

# Livestock Update


***Beef - Horse - Poultry - Sheep - Swine***

**April 2014**

This LIVESTOCK UPDATE contains timely subject matter on beef cattle, horses, poultry, sheep, swine, and related junior work. Use this material as you see fit for local newspapers, radio programs, newsletters, and for the formulation of recommendations.

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**Scott P. Greiner, Extension Project Leader**  
**Department of Animal & Poultry Sciences**

## Dates to Remember

### HORSE

#### JULY

28 thru Southern Regional 4-H Horse Championships. Raleigh, NC.

8/2 **Contact:** Celeste Crisman, (540) 231-9162 or email: [ccrisman@vt.edu](mailto:ccrisman@vt.edu)

#### SEPTEMBER

11-14 State 4-H Horse Show. Virginia Horse Center, Lexington, VA.

**Contact:** Celeste Crisman, (540) 231-9162 or email: [ccrisman@vt.edu](mailto:ccrisman@vt.edu) or  
Jessica Tussing, (540) 231-6345 or email: [jessit07@vt.edu](mailto:jessit07@vt.edu)

### SHEEP

#### SEPTEMBER

27 Southwest AREC Education Field Day and Ram Sale. Glade Spring. **Contact:** Lee Wright, (276) 944-2200; email [lrite@vt.edu](mailto:lrite@vt.edu) or Scott Greiner (540) 231-9159; email: [sgreiner@vt.edu](mailto:sgreiner@vt.edu)

## **April Herd Management Advisor**

Scott P. Greiner & Mark A. McCann  
Extension Beef Specialists, Virginia Tech

After a cold and snowy winter, spring always offers a new perspective to daily chores and activities. This new perspective is also something to apply to cattle enterprises. The industry is operating at record prices along with reduced input costs compared to recent times, creating a situation where we have no history to lean on. The near term outlook is very favorable and shows no major change from where we are today. The playing field of revenues vs. costs suggests that some management practices may need to be reevaluated. The perennial statement “if it cost more than it returns, then don’t do it” is based on both costs and returns, and the relationship between these two factors has changed over the course of the last several months. The value of today’s calf crop justifies a reexamination of return on investment for spending additional dollars to obtain an additional calf born, or put on an extra pound of weaning weight. Management practices which impact return to estrus, pregnancy rate and weaning weight should be reconsidered in terms of the present economic climate.

### **Spring Calving Herds (January-March)**

#### **General**

- Calving season winding down. Continue to observe late calving cows frequently.
- Tag, tattoo, record birth weight, calving ease score, teat/udder score and mothering ability of dam. Keep accurate records at birth to comply with age and source verification requirements.
- Monitor young calves for scours. Keep calving area and paddocks with pairs clean and well drained. Move pairs to new pastures or locations and reduce commingling of newborn calves with older calves to help reduce exposure and transfer of scours.

#### **Nutrition and Forages**

- Continue to offer a high magnesium mineral to prevent grass tetany. Monitor intake to insure cows are consuming the recommended amount. No other source of salt or minerals should be available.
- Evaluate growth of yearling heifers with goal of reaching 60-65% of mature weight by breeding. Depending on forage quality, supplementation maybe needed to meet weight gain target.
- Offer medium quality hay as cows are turned out on pasture and use hay disappearance as a barometer of dry matter needs of the herd.
- New forage growth is very digestible, high in protein and high in moisture content.

#### **Herd Health**

- Consult with your veterinarian concerning pre-breeding vaccination schedule for cow herd, yearling heifers, and bulls. Plan early to allow 30-day vaccination window prior to breeding season.
- Monitor calf health closely, particularly for signs of scours and pneumonia, have treatment supplies on hand.

- Observe newborn calves to ensure colostrum intake first few hours of life. Provide selenium and vitamin A & D injections to newborn calves. Castrate commercial calves at birth.

### **Reproduction**

- Finalize plans and protocols for breeding season. Establish calendar to map timing of synchronization program to be used during breeding season. Have supplies and semen on hand.
- Breed heifers 2-4 weeks ahead of mature cows to allow longer post-partum interval prior to second breeding season.
- Schedule and conduct breeding soundness exams on herd sires, including annual vaccinations.
- Manage newly acquired herd sires properly to prepare them for the breeding season. Yearling bulls often lose 100+ pounds during their first breeding season. Adjust them to the feed and environment of their new home, and commingle bulls of same age/weight for a period of time prior to turnout. Ample exercise, in combination with a proper nutritional program, is essential to make them physically fit for the breeding season

### **Genetics**

- Finalize genetic goals and selection criteria for upcoming breeding season (both AI and natural service sires).
- Collect remaining yearling performance data (weight, height, scrotal, ultrasound) in seedstock herds.

