



R Ewe Kidding

“The small intestines from eleven sheep are needed to make one tennis racket.”

By: Cyberspace Ag

Contact Us

Amy Thomas
Extension Agent
Agriculture—Livestock

N.C. Cooperative
Extension Service

Forsyth County Ag.
Building

1450 Fairchild Rd

Winston Salem, NC
27105

336-703-2850

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Consider Annuals

Many producers are currently reaping the benefits of the spring flush. Grass is abundant and animals are off hay feeding. However soon the pasture and possibly the hay lands will fall into what is commonly termed the summer slump. Some of the efforts to buffer against the summer slump or summer

droughts can be the use of annuals in the operation.

Some excellent annual choices for summer time grazing are Pearl Millet, Soybeans, Cow Peas and Crabgrass. Two are in the grass family and the other two legumes.

The grasses will produce more tonnage than the legumes.

On average they can typically produce between 3 and 5 tons per acre. They are a also very drought tolerant.

Legumes will offer a higher protein content for the animals. However yield is lower, typically



Pearl Millet

about 2 to 3 tons per acre. The added benefit is the nitrogen fixing properties. Legumes will readily fix (store) nitrogen in the soil, which means less fertilizer.

These plants love the hot weather.



Cowpea



Summer Heat

Hot weather can affect fertility especially males. It is imperative that animals have access to shade to get relief from the high heat indexes. Shade trees are some of the best and most economical shade provider. However the trunks of trees will need to be

protected from sheep and goats. The animals in particular want to strip the bark from the trees eventually killing them.

Other sources of shelters/shade that have been utilized are carpports, large tanks cut in half. Many items that people

might dispose of can be converted to a small ruminant shelter.

Lastly water, but most importantly water shouldn't be overlooked. Available water should be clean and fresh at all times to encourage animal hydration.

Know Your Predator

When kids/lambs are missing it can be fox or a coyote. A fox is going to have an extremely hard time with an older kid/lamb.



Identifying tracks and scat (poop) will help determine wildlife predator. Typically coyotes and foxes WON'T share the same territory. A coyote track is going look more like a dog track where as fox will be considerably smaller.

Coyote tracks can be distinguished from a dog track by the nail prints. A dog track

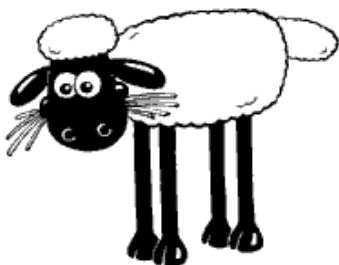
will imprint all 4 nails. While a coyote track often won't leave nail imprints (unless ground is muddy, then will leave 2 nail imprints).

According to the National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS) 60.7% of the loss from predators was coyotes. The next largest category was dogs at 15.1%.

It can often be difficult to know loss is suffered from a coyote or neighborhood or feral dog(s). A coyote will normally pick one or two

animals, enough for a meal and typically the remaining herd/flock is undisturbed. Frequently the missing animal isn't found. However with a dog as the predator, the herd is excited and nervous, injured animals present and if animals are missing they are usually found inside the pasture. When a dead animal is found a coyote will go for the belly region (sometimes the rectum) first. A dog kill may not be eaten and if so consumption is erratic.

Replacements



"In most breeding systems, replacement females will be generated from within the flock. Therefore, attention to maternal traits in the rams siring potential replacements is critical. Additionally, preference should be given to crossbred females. Crossbred animals have two major advantages over straightbred animals: 1) Crossbred animals

exhibit heterosis (hybrid vigor), and 2) Crossbred animals combine the strengths of the breeds used to form the cross. Crossbred females are superior to straightbred for reproductive performance due to advantages received from heterosis. Crossbred ewes exhibit significant advantages in fertility, prolificacy, and lamb survival resulting in

advantages of up to 18% in pounds of lamb weaned per ewe exposed compared to straightbred ewes. From the existing pool of potential replacements, the following are important considerations for selection: Performance records, Age and Conformation/Soundness

By: Va. Tech

Pasture Tips



Mistakes made now can affect future production for years to come.

