

How to Start a Small Ruminant Program

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Introduction

Despite the gain in popularity of small ruminant production throughout the north Florida region, connecting with them has proven difficult. Florida Agriculture and Mechanical University (FAMU) has had an ongoing small ruminant program and UF/IFAS Extension offers county and regional programs periodically. However, many producers either don't attend programs or do not know of the programs we offer despite advertising.

Therefore, the University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agriculture Sciences Extension (UF/IFAS Extension) Columbia, Hamilton, and Suwannee Counties partnered with FAMU to develop a regional program to reach out to sheep and goat owners. The three counties either had no previous listserv of producers or had an outdated list.

Other issues included: knowing what type of program these producers wanted and/or needed; when was the best time to deliver the information; and finally where should the information be provided to maximize convenience for the producers.

Objectives

- Assess the number of small ruminant producers
- Develop contacts for future programs
- Determine what information was wanted/needed
- Determine when, where, and how did the producers want the information delivered

Method

The same program material was offered for free in each county on different dates, on different days of the week. A lack of fee, multiple dates, and various locations reduced the number of conflicts in order to maximize participation. The program focused on the end goal of livestock production, marketing. This offered practical, profit driven information to those producers already in the business and allowed beginners to decide if goat or sheep production was right for them. With a lack of contacts, programing was advertised using a general flyer for all counties. The flyer was shared with any available contacts, through social media, and posted at local venues. A newspaper article was also written about marketing goats and sheep that advertised the program within two of the counties. Surveys and open discussions were used to gather recommendations for future programs.

Results

- A total attendance of 63 individuals from within the counties and surrounding areas
- A listserv for each county has been created
- Future program ideas were generated through survey data
 - Topics included:
 - ✓ getting started
 - ✓ cool season forages
 - ✓ parasite control
 - ✓ Predation
 - ✓ Etc. etc.
- Producers indicated they wanted the Master Sheep and Goat program but to offer it closer than Tallahassee
- Producers also preferred having separate meetings that either focused on goats or sheep, instead of both

Future Plans

As a group we plan to provide programs in each county based on topic suggestions and work to further improve communication efforts with the sheep and goat producers.

FREE GOAT AND SHEEP PROGRAM

UF IFAS Extension UNIVERSITY of FLORIDA | FAMU COOPERATIVE EXTENSION FLORIDA A&M UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SCIENCES

Information presented by FAMU Master Goat and Sheep Program Coordinator: Angela McKenzie-Jakes

Suwannee County- February 11th at 6 pm
1302 11th St. SW Live Oak, FL 32064
RSVP to (386) 362-2771 or darlingc@ufl.edu

Hamilton County- February 17th at 6 pm
1143 NW US Highway 41 Jasper, FL 32052
RSVP to (386) 792-1276 or ghicks@ufl.edu

Columbia County- February 20th at 6 pm
437 NW Hall of Fame Dr. Lake City, FL 32055
RSVP to (386) 752-5384 or apt@ufl.edu

Topics Include:

- Goat and Sheep Industry (National, State, and Local)
- Marketing your goats and sheep
- Where do we go from here? (round table discussion)



Industry News on Sheep and Goats

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