### **Fall Calving Herds (September-November)**

#### **General**

- Schedule and conduct pregnancy diagnosis with veterinarian 45-60 days following breeding season.
- Evaluate potential options for marketing of calf crop, including timing of weaning to meet operational goals. Calculate break-evens on various marketing options and consider risk management strategies.
- Reimplant commercial calves.

#### **Nutrition and Forages**

- Begin creep feeding or creep grazing calves if desired.
- Cows are entering latter portion of lactation, above average to good quality hay should meet nutritional requirements.
- Although pasture green-up is beginning, hay should be continued to be offered until consumption declines significantly.
- Reserve high quality hay and a pasture area for calves post-weaning.

### **Herd Health**

- Consult with veterinarian on vaccination protocol for calf crop. Design vaccination and weaning program around marketing goals and objectives.

### **Genetics**

- Collect weaning weights on calf crop at optimum time (AHIR age range 120-280 days), along with cow weights, hip heights and body condition scores (cow mature size data taken within 45 days of calf weaning measure).

**2014 Virginia BCIA Outstanding Commercial Producer Award  
Presented to James Kean**

Joi Saville, Extension Associate  
and Scott Greiner, Ph.D.  
Extension Animal Scientist, Virginia Tech

The 2014 Virginia Beef Cattle Improvement Association recognizes James Kean from Louisa, Virginia as the 2014 Outstanding Commercial Producer. With his commitment to produce high-quality calves through improvement of genetics and management, Kean exhibits one of the key missions of BCIA.

James Kean runs a 300 head fall-calving cow/calf beef operation in Louisa, Virginia. James has a reputation for having high quality beef cattle with his calves always bringing a premium in the local state graded sales or Central Virginia Cattlemen Association (CVCA) special tele-auction sales. James has always paid special attention to maintaining high quality genetics in his herd through the use of AI with his heifers, as well as using top quality bulls many times from the BCIA Test Station sales on the cows. The cow herd consists primarily of Angus and black baldy cows. James also raises small grain and corn row crops on his operations, which is used primary for feed resources in his cattle operation.

James is a leader for the local farming community serving on several boards of directors. James has been an active member of the Louisa Farm Bureau Board of Directors for over 25 years serving as President for several years. He has been a director on the Thomas Jefferson Soil and Water Conservation District for the past eleven years. James served on the Orange Madison Coop Board of Directors for 20 years. He has been a member of the CVCA since it started in the late 1980's and served on the board of directors since January of 2011. James is also a 4-H volunteer and has helped with the Louisa Agriculture Fair for the past 15 years.

James is married to Dr. Kate Hussman who recently retired from being a large animal veterinarian in Louisa County. James has two sons Brian and John.

Virginia BCIA congratulates James Kean for his commitment to improve genetics and management within his herd by focusing on key selection criteria and marketability of his calves.

**2014 Virginia BCIA Superior Service Award  
Presented to Lawson Roberts**

Joi Saville, Extension Associate  
and Scott Greiner, Ph.D.  
Extension Animal Scientist, Virginia Tech

The 2014 Virginia BCIA Superior Service Award is presented to Lawson Roberts from Amelia, Virginia. Through his industry involvement, leadership, and education, Lawson has been dedicated to promoting the principles of BCIA by fostering genetic improvement and quality enhancement of beef cattle in Virginia.

J. Lawson Roberts, former Livestock Marketing Specialist with the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS), has graded livestock across Central Virginia and the Commonwealth. He has contributed significantly to the enhancement of the quality and consistency of the cattle in the region through his efforts. He willingly shares his expertise with adults and youth, conveying his knowledge of the Livestock Grading system. He has participated in numerous educational programs, field days, and workshops to enhance the understanding of producers on the importance of genetics and management, and their relationship to cattle quality and value. He assists VCE programs by educating producers on the application of the grading system and includes examples of the relationship between feeder cattle grade and end product attributes at harvest.

Lawson has contributed significantly to the growth and success of the Virginia Quality Assured feeder calf program. He assists groups including Amelia Area Cattlemen's LLC, Buckingham Cattlemen's Association, Central Virginia Cattle Producers, Southern Virginia Beef Alliance, and others. He also works closely with the Virginia Premium Assured Heifer Program. This is in addition to grading weekly sales in Lynchburg and Blackstone and at other markets as needed. Lawson is highly respected for his knowledge and expertise, and played an important role on the team that has established a strong reputation for the region as a source for quality cattle.