- During the growing season (spring through fall) don't graze below 3 inches.
- This summer take soil

samples on any land that doesn't have a current soil sample (within the lasts 2 years). Soil samples are free.

- Increase legumes. Legumes add nitrogen to the soil.

- Increase plant diversity. Diversity helps increase the grazing period.
- Identify weeds and control during best times for those weeds.

Breeding Males

The next crop of kids or lambs depends on the breeding soundness of the sire being used in the herd. Several factors will reduce pregnancy rates.

Some hereditary (passed from parent to baby) problems that reduce fertility are: Cryptorchidism (one testical not down in the scrotum), small testicals and split scrotum.

The small scrotal size can also be a result of factors other than genes. Small scrotal size can also result from poor nutrition during the first year

of life. It also can be an indicator of a hermaphrodite (having both male and female organs).

The greatest problem with cryptorchid males is the temperature of the testicles. The reason the testicles are located outside the body is to maintain a temperature of 90 degrees. The scrotum can elongate in the hot summer days and contract in the cold winter months all to maintain the correct temperature. This correct temperature impacts the sperm vitality.

A split scrotum, like

cryptorchidism, affects the temperature of the stored sperm. This condition also tends to restrict sperm flow and increase change of injury to the scrotum.

Any of these conditions results in lower sperm count which results in lower pregnancy rate in females.

Libido (or sex drive) isn't an accurate indicator of fertility. However if libido is low, regardless of fertility, the male may not be aggressive enough to get herd females bred.



Livestock Guardian Dogs

For many years Livestock Guardian Dogs have been used to protect a flock/herd from predators. These dogs are not the typical domestic dog. They have a job to do and take that job very seriously.

Unfortunately the general public doesn't understand the important role these dogs play in the success of a small ruminant producer.

A sheep rancher in Colorado that uses federal land for

summer grazing found himself in the middle of a conflict. His guardian dogs attacked a cyclist riding through the area. The incident was taken to court. The final verdict labeled the rancher's dogs as dangerous. He was charged of a misdemeanor, fined and ordered to pay restitution. In place of jail time the rancher was sentenced 200 hours of community service.

Since the incident the rancher has removed these dogs from the flock. Currently his loss

from predators is at 26%. This is too high a loss for him to continue. He stated if he doesn't get the laws and verdict overturned he will be out of the sheep business.

If a successful compromise isn't reached concerning livestock guard dogs on federal land, the use of livestock guard dogs might be something of the past. This may just open the door to ban the use of these dogs everywhere.

By: American Sheep Industry



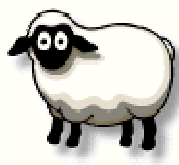
Ranch Quiz

1. Which state has the largest dairy goat population?
2. What is the deadly chemical found in wilted wild cherry trees?
3. Which breed has the highest average butterfat?

Answer Key
 1. California
 2. Cyanide
 3. Nubian

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According to USDA reports farmers are doing more with less. Unfortunately this report has some bad news to go along with the good.

The good news is two fold. Comparing 1950 to 2008 farming has reduced input by 2% but increased production by 162%, which is truly amazing. Another positive highlight coming from the report, is the environmental impact. Erosion from wind and water from farming practices has reduced 3.4% from 1982 to 2008.

The discouraging highlight from the report was the loss of prime farmland. "Prime farmland acreage slid from 339 million acres to 325 million acres. Prime farmland converted to other uses, such as development, is larger than the combined area of New Hampshire and Vermont and almost as large as West Virginia."

By American Farm Bureau

Events

June 4-5 West Virginia Purebred Sheep Breeders, Ram, Ewe, Club Lamb and Goat Show and Sale; Petersburg, W.V. call 304-758-4819

June 11 Lamb Camp, Elm City, SPACE LIMITED; call 252-237-0113

July 6 Wool Collection, Williamston; call 252-789-4370

July 7 Wool Collection, Asheville; call 828-255-5522

July 7 Wool Collection, Albemarle; call 704-983-3987

July 8 Wool Collection, Sparta; call 336-372-5597

July 23-24 Southern States Dorper Show/Sale, Cookville, Tn.; call 254-681-8793

Oct 22-24 Southeastern Animal Fiber Fair, Fletcher; call 828-863-4908



Until next time....

See ya!