

NNY Sheep & Goat Newsletter – September 2008

From the Cornell Cooperative Extension of St. Lawrence County Extension Learning Farm,
Canton, NY

By Small Livestock Educator Betsy Hodge

Hi Folks The pastures are still green and all of the flock is out there and in good body condition. Next week we will sort out the pregnant ones and get them situated for lambing. We should start lambing around the 15th of September. Fall lambing is usually a pleasure because the sheep have been exercising and eating good green grass. The lambs are usually vigorous and surprisingly filled out – at least for lambs.

We are going to move our Premier-style feeders out to make more room in the barn and use the large round bale feeders and make some kind of narrow trough just for grain. Stop by and see the lambs. I'm also looking for people to spin and generally represent the sheep industry at the Harvest Festival September 27th. Let me know if you are interested.

North Country Shepherds Let's get the North Country Shepherds together on Thursday evening September 18th at the Extension Farm at 7:00 pm. The North Country Shepherds is a group of sheep, goat, llama and alpaca producers that gets together a couple times a year and shares ideas. It is time to discuss the marketing that has already happened and what is coming up for the fall and winter. The Wool Pool is scheduled for October 11th and Dr. Thonney from Cornell will be here in November. Winter feeding would be another good topic. We are looking for feedback on our sheep farm demonstration as well. Let me know if you are willing to help with snacks and drinks.

Cornell Sheep Symposium – October 24 and 25 The Cornell Sheep & Goat Symposium will be held at Cornell in Ithaca, NY on October 24th and 25th. This is a chance to network with producers from all over the state and also the northeast. Topics range from very practical to scientific. One highlight is always the small ruminant vets and their question and answer period on Saturday morning. There are several sessions on goats – one on starting a goat dairy and one on meat goats. I will be attending and can take riders with me. I also have a hotel room I can share with the appropriate person.

1844 House Direct Marketing Experiment Last month I wrote about working with Brian Walker, the chef and owner of the 1844 House restaurant located between Canton and Potsdam. Brian has been serving our lamb at his restaurant for about 6 weeks. Business is slow in the summer but is picking up quickly with the colleges starting up. Brian is being very creative and using some of the less “restaurant-like” cuts. He serves one dish with three lamb cuts – an Italian sausage, a section of ribs and a shish-ka-bob. So far it has been very well received.

He had hoped to sell the lamb in frozen packages in his farmer's market stand but so far he has been only marketing it in the restaurant.

Speaking of direct marketing. The lambs at my home farm have grown very well – one advantage of the cooler weather we had. Sometimes they don't start eating the grain very well and just seem to stand still. This group has gained well and I sold the biggest 15 to the Dolan's for \$90.00 per head. At that time I was having trouble finding a used freezer and had just about given up on selling lamb cuts out of a freezer in my garage. However, there appeared a used freezer for sale just a few doors from home and it is now in place in my garage for a very

reasonable fee. The last seven lambs I have (those left after taking out breeding stock) will be grown out and sold out of the freezer. My biggest challenge now will be guessing when they will be ready and getting them in at Tri-Town during the busy season.

Parasite Report Parasite loads seem to be running to both extremes. The heavy downpours in August seemed to have washed the larvae right off the grass and slowed down the usual bloom of larvae on the pasture that happens in mid-August. Very few of the sheep at the Extension Farm or at home have required de-worming. However, producers have reported individual lambs or baby goats with diarrhea. It could be some kind of stomach worm or it could be coccidia. Coccidia is usually something that builds up inside and doesn't usually get bad enough to bother animals housed outside. Stomach worms – not the Barberpole worms that cause anemia and bottle jaw – could be the cause of the diarrhea but whether they should be treated or just watched is the question.

My workstudy student, Christine Foster and I ran 6 fecal samples just to see what was going on out there. We ran three from my farm – a lamb, a llama, and a sheep – and three from the Extension Farm – all ewes. Most had only a few or no eggs in the feces except my lambs that have been in a pen for a month. They had some stomach worms and just a couple coccidia but not enough to be a problem or to warrant de-worming. Considering we had wet weather and then two weeks of hot weather I expected more from the pastured animals.

One thing that could cause a short bout of diarrhea in a young lamb or goat is gorging themselves on salt/minerals. Being babies they sometimes discover the minerals and go crazy. Usually this doesn't hurt them and they get over their desire to binge on minerals.

All this said, keep a close eye on your animals this time of year. If you notice any of them off by themselves or looking a little depressed or unthrifty there is a good chance they need de-worming. If you see what look like little pieces of rice in the manure (not diarrhea) then that is from tapeworms. Usually tapes show up in younger animals – a year and under. Technically tapeworms do not limit production and sheep and goats build up an immunity to them. However, if they are young animals it may be worth treating. Call me for recommendations.

Wool Pool – October 11th – 10:00 am to 12:00 pm The Wool Pool will be held Saturday October 11th at the Extension Learning Farm in Canton. Wool will be accepted in wool bags or heavy contractor bags. Wool should be dry. We will weigh your wool so you have an idea what to expect and it will be labeled and recorded. The Canadian Wool Growers then sorts the wool, fleece by fleece and grades it and sends a check usually after Christmas. Prices will be around \$.40/lb for good white wool and down from there. If you bring wool, plan to hang around and help for a little while. Please let me (379-0607, bmf9@cornell.edu) or Sandy vonAllmen (769-7209 or homespun@northnet.org) know if you are planning to bring wool so we can set up a schedule.

Rams – We have 5 nice ram lambs for sale. Two are from last fall and three are spring rams. The fall lambs were chosen because they were out of older, reliable, fall lambing ewes with growth rate taken into consideration. The spring ram lambs were chosen primarily on growth rate. All are twins or triplets. Some are already claimed but there are a couple left. If you are interested, please let me know.

Marketing News- Bob Wilson of Black Lake has been working with the Gold Medal company which is opening a slaughterhouse in Brier Hill (between Odgensburg and Hammond on Rt 37). They are interested in taking a load of lambs direct from the producers to supply the end of Ramadan and the Rosh Hashanah holiday demand. The slaughterhouse in Brier Hill is not open yet but we are trying to get our foot in the door so that when it does open they will be ready to work with producers in the area. If you have 50-100 pound lambs to go in mid-late September let me know ASAP. We will deliver them to Brier Hill and Gold Medal will truck them to their facility in Utica. No price information yet but I am assuming it will be comparable to New Holland prices.

Depending on what happens with the truck to Gold Medal, we may run another group load to New Holland in the end of October/early November. The Christmas sale in mid-December at Empire Livestock in Gouverneur is another good option for Christmas type lambs (50-60 pound chunky lambs) and culls.

Goats are getting increasingly frustrating to market. If you have Boer cross or well-grown dairy bucks, wethers or doelings to sell for meat, please let me know. If we could make a load of some consistent quality we might be able to find a buyer. I have seen some nice animals around the county and we need to start coordinating to find a better price for them.

Ramadan is moving back about 11 days every year. We have had a good market for fall, pasture-raised lambs. It will be interesting to see how far back we can push our pasture lambs to get them big enough for Ramadan. Speaking of holidays, Easter will be April 12, 2009 and Greek Easter April 19th. Ramadan in 2009 will start on August 22, and end on September 22. Of course, if Ramadan uses a lot of lambs in the early fall, there may be a good market later in October and November for nice lambs since there won't be many around.

There are many nice ewe lambs around for increasing flocks or starting new ones, including hair sheep. Please let me know and I will pass the information on to you.