Lawson has been integrally involved in youth education, including the State Fair of Virginia, and numerous local shows. He grades livestock at local events and willingly visits with the youth to explain grading and marketing to them. He volunteers to educate 4-H Stockman's and Livestock Judging teams in his home county.

Lawson recently accepted the position as Manager at the Southside Livestock Market and will continue to be an important component of the industry in the region and state. Additionally, Lawson farms with his father in Amelia on their cow-calf operation.

Virginia BCIA extends its appreciation to Lawson Roberts for his dedication and leadership toward the enhancement of Virginia's beef cattle industry.

**2014 Virginia BCIA Outstanding Seedstock Producer Award  
Presented to Shelton Angus Farm**

Joi Saville, Extension Associate  
and Scott Greiner, Ph.D.  
Extension Animal Scientist, Virginia Tech

The 2014 Virginia Beef Cattle Improvement Association (BCIA) recognizes Shelton Angus Farm and W. H. "Buddy" Shelton from Gretna, Virginia as the 2014 Outstanding Seedstock Producer.

The Shelton Farms are located in Pittsylvania County which is historically one of the largest tobacco producing regions in the southeast. The registered herd was established in 1963 by Walter H. and Ruby Shelton. Management of the cattle became the responsibility of W.H. "Buddy" Shelton Jr. in 1988 after he returned to home post-graduation from Virginia Tech.

One hundred twenty brood cows are maintained on an all fescue grazing system. The herd is exclusively fall calving, which is typical in south-central Virginia. The herd has been on a 100% A.I. breeding program since 1988. Bulls are developed collaborative with other seedstock breeders in the region, and historically marketed through the Virginia BCIA program, until five years ago when Shelton Angus initiated their own annual fall bull sale.

Genetic improvement in the herd centers on functionality and adaptability to the region's fescue environment, along with economically relevant traits to their feeder cattle-producing customers. Embryo transfer and genomics are key technologies which have assisted in the advancement of the herd. Additionally, Shelton Angus focuses on customer service by providing group backgrounding and marketing opportunities to their clients, as well as facilitating retained ownership and collection of carcass data which benefits both their customers' and their own breeding programs.

Buddy Shelton has been an active leader in agriculture, including serving as President of the Virginia Angus Association, President of the Pittsylvania County Cattleman's Association, along with being engaged in Farm Bureau, 4-H and youth groups, and his local church.

Virginia BCIA congratulates Shelton Angus Farm and Buddy Shelton for their dedication to genetic improvement.



## **2014 Virginia BCIA Southwest Bull Test & BCIA-Influenced Virginia Premium Assured Plus Bred Heifer Sale Report**

Joi Saville, Extension Associate  
and Scott Greiner, Ph.D.  
Extension Animal Scientist, Virginia Tech

The 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Southwest Virginia Performance Tested Bull Sale sponsored by the Virginia Beef Cattle Improvement Association was held Saturday, March 22, 2014 at Wytheville. The 138 bulls offered commanded a record average price of \$3859 per head. Breed averages were as follows: 85 Angus averaged \$3551, 15 purebred Simmental averaged \$3387, 19 Simmental Hybrids \$4279, 4 Charolais \$4413, 5 Gelbvieh Balancers \$4190, 2 purebred Gelbvieh \$15000, and 8 Polled Hereford at \$3763. The BCIA-influenced Virginia Premium Assured plus Bred Heifer Sale held in conjunction with the bull sale sold 26 heifers for an average price of \$2221 per head.

The top selling Angus bull went to Mike A. Johnson of Siloam, North Carolina for \$7000. Angus Lot 39 is a September 2012 son of GAR Prophet and was bred by Lucas Farms, Joe and Timmy Lucas of Blacksburg, Virginia. This bull was the high-sale order indexing Senior bull, as he had a test YW of 1284, ratio 118, test ADG of 4.38, ratio of 130, along with +74 WW EPD, +144 YW EPD, +31 Milk EPD, +0.92 MB EPD, and a +106 \$B. The second-high selling Angus bull was Lot 40, and was also consigned by Lucas Farms and sold to Bobby and Martha Jackson of Draper, VA for \$6250. This bull is another high growth son of GAR Prophet and had YW EPD +118, MB EPD +1.40, \$W +56, in addition to ADG ratio of 118, test YW ratio of 106. Lucas Farms was recognized with the 2014 SW Virginia Bull Test Breeder Group for their consignment of Senior Angus bulls. Another Lucas Senior bull, Lot 36, was another high-growth son out of KCF Bennett Upward W538, with WW EPD +62 and ADG ratio of 108. This bull commanded \$4500 from Shelby Lineberry of Galax, VA. Lot 37, another KCF Bennett Upward W538 son, sold to Clark Reece of Hillsville, VA for \$4300 and posted a test ADG ratio of 106 with a +62 WW EPD and +109 YW EPD.

