below are a few highlights from presenter presentations and take away messages for those of you who weren't able to attend. Enjoy!

### Milking Machine Design for Sheep

*Dr. Beate Maassen-Francke  
of GEA Farm Technologies*

Start with the end in mind.

- Correct layout of milking installations from the beginning offers you a pleasant and comfortable working place and your sheep an environment to produce good quality milk. In well-balanced systems, all components are aligned properly.
- Talk with your equipment specialist to develop a design that will work best for your operation.

### Genetics of Lamb Survival

*Dr. David L. Thomas  
of the University of Wisconsin-Madison*

Lamb survival is an economically important trait in commercial sheep production.

- Good management practices are essential for high lamb survival, but breed choice, selection, and crossbreeding may offer ways to genetically improve lamb survival even further.
- Trials completed at the University of Wisconsin-Madison showed certain breeds or cross breeds resulted in higher rates of lamb survival.

### Getting Started in Sheep Dairying

*Terry Felda  
of Tin Willows Farm*

New to sheep dairying? The learning curve is steep.

- There is no right or wrong when you're starting out. There might be a "better" or "worse" for each farmer, but you'll learn through trial and error what works for you. Look to others in the industry and share stories of success and learning.

Tap into resources.

- Take advantage of programs like the Farm Service Agency (FSA). Meet with your local loan officer early in the process to discuss your future and how your operation will operate. Doing so will help you develop a plan and gain some buy-in and support for when you need financial assistance.

*Interested in learning more about the topics presented at this year's symposium? View the event proceedings online at: <http://bit.ly/waNMbk>*

# Milking station design: Keep these five things in mind

By **Jim Fisher**

*Jim Fisher is a consultant with GEA Farm Technologies.  
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**C**ORRECT DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION of anything on the farm is critical to the success of your herd. But it is of the utmost importance when you are building a milking parlor.

Set up and design of the equipment affects the health and well-being of your sheep, as well as the productivity of the milker. As a result, overall economic success of the operation is at stake.

Whether you're a seasoned veteran considering a milking station remodel or looking at building a milking station for the first time – there are some questions you need to ask yourself. Here's a look at five things to keep in mind when designing a sheep milking installation.

## Sheep breed

Evaluate the expected milk production for each breed and predicted milk flow. This will impact whether you have a long or short milking duration, which in turn impacts parlor throughput.

## Size and type of parlor

Consider the number of ewes you plan to milk and future growth opportunities. Then think through what type of parlor would be the best fit. A variety of parlors exist, from raised milk stands where sheep climb a ramp to a platform, to pits where the sheep are at ground level and the milkers work below ground level.

## Milk line installation

Think through where the milk line should be installed. Milking parlors can be designed with milk pipes situated above or below the sheep. Location of the milk line will change the amount of vacuum pressure needed. In the case of dairy farms with larger sized herds a system which has a low line milk pipeline is ideal.

## Type of milking unit

Consider what type of milking unit would be best for your operation. The conventional standard milking unit is available with or without automatic vacuum shut-off. Non-conventional milking units are also available with automatic teat cup valves and automatic detaching.

The non-conventional unit with teat cup valve offers a safe attachment without unintended air leakage. If the cluster falls off, the valve shuts immediately. Air leakage and resulting vacuum drop are reduced to a minimum. The benefit is that even untrained operators can work well with these milking units.

Special consideration should be given to the type of liner used. In dairy sheep installations, especially where there is no automatic detachment the transparent silicone liner combined with a transparent teat cup has the advantage that the milker sees the decreasing milk flow compared to a rubber liner. This can be a help to reduce over milking which often occurs in sheep milking installations due to the short milking duration of the ewe.

## Altitude of farm

Proper installation of the milking parlor requires the knowledge of the altitude of the farm. Location above sea level impacts vacuum pump capacity and therefore impact the efficiency of your parlor.

Designing a milking parlor for sheep bears careful consideration before starting the operation. Correct layout offers the operator a pleasant and comfortable working place and the sheep an environment to produce good quality milk. Preparation is the key to success.

Talk with your local milking equipment dealers about how to tailor the design of your facility to meet your needs. ■

## GEA Farm Technologies recommendations for pulsation and vacuum settings

Use these as a handy reference when deciding vacuum and pulsations settings.

