

Advancing Small Ruminant Production: A Portfolio Model for Risk Management Education

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Sheep & Goat Education

Advancing Small Ruminant Production’s portfolio of programs addresses the evolving needs of Missouri’s sheep and goat producers by providing risk management education for beginner and experienced farmers. As the industries grow, producers must navigate unique challenges and opportunities in an increasingly competitive market.

Missouri’s ranking among states (2024):

- 2nd in Meat & Other Goat Inventory
- 14th in Sheep & Lamb Inventory

The portfolio provides education on five key risk categories:

- **Financial:** Budgeting, cost analysis, cash flow management
- **Production:** Herd health, multi-species grazing strategies, selecting replacements and culls
- **Marketing:** Market outlooks, value-added opportunities, market diversification
- **Legal:** Record-keeping, resource allocation
- **Human:** Succession planning, labor management

Program Delivery & Partners

Risk management education is integrated into production-based workshops, ensuring producers learn to mitigate risks. This approach enhances producer decision-making by linking management practices with long-term risk mitigation strategies.

Examples:

- Lambing and Kidding class includes *Economics of Multiple Births*
- Preparing for Breeding Season class includes *Selecting Replacements with Production Records*
- Direct Marketing class includes *Adding Value to Sheep and Goats* with a carcass cutting demonstration which is cooked for lunch

Partnerships expand educational opportunities for sheep and goat risk management, especially partnering with production educators and industry groups such as:

- MU Extension Livestock Specialists
- Lincoln University Small Ruminant Specialists
- Missouri Sheep Producers Association
- Midwest Goat Expo

Educational Topics

Beginner Audience

- Introduction to Sheep and Goats
- Opportunities and Challenges of Raising Goats
- Sheep and Goat Selection
- Integrating Goats into the Farm Enterprise
- Making a Profit with Sheep and Goats
- Market Outlook
- Maintaining Production Records

Experienced Audience

- Economics of Multiple Births
- Economics of Sheep and Goat Production
- Profitability of Culling Decisions
- Selecting Replacements with Production Records
- Identifying Culls with Production Records
- Multi-Species Grazing (Cattle & Goats)
- Adding Value to Sheep and Goats
- Pros and Cons of Auction or Direct Marketing
- Economic Impact of Low Performing Animals

Participant Learning



Knowledge before and knowledge after is the average of participant survey responses, based on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 is very low and 5 is very high. Percent increase is the percent change between the mean before and after.

Participant Planned Practice Changes

Topic	Practice Change of Survey Respondents
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Introduction to Sheep & Goats	33% would start raising goats. 30% would start raising sheep.
Production Records	64% will keep & use production records to improve farm financials.
Sheep & Goat Market Outlook	55% will market sheep and goats during seasonal market highs. 55% will reduce production costs to align with market declines.
Sheep & Goat Market Outlook Train-the-Trainer (TtT)	71% will teach lowering production costs to improve profitability. 65% will teach about the best time to sell sheep and goats.
Adding Value to Sheep & Goats	63% will start a new value-added enterprise. 58% will expand a current value-added enterprise.
Selecting Replacements	60% will start using production records to choose replacements.
Pros & Cons, Auction or Direct Marketing	50% will not consider a direct marketing business model. 37% will start a direct meat marketing business.
Multi-species Grazing	63% will discuss diversification plans with others. 63% will evaluate their farm & skills for diversification potential.

Portfolio of programs has reached 1,160 participants over the past three years through 17 events. Planned practice changes are derived from post-program surveys returned by 283 participants (24% response rate).

Resources to Support Teaching

USDA: NASS Agriculture Survey & Agriculture Census Data; USDA: AMS Market Data.
Livestock Marketing Information Center (LMIC.info).
Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA.com.au), *Global Market Snapshot Reports..*