The high-sale indexing Junior Angus bull, Lot 75, was bred by Grassy Valley Farm, Lee Duckworth of Afton, Tennessee. This junior Angus bull is a January 2013 son of AAR Tex X 7008 SA and posted an ADG of 4.20, ratio 130, test yearling weight of 1281, ratio 118, along with a \$B of +110, YW EPD of +128, MB EPD of +0.93, %IMF ratio of 110 and RE ratio of 106, and sold to Andrew Echols of Gap Mills, WV for \$5000.

Demand remained strong in the Angus bulls as Lot 45 commanded \$5500 from Matthew Anderson of Chilhowie, VA. This December 2012 Sitz Upward son, consigned by Mullins Angus Farm in Clintwood, VA, posted a test YW ratio of 110 and ADG ratio of 135, as well as EPDs of +115 YW, +12 CEM, +32 Milk, +95 \$B. Lot 77 junior bull from Lucas Farm, sold for \$5500 to Barry Vaughn of Austinville, VA. Lot 46 consigned by Amy Loyd of Harr Farms and Cattle Co. in Bluff City, TN demanded \$5000 from Tom Covey of Radford, VA. This calving ease son of GAR New Design 5050 displayed EPDs of +14 CED, -1.1 BW, +12 CEM, +32 Milk, and +0.84 RE.

Demand was very strong for the Gelbvieh and Gelbvieh Balancer bulls, which included a sale favorite- Lot 601 consigned by Little Windy Hill Farms of Max Meadows, VA. This December 2012 purebred Gelbvieh homozygous black, homozygous polled son of Black Impact 3960N brought \$25,000 and sold to C-Cross Cattle Company and Old South Farms of Asheboro, North Carolina. He posted EPDs of +1.1 CE, +0.0 BW, +34 Milk, and a ratio of 119 for %IMF. Little Windy Hill also had the second highest selling Gelbvieh Balancer, Lot 614. This homozygous black, homozygous polled son of KCF Bennett Quality Focused, which commanded \$5750, was sold to Gale Rippey of Galax, VA. This March 2013 bull had a CE EPD of +15, BW EPD of -1.9, CED EPD of 11, as well as a test YW of 1224. Tommy Shrader of Rosedale, VA bought Lot 602 purebred Gelbvieh bull for \$5000. This homozygous black, homozygous polled Black Impulse 1296L son posted a test ADG of 109, YW EPD of +98 and was consigned by Handfula Gelbviehs of Bland, VA.

The high selling Polled Hereford bull was bred by Fields Edge Herefords, Terry and Roger Slusher of Floyd, VA and commanded \$7600 from Sally Run of Wytheville, VA. This September 2012 son of MSU TCF Revolution 4R posted test ratios of 104 and 113 for YW and ADG, respectively, as well as EPDs of +4.1 CE, +103 YW, %IMF ratio of 113, RE ratio of 107 as well as a BMI of +\$23 and CHB of +\$32. Lot 203 from Fields Edge Herefords commanded \$3700 from Tommy Shrader of Rosedale, VA. This CRR About Time 743 son posted strong carcass traits with a +0.28 MB EPD, %IMF ratio of 120, BMI value of +\$21 and CHB value of +\$28. Another MSU Revolution son, Lot 201, also sold to Tommy Shrader for \$3600. This September 2012 bull posted EPDs of +62 WW, +4.2 CEM, along with ratios of 112, 113, 107 for WW, %IMF, and RE, respectively. Virginia Tech of Blacksburg, VA consigned Lot 210 sired by CRR About Time 743, and sold to Jeff and Vilene Dean of Jonesville, VA for \$3600. This high growth bull posted EPDs of +96 YW, +34 Milk, +0.75 RE, along with a WW ratio of 110 and CHB value of +\$34.

