SHEEP GUIDE

TERMINOLOGY:

- **Ovine**
  - veterinary term for sheep
- **Ewe**
  - adult female
- **Ram**
  - adult male
- **Lamb**
  - young sheep under a year old
- **Lambing**
  - labor process of sheep
- **Wether**
  - castrated male sheep
- **Mutton**
  - sheep meat from an animal over a year old

Breeds:
The 6 major sheep breeds are:
Dorset
Suffolk

- Ruminants
- 
- 
- Range in size from 100-225 lbs.
- 
- Wool may weigh 15 lbs. or more
Breed Selection:
- Sheep used for several purposes, mainly for meat and wool products
  - Lamb –
  - Mutton –
  - Chammy –

Nutrition:
- Carbohydrates and fats for energy
  - pasture, hay, silage, and grains
- Protein
- Vitamins
  - A, D, E, K (B is produced by rumen bacteria)
- Minerals
  - salt, phosphorus, calcium, and potassium
- Water
  - one gallon per day per sheep
- Silage can be a combination of ground corn and moist hay or just very early cut hay that is high in sugar content

Behavior:
- Several defense mechanisms:
  - stomping feet
  - moving into the flock

Equipment and Housing Needs:
- Protection from weather
- Electricity
- Water
- Troughs or feeders
  - Free stalls for does
  - Goats kept inside should be dehorned to prevent injury

Grooming:
- Most breeds require regular shearing
  - Carefully done with clippers or shears
  - Involves electric shears, shearing blades, trimmer disinfectant, shearing tables or chutes, blankets, and hoods
Basic Health Care and Maintenance:
- Signs of unhealthy sheep:
  - Poor wool or coat quality, loss of wool, discharge from eyes and nose, pale mucous membranes, anorexia, diarrhea, and standing alone from flock
- Yearly physical exams; updated vaccines

Vaccinations:
- Programs will vary based on location and veterinarian recommendations

Breeding and Reproduction:
- Ewes reach maturity at 8-10 months
- Breeding begins at 2-years-old
- Gestation length: 148-150 days
- Four phases of lambing
  - Dilation
  - Expulsion of lamb
  - Expulsion of placenta
- Shear ewe around udders
- Reduce grain

Lambing:
- Occurs in different phases much like humans:
  - Contractions
  - Expulsion of placenta
  - Dilation phase:
    - Cervix dilates and birth canal is prepared
    - Clear, whitish discharge appears on vulva
      - Main sign lambing has begun
  - Contraction phase:
    - Lamb moves into birth canal
    - Water like fluid discharges - water breaks
      - Completion of this phase
  - Expulsion of lamb:
    - Normal birth
      - Tip of nose and front feet delivered first
    - If second lamb is to be born, interest in first decreases and contractions start
• Expulsion of placenta (afterbirth):
  • Extra embryonic membranes form around embryo in early pregnancy
  • Responsible for transfer of nutrients and wastes between mother and fetus.
  • Orphaned lamb – happens when ewe dies or rejects offspring
  • May be placed with another lamb
  • May need to use cow’s milk or milk replacer to bottle feed

Common Diseases:
• Sheep are easily susceptible to diseases

Foot Rot:
  ❖ Also called an abscess
  ❖ Cause
  ❖ Infection results in lameness, limping
  ❖ Trim away decaying area
  ❖ Keep pen clean and dry

Mastitis:
• Udder infection
  • Udder may feel hard and be hard to the touch

Actinobacillosis:
• “Lumpy jaw”
  • Causes tumor like lumps of yellow pus to build up within jaw
  • CANNOT be used for human consumption

Actinomycosis:
• “Wooden tongue”
  • Hard lesions on tongue
  • Difficult to eat
  • Isolate from herd
  • Contamination through feed and water

Blue Tongue:
• Viral disease spread by gnats
• Signs: fever, loss of appetite, sluggish behavior, swelling on mouth and ears, ulcers in mouth, and trouble eating
• Vaccinate at shearing

**Enterotoxemia:**
- Bacterial disease affecting lambs/show animals
- Affects show animals due to increased gains
- Death with heads arched due to convulsions
- Vaccines and good management
  - 2 and 6 weeks prior to labor

**Johne’s Disease:**

**Soremouth:**
- Contagious and zoonotic
- Healing can be done by removing scabs and rubbing iodine into sores
- Vaccinate

**Lamb Dysentery:**
- Bacteria that affects lambs at 1-5 days old
- Signs:
- Sanitation and good management

**Polyarthritis:**
- Lambs 3 to 5-weeks-old
- Signs:
- Painful

**Common Parasites:**
- Common external parasites:
  - All severely affect wool quality of coat
- Common internal parasites:
  - Lungworms, whipworms, tapeworms, coccidian, liver flukes, stomach worms
  - Treat with topical dips, insecticide sprays, anthelmintics, waste control and removal, and pasture rotations
Sheep Production:
- Advantages:
  - Best suited livestock for grazing
  - Dual purpose breeds (meat and hair)
  - Low amount of waste
  - Easy to raise
  - Require minimal space

- Disadvantages:
  - Wool prices low
  - Sheep are susceptible to disease
  - Meat production low

Farm Flock Method:
- Most popular method
- Production of market lambs
- Usually raised with other livestock

Purebred Flock Method:
- Small amounts of purebred sheep farms
- High level of management necessary
- Full time business
- Pasture space

Range Band Method:
- Each band has a herder
- Move sheep over land to different pastures
- Emphasis on lamb or wool

Confinement Method:
- Becoming a popular breeding method
- Aseptic environment
- No need for land
- More skill and care
Lamb Feeding:
- Specialized method
- Usually raised on farm
- Reproduction is the basis