Pulsation rate: 120 to 150 cycles per minute	33 kPa= 9.75"hg
Pulsation ratio: 50:50	36kPa=10.6"hg
Simultaneous pulsation	37kPa=10.9"hg
Vacuum in low line systems: 33 kPa to 36 kPa	39kPa=11.5"hg
Vacuum in high line systems: 37 kPa to 39 kPa	34kPa=10.0"hg
Vacuum in bucket milking systems: 34 to 37 kPa	

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# Keep nutrition top of mind this lambing season

**E**STIMATES ARE THAT EACH YEAR 10 percent of the lamb crop dies from starvation within one week following birth<sup>1</sup>, but even one lamb is one too many to lose. For busy sheep producers in the middle of lambing season, it's important to keep emergency nutrition in stock in the event of orphan or unclaimed lambs, those too weak to nurse the ewe, or for ewes that aren't able to produce enough milk for bonus lambs.

"The most important factor in raising bonus lambs successfully is a proper lamb milk replacer diet," says Dr. Tom Earleywine, director of nutritional services for Land O'Lakes Animal Milk Products. "It's especially important to choose a milk replacer that's specially formulated to lambs' unique needs, such as Ultra Fresh® Lamb Milk Replacer. Calf or pig milk replacers won't get the job done because the fat and protein specifications do not meet lambs' nutritional needs."

Milk replacer should contain at least 24 percent all-milk protein, and fat sources that are of animal origin and homogenized to small particle size for maximum digestibility. Producers should look for a lamb milk replacer that is high in energy and mixes easily such that it ultimately provides lambs with the proper nutrition in every drop.

Getting all young lambs off to a good start is important for their long-term health and growth as well as their productivity as adult animals. The most economical means of providing milk to these lambs is through a lamb milk replacer. A high quality lamb milk replacer supports good health and growth, and may be less expensive in the long run. ■

*For more information on Ultra Fresh® Lamb Milk Replacer or to order, lamb producers are encouraged to ask their local feed retailer, visit [www.lolmilkreplacer.com](http://www.lolmilkreplacer.com) or call 1-800-618-6455.*

*Ultra Fresh is a registered trademark of Land O'Lakes, Inc.*

<sup>1</sup>Sheep Housing & Equipment Handbook, MWPS-3, 3rd Edition, 1982, Midwest Plan Service, Ames, Iowa 50011

## Use these tips when feeding lamb milk replacer.

1. Lambs should receive colostrum soon after birth.
2. Provide a warm, dry, draft-free area to start lambs.
3. Lambs may require some assistance the first day or two to teach them to nurse on whatever feeding device is used.
4. Avoid placing young lambs with older lambs, as they might be pushed aside and not be able to obtain milk replacer. If lambs were nursing a ewe, they would drink 25 to 40 times per 24 hours.
5. Hang a light over the milk replacer feeding device and dry ration feeder.
6. If using devices to give lambs free access to Ultra Fresh® Lamb Milk Replacer, keep the equipment and nipples as clean as possible. When starting lambs on nipples they will require assistance. However, they will adapt readily and nurse independently within one or two days.
7. Provide a high quality creep feed at a few days of age and continue on a free-choice basis. Fresh, clean water should be provided at all times.
8. Lambs should be weaned from milk at four to six weeks of age or about 25 pounds of weight. Abrupt weaning can be used. However, reduce milk replacer feeding a few days prior to weaning to encourage creep intake may be desirable.
9. If scours occur: First – Evaluate sanitation. Second – Check environment for drafts and proper temperature. Third – If scours persist, keep the animal hydrated, and treat with suitable electrolytes and antibiotic as recommended by your veterinarian.

# Record keeping: Stay ahead of the game

**K**EEPING ACCURATE, COMPLETE RECORDS is an integral management procedure that every dairy sheep herd can benefit from. Drawing from a history of lamb, ewe and even ram data can make management decisions, such as identifying replacement and cull animals easier, and record referral is a key component to genetic gain and forward progress for the herd. Health status of the herd can also be quickly and easily analyzed and assessed for future management with the help of a history through records.

## What data is important?

Traits and data collected and put into records will vary from herd to herd, depending on what information is the most important to them, and what information is needed for management decisions. However, there are some baseline data points that most herds incorporate into their records.