The strong Charolais sale was led by Lot 304, consigned by Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, VA. This March-born son of M6 Fresh Air 8165 commanded \$5750 from Curtiss Nipp of Overbrook, OK. He posted EPDs of +6.4 CE, +89 YW, and +0.48 RE, in addition to ratios of 117 WW, 112 test YW, 110 MB, and 111 RE. Virginia Tech's consignment of Junior Charolais bulls held strong with Lot 303 selling to Perry Severt of Jefferson, NC for \$5000. This calving ease son of LT Bluegrass 4017 posted EPDs of +9 CED, -2.1 BW, +6.8 CEM and +0.18 MB, as well as a carcass ratio of 126 for IMF.

The senior high-indexing SimAngus bull was consigned by Hounshell Farms, Buster and Jason Hounshell of Wytheville, Virginia. Lot 437 was sold to Dusty Long of Galax, Virginia for \$6000. This high performing bull had a test YW of 1202, ratio 111 and a test ADG of 4.78, ratio of 127, in addition to EPD's of +124 YW, +1.03 RE and a ratio of 115 for RE. Also selling from \$6000 was Virginia Tech's Lot 451 which went to Jason Semones of Hillsville, VA. This homozygous black, homozygous polled son of AAR Ten X 7008 ranked in the top 1% for his TI index of +97, as well as posting a YW EPD of +124, MB EPD of +1.33, and ratio of 107 for test ADG.

J & M Windy Acres, Mike Connatser and family, of Maryville, TN was recognized with the Junior Breeder Group Award for their consignment of spring-born Simmental Hybrid bulls.

Their Lot 444 sold for \$5200 to Gary Bare of West Jefferson, NC. This son of PVF-J 4P14 HYB Rookie posted +80 WW EPD, +32 Milk and +0.99 RE, along with +83 TI. J & M Windy Acres Lot 445 bull was the high-sale order indexing bull for the Simmental Hybrids and commanded \$3400 from Ted Holyfield of Elkin, NC. This WHS Limelight 64V son ranked in the top 1% for his WW and YW EPDs of +86 and +145, respectively. He also posted test ratios of 107 YW, and 110 ADG, along with a +175 API and +100 TI.

The junior high-indexing purebred Simmental was consigned by Trio Farms, Jerry Burner of Luray, VA. Lot 423 was a homozygous black son of Ellingson Dominator W905 and sold to Jack Byrd of Amelia, VA for \$5100. This February-born bull displayed a test YW of 1277, ratio 110, ADG ratio of 115, as well as carcass ratios of 112 and 115 for %IMF and RE, respectively.

Demand remained strong for the SimAngus bulls with Lot 436, another Dikemans Double Down 26W son consigned by Hounshell Farms which commanded \$5700 and sold to Glenmary Farm of Rapidan, VA. This homozygous black fall-born bull displayed a +110 YW EPD, +80 TI, along with test ratios of 106 ADG and 118 RE. Lot 452 demanded \$5200 from Ben Fore of Glade Spring, VA. This Trio Farms 3/8 Simmental bull posted test ratios of 108 YW, 115 ADG, 159 %IMF, and 108 RE, along with a +183 API and +88 TI. Lots 438 and 447 sold to Robert Tate of Red Oak, VA for \$5000 each. Lot 438 is a HSF Combo P462 son consigned by Hounshell Farms and Lot 447, consigned by Jess-A-Marr Farms, Mike Walters of Wytheville, VA.

The BCIA-Influenced Bred Heifer Sale consisted of 26 fall-calving commercial bred heifers. All heifers were designated as Virginia Premium Assured Plus females. Demand was strong and prices steady, as the heifers averaged \$2221 per head. Virginia Tech of Blacksburg, VA consigned Lot 5 to top the sale at \$2600 selling to William Gillespie of Tazewell, VA. This pair of heifers is due to calve in October/November and was bred to VIP Foreman 1Y37. Lot 1 also from Virginia Tech sold for \$2300 and went to Roger Cockerham of Lowgap, NC. These August 2012 heifers were daughters of Sinclair Net Present Value and are due to calve in September. Hillwinds Farm of Dublin, VA consigned both Lots 2 and 6, which commanded \$2400. Lot 2 consisted of a pair of SimAngus heifers out of GAR Prophet and were bred to Laws Final Answer X136 due to calve in September. These heifers sold to L. Jordan Farms of West Jefferson, NC. Lot 6 went to William Gillespie of Tazewell, VA and was comprised of 3 SimAngus heifers out of GAR Progress due to calve late September.

All bulls and heifers were consigned by members of the Virginia Beef Cattle Improvement Association. Bulls were developed at Hillwinds Farm at Dublin, VA owned and operated by Tim Sutphin. The sale was managed by Virginia BCIA and the Virginia Cattlemen's Association, and the auctioneer was Mike Jones.

