

Kentucky Agriculture Advisory Council
January 17-18 2006
Goat/Forage Breakout Session
David Ditsch, moderator
Ricky Yeargan, recorder

Dr. Robert Harmon, chair of the Animal and Food Sciences Department, UK, presented a handout summarizing goat/forage extension and research activities during 2005.

Personnel with goat responsibilities were introduced or recognized. They include David Ditsch and Brandon Sears, Plant and Soil Sciences Department, UK, Quicksand; Terry Hutchens, Extension Associate, Animal and Food Sciences Department, UK, Lexington; Ken Andries, Small Ruminant Specialist, KSU, Frankfort; and Patty Scharko, Extension Veterinarian, UK, Lexington. Tess Caudill, KDA, Frankfort, assists with goat marketing issues. The team collaborates with the goat industry to benefit all producers.

Dr. Andries mentioned the online goat course available through Langston University in Oklahoma. A balance of distance learning and live presentations may expand educational efforts. The KSU doe herd is now sufficiently large to conduct trials. Vaccination for caseous lymphadenitis and kidding season trials are planned.

A delegate asked about markets and processing facilities. Tess Caudill commented on a study of effects of castration on marketability. There are no discounts in the current market; there are two days per year when the Muslim market demands unblemished (intact) animals. Kentucky's road systems benefit goat producers, as live animals are shipped to cities with large ethnic markets in all directions (New Jersey, Atlanta, Memphis, St. Louis, Chicago, Detroit, etc.). Most producers sell direct to local Hispanic or Muslim customers. One small processing facility is operating in Kentucky, but processes more lamb than goat.

Dr. Lee Meyer, Agricultural Economics Department, UK, presented a handout updating work of the Forage Economics Quick Response Team. Several decision aids and publications related to economics of forage production, management, and use are completed. An Economics of Round Bale Silage publication will be available this spring. Dr. Meyer stressed this work is a direct response to Kentucky Agriculture Advisory Council requests.

Dr. Andries and Terry Hutchens mentioned potential work with Alltech on some of their feed additives, including organic mineral products.

After discussing the scarcity of up-to-date nutritional recommendations for meat goats, the team was asked where nutrient requirements could be obtained. Langston University has an online nutritional calculator. Dr. Andries likes the producer (vs. the scientific) version because it is easy to use, comprehensive, and flexible. Other sources for nutrient requirements include the National Research Council (NRC), Goat Medicine by Dr. Mary Smith, French sources (higher energy levels than U.S.), and North Carolina State

University. Producers are urged to feed more than 50% of nutrients as forage(s) to satisfy fiber requirements.

The ARS Forage Unit at UK anticipates a rumen microbiologist on board by May 2006. This person may work with goats initially.

Producers need education on using the Langston calculator to balance rations. Training should also include forage quality and testing (through KDA, \$10 per sample) information. Ditsch and Sears have initiated a two-treatment, one replication trial on forage supplementation.

A delegate inquired about artificial insemination courses. Hutchens mentioned five courses were presented in 2005, and agreed to work with the Eastern Kentucky Goat Producers Association to set up another.

Another delegate stated that due to drought conditions, hay was expensive. In her area, cash hay producers target horse owners, harvest alfalfa, and further elevate hay prices. She wondered if hay producers could be educated as to goat producers' hay needs – e.g. square bales, composition, etc. Some attendees questioned whether “goat hay” can be defined, or whether a sufficient market exists to motivate production. The KDA hay web site was mentioned as a possible tool.

The concept of establishing a Master Sheep/Goat Producer program was discussed. Dr. Harmon is planning a Small Ruminant Summit in April 2006, and stated the program needs to be on the agenda. Delegates were reminded that the Master Cattleman (MC) program, which could serve as a template, did not happen overnight. MC requires roughly \$250,000 for two-year sessions (secured through three rounds of Agricultural Development Board funding of the Kentucky Beef Network). There are also many more resource personnel across all disciplines available to beef programs compared to goats/sheep. Industry backing is critical to start-up of a goat/sheep curriculum.

Delegates were asked if classes could be filled. They felt that demand was there, but there are information gaps that need to be filled (nutrition, Kentucky research, validation of out-of-state recommendations under Kentucky conditions, etc.).

Final thoughts:

- Good state team in place – UK, KSU, KDA.
- Regional Southern Cooperative efforts to organize existing information will be helpful; however, differences from Florida (peanut hay) to Oklahoma (arid conditions) to Kentucky (wetter conditions) remain.
- Langston University resources may be best for now (although they don't have fescue), with material from Penn State, North Carolina State, others as additional references.
- The number of specialists, associates, etc. with small ruminant research/extension responsibilities is relatively small – “critical mass” implications for Master Goat/Sheep Producer curriculum.

- Some Kentucky successes have been replicated in other states (e.g. nutrition in North Carolina).
- Sheep/goat associations may need to develop more cohesion at state and local levels before pursuing funding for Master Producer program.
- One delegate observed that three people attended the last Kentucky Agriculture Advisory Council goat discussion; over 20 participated today.