Tom Kieffer of Dream Valley Farm collects several points of information before making informed decisions about the herd each year. "Using ear tag number and scrapie tags, we collect dairy breed percent, disposals, sire and dam, birth information, litter size, and milk production ranking," explains Kieffer. "We rank-order all of our ewes based on milk production. The ranking formula includes actual pounds of milk, butterfat, and protein, which is derived from our monthly DHI [Dairy Herd Improvement] testing, with consideration given to the age of the ewe and number of lactations."

Kieffer also points out that they occasionally note information pertaining to udder and body type confirmation within their records, and they can do some sire comparisons using their system.

On a greater scale, but with similar data collected, Yves Berger, researcher and manager at the University of Wisconsin, Madison Spooner Research Station shares his insights on what data is important to the progress of the dairy sheep herd at the station.

"The information collected is entered by the shepherd in the barn directly on a small notebook computer designed to be handled on the farm," explains Berger.

The data collected at the Spooner Research Station includes (but is not limited to):

Animal information	Annual events	Milk	Rams
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Animal ID (ear tag and RFID)</li> <li>• Sex</li> <li>• Genotype</li> <li>• Sire ID</li> <li>• Dam ID</li> <li>• Dam Breed</li> <li>• Date of Birth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sire ID bred to</li> <li>• Breeding date</li> <li>• Lambing date</li> <li>• Weaning date</li> <li>• First milking date</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AM and PM milk production</li> <li>• Fat percentage</li> <li>• Protein percentage</li> <li>• Somatic cell count</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All information pertaining to rams used for breeding</li> </ul>

## Keep it organized

Records can quickly become overwhelming without a system to stay organized and easily reference when trends need to be tracked for key management decisions. Depending on the producer's needs, software systems from basic to in-depth commercial databases are available to organize records.

Kieffer explains their use of an Excel workbook, composed of spreadsheets that they created themselves. "Nothing is automated in our system as every detail is entered and updated individually," says Kieffer. "It can be time consuming and prone to error as it requires some proof-reading to reduce and eliminate human error. However, it does provide us a source of information for animal selection." Kieffer agrees the benefits his herd derives from the additional information is worth the time it takes to keep the records.

On a different scale, the Spooner Research Station takes advantage of the MS Access program, which is a database typically included in Microsoft Office packages, and is fully compatible with Excel. Berger developed the research station's system for record keeping on four tables within the software.

"The first table is animal information, on which every lamb born at the station is entered," says Berger. He goes on to explain that the second table is called Annual Events and includes all that concerns breeding and lambing of ewes such as sire ID bred to, date of breeding, and date of weaning.

The third table includes milk production of all the ewes at the station. "All ewes at milking are tested every 28 days, during which we record milk production data. An automatic query set on this table gives the total milk production of the ewe just after the test," says Berger.

The fourth table within the database contains all information belonging to rams used for breeding that were purchased outside or born at the station.

All of the tables within the Access system are linked together by one or more common criteria, such as animal ID. "Because of the link between the tables it becomes very easy to make several queries, such as finding the milk production on all ewes born from one particular ram, and reports and forms from these queries can be created," explains Berger.

The database at the Spooner Research Station has been in place since the early 90s and now contains information on more than 14,000 lambs, 5,000 breeding-lambing events and close to 5,000 lactations with monthly production. "The system allows us to look at and analyze a multitude of traits – the most important being the pedigree of each animal, overall production of each animal (lamb and milk), and the growth of lambs," says Berger.

While the Access database is useful, Berger cautions, "They [databases] are only useful if they are accurate and up to date." He also explains the database is sometimes cumbersome and not always user

**Record keeping • continued p. 6**

# Brad Gregory Chehalis, Wash.

Brad Gregory, along with his wife, Meg, have been raising milking dairy sheep since 2000, and for the past seven years have been commercially making fine, hand crafted cheese. Gregory also works with fellow DSANA member Terry Felda to use milk from her herd of dairy sheep in the making of his cheese at Black Sheep Creamery.

His operation in Chehalis, Wash. is home to 85 ewes that call 40 acres of the 130 acre farm their home. Gregory includes a mix of Lucaunne and East Friesian breeding into his herd that started from a base of Arcott Rideou and has had great success with this line.

The mix of these three breeds produces animals that are easy to handle and adapt well in the Western climate. With few health issues from his breeding strategy, Brad is achieving his goal to make a positive impact on local food production with his herd and cheese making business.

## ***Brad's advice for members...***

**Be actively involved.** Participate and support DSANA by