Virginia BCIA and the Southwest Bull and Heifer Sale consignors would like to thank Abingdon Equipment, ABS, Baker Cattle Company, Brown Insurance, Farm Credit, First Bank & Trust, G & G Livestock, Genex, Giles Farm Bureau Cooperative, Handfula Gelbviehs, Lucas Farms, Mt. Airy Equipment, Performance Feeds, Potts Creek Farm,

Select Sires, Snuffy's General Store, Virginia Gelbvieh Association, Wythe Livestock Exchange, and Zoetis for their sponsorship and support.

Special thanks to all the bull and heifer buyers at the 2014 Southwest Virginia BCIA Sale:

Akers Farm; Dublin, VA	Jason Semones; Hillsville, VA
Alan Dale Rutherford; Jonesville, VA	Jason W. Groseclose; Dublin, VA
Alan W. Graybeal; Dublin, VA	Jayson Vicars; Athens, TN
Allen G. Cox; Independence, VA	Jeff and Vilene Dean; Jonesville, VA
Andrew Echols; Gap Mills, WV	Jeremy Scott Perfater; Blacksburg, VA
Barry R. Vaughn; Austinville, VA	Jerry D Eller; Draper, VA
Ben F. Fore; Glade Spring, VA	Jerry Edwards; Ennice, NC
BGB Farms; Radford, VA	Jerry Ray Branscome; Pinnacle, NC
Billy J. Childress; Thurmond, NC	Jerry W. Gloseclose; Ceres, VA
Bobby and Martha Jackson; Draper, VA	Jerry W. Widener; Chilhowie, VA
Brian D. Alexander; Rural Retreat, VA	Jessie A. Asbury; Tazewell, VA
Bundy Farm; Lebanon, VA	Jim Gregory; Java, VA
Burnett/Quesenberry; Dugspur, VA	Jimmy D. Dalton; Gretna, VA
Cassell Family Farms; Wytheville, VA	John Edward Rash; West Jefferson, NC
C-Cross Cattle Company; Old South Farms; Asheboro, NC	John G. McMurray; Bristol, VA
Chip Ridge Farms, LLC; Abingdon, VA	John H. Crowgey, III; Wytheville, VA
Clark S. Reece; Hillsville, VA	Kevin A. Shrader; Newport, VA
Clinton M. Munsey; Bland, VA	L. A. White Farm; Cedar Bluff, VA
Curtiss Nipp; Overbrook, OK	L. Jordan Farms; West Jefferson, NC
Darrell Brent Fletcher; Nickelsville, VA	Lauren D. Yoder; Copper Hill, VA
Darrell W. Meade; Nickelsville, VA	Lloyd N. Winslow, Jr.; Halifax, NC
David P. Midkiff; Ivanhoe, VA	M. C. Saunders; Tazewell, VA
David Smith & Jeffrey Showalter; Amelia, VA	Mark Grim; Floyd, VA
Dean Living Trust; Jonesville, VA	Martin P. Farrier; Newport, VA
Denny L. Jessee; Castlewood, VA	Matthew James Anderson; Chilhowie, VA
Donald Osborne, Jr.; Lebanon, VA	Michael D. Cox; Kingsport, TN
Douglas Skip Taylor; Elizabethton, TN	Michael Shannon Cox; Kingsport, TN
Dusty Long; Galax, VA	Mike A. Johnson; Siloam, NC
Ellis Dean Short; Narrows, VA	Mike Walker Cox; Allisonia, VA
Ernest L. Bentley; Johnson City, TN	Morning Dew Farms; Bland, VA
Frank M. Cox; Independence, VA	Nancy C. Marshall; Castlewood, VA
Gale Rippey; Galax, VA	Perry S. Severt; Jefferson, NC
Gary Bare; West Jefferson, NC	Preston D. Robinson; Woodlawn, VA
George Phillip Duggins, Sr.; Galax, VA	Randy Lawson; Chilhowie, VA
Glenmary Farm; Rapidan, VA	Randy Lee Dunmon; Pilot Mountain, NC
Green Valley Genetics; Lebanon, VA	Raymond A. Campbell; Saltville, VA
Guy Stilwell; Dugspur, VA	Reese E. Corell; Tazewell, VA
Harrington Farm, Inc.; Elk Creek, VA	Richard Goode; Moseley, VA
Hidden Rock Farms; West Jefferson, NC	Ridgeview Farm; Hillsville, VA
Jack B. Gibson; Castlewood, VA	River Ridge Farm; Elliston, VA
Jack Byrd; Amelia, VA	Robert D. Corell; Tazewell, VA
James Elliott; Ennice, NC	Robert E. Tate; Red Oak, VA
James L. Minnick; Christiansburg, VA	Robert J. Smith; Danville, VA
James W. Collins; Wytheville, VA	Robert Smith; Glade Spring, VA
	Rodney B. Fields; Galax, VA

Roger Dale Cockerham; Lowgap, NC  
Ronald A. DeHart; Floyd, VA  
Sally Run; Wytheville, VA  
Sam R. Crockett; Wytheville, VA  
Samuel Cassell; Wytheville, VA  
Sanderson Brothers; Goode, VA  
Shelby Jean Lineberry; Galax, VA  
Spruce Gap Farm; Eggleston, VA  
Steven E. Keene; Pilgrims Knob, VA  
Ted J. Holyfield; Elkin, NC  
Terry Hall; Ennice, NC  
Thomas G. Nelson; Pence Springs, WV

Tim Sutphin; Dublin, VA  
Tom Covey; Radford, VA  
Tommy R. Umbarger; Bastian, VA  
Tommy Shrader; Rosedale, VA  
Tony Wayne Collins; Stuart, VA  
Travis Laurence Wyrick; Crockett, VA  
Valley View Farms; Tazewell, VA  
Victor Clayton Smith; Ennice, NC  
W. A. Neubert; Birchwood, TN  
Warner-Gibson Farms; Dailey, WV  
William A. Gillespie; Tazewell, VA

## Management of the Flock for Fall Lambing Success

Dr. Scott P. Greiner  
Extension Animal Scientist, Virginia Tech

Interest among sheep producers to have fall-born lambs is on the rise. Fall-born lambs typically are well-suited to take advantage of strong early-spring market prices. Additionally, there is strong demand for fall-born lambs to meet the needs of youth which have spring market lamb shows. Favorable weather and forage production associated with fall lambing compliment these marketing opportunities. However, with sheep being very seasonal in their reproduction, fall-lambing is limited by the ability to get ewes pregnant in the spring. There are several options producers have to enhance the opportunity for spring breeding to be successful.

Most successful spring breeding programs utilize genetics that have out-of-season capability. Breeds noted for this ability include Dorset, Polypay, Rambouillet, Finnsheep, potentially hair breeds (Katahdin, St. Croix, Blackbelly), and crosses of these breeds. Considerable variation exists within these breed for fall lambing potential, and selection for this trait needs to be a priority for operations that utilize an extended breeding season.

Genetics, coupled with proper nutrition and management are key components for spring breeding success. One such management practice- the “ram effect” is commonly utilized to induce ovulation in anestrus ewes that have been previously isolated from rams. The ram effect is an effective, inexpensive, practical means to increase percentage of ewes lambing out of season. Utilization of the ram effect requires ewe isolation from rams for a minimum of one month, and preferably longer. Isolation from rams needs to be complete by avoiding fence-line contact and any association with rams (sight, smell, touch). Upon joining rams with ewes that have been previously isolated, ewes will ovulate with 7 days after introduction of the rams. However, less than 20% of the ewes will be in heat during these first 7 days (silent heat). Active estrus (heat) and ovulation will occur 17 to 24 days after introduction of rams, resulting in pregnancy. Breed of ewe is an important factor in response to the ram effect. Ewes will be more responsive to the ram effect as they reach the end of anestrus (are ready to start cycling), and therefore ewes with the genetic propensity to breed out-of-season respond most favorably to the ram effect in the spring. Vasectomized teaser rams are frequently used during the first two weeks since there is a delay in estrus with the ram effect. Fertile rams need to be placed with the ewes after 14 days. Aggressive rams (both fertile rams and teasers) with high libido are most effective in eliciting a response in the ewe. It is important that rams receive a breeding soundness exam prior to spring breeding to ensure fertility.

Hormonal control of the estrous cycle has been used for several years to induce ovulation in ewes. Until recently, however, protocols and products approved specifically for sheep have been a limiting factor for wide-spread application. The sheep EAZI-BREED CIDR is approved for use in the U.S. and provides sheep producers an additional tool for spring breeding. The CIDR is a vaginal insert which releases progesterone, and is labeled to induce estrus in ewes during seasonal anestrus. The CIDR is a simple, easy-to-use device that is inserted into the ewe for five days, with ram introduction to immediately follow. Similar to the use of the ram effect, it is important that ewes not be exposed to rams prior to synchronization. Additionally, since a large number of ewes will exhibit estrus simultaneously through, the ewe:ram ratio should not exceed 18:1 and may need to be lower depending on the age and capacity of the

ram. Consequently, pre-planning is warranted when using CIDRs to insert and remove the devices on staggered days if a large number of ewes are synchronized.

On-farm research with CIDRs has been conducted at Virginia Tech utilizing a Dorset flock with a history of fall lambing. Over the past three years, pregnancy rate in ewes receiving a CIDR for 5 or 7 days in early May has ranged from 59-74%. All ewes were mature ewes (no ewe lambs), and had lambed in January-February (lambs weaned at 60 days of age, and ewes synchronized 30-45 days later). A control group of ewes received no CIDR and had lambed the previous fall. These ewes were exposed to the same rams at the same time as the synchronized ewes. Pregnancy rate over last three May breeding seasons in these ewes ranged from 44-58% utilizing the ram effect only. Comparing lambing rates in fall-lambing vs. spring-lambing ewes in this system has revealed an advantage in number of lambs born to spring-lambing ewes (1.78 vs. 1.34 lambs born/ewe for spring vs. fall). In addition to the cost associated with synchronization (CIDR and labor costs), the fewer number of lambs born, weaned, and therefore marketed needs to be considered in a fall-lambing budget. Consequently, significant premiums in lamb value and/or reductions in production costs need be realized in fall-born lambs to offset the differences in pregnancy rates and number of lambs born compared to spring lambing systems.

Collectively, these on-farm experiences underline several key points when synchronizing ewes for spring breeding:

- Whiteface/Dorset ewes will probably respond more favorably to spring synchronization than blackface ewes
- Ram fertility and libido is critical, conduct BSE on rams and observe closely; use of a marking harness will increase accuracy of monitoring
- Ewe:ram ratio should not exceed 18:1 and may need to be lower depending on the age and capacity of the ram. Single ram flocks should stagger CIDR removal (every 2-3d) to avoid overworking the ram
- Ewes should be in good body condition, weaned and recovered from the weaning process
- Ewes should not be exposed to rams prior to synchronization
- Minimize stress on ewes during and immediately following breeding season (heat, transportation)
- Lambing rates will be significantly lower for fall vs. winter/spring lambing ewes

Finally, similar to fall breeding, basic management practices will enhance the success of spring breeding. Ewes need to be in good body condition, and need to be weaned and recovered from the weaning process prior to spring breeding. A solid nutrition and mineral program, along with flock health program are also key.

## **Sheep Update**

Dr. Scott P. Greiner

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### **Consignments Being Accepted for 2014 Virginia Tech Southwest AREC Ram Test**

Consignments are currently being accepted for the 2014 Virginia Tech Southwest AREC Ram Lamb Performance Test to be conducted at the Southwest Agriculture Research and Extension Center near Glade Spring, VA. The program was initiated in 2012, and is a forage-based ram performance test, designed specifically to quantify growth and parasite resistance in hair sheep rams. Rams will be taken up at the station on Tuesday, June 4. A three week acclimation period will be used, during which time rams will be adapted to the forage and management system, as well as assess parasite status. The goal will be to reduce parasites to very low levels, and ensure rams do not harbor drug-resistant parasites. After this acclimation period, the rams will start the test period and be evaluated for 70 days (ending early September). Rams will have continuous access to high quality fescue-based pasture, and supplemented on a daily basis with concentrate. This combination offers the best opportunity to both properly grow and develop the rams, as well as measure performance potential. At the start of the test, the rams will also be administered a controlled dose of parasites. Frequent measurements of weight gain, fecal egg count, and FAMACHA scores will allow us to differentiate ability of the rams to cope with parasites, while simultaneously provide information to prevent parasitism from having serious detrimental impact on the rams' performance. In addition to measurement of growth and parasite performance, rams will be evaluated for carcass traits with ultrasound during the test, and DNA genotyping will be conducted for scrapie resistance. A Educational Field Day and sale for eligible rams is scheduled for September 27. Rams born January 15 to March 15, 2014 are eligible. For rules and regulations, as well as entry forms contact Lee Wright at (276)944-2200, e-mail [lrite@vt.edu](mailto:lrite@vt.edu), or Scott Greiner at (540) 231-9159, e-mail [sgreiner@vt.edu](mailto:sgreiner@vt.edu), or visit <http://www.apsc.vt.edu/extension/sheep/index.html> . Consignment forms are due May 10.