Coordination in Current U. S. Sheep Research and Extension Education

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Research Context: Sector Characteristics

- Sheep Sector as a Whole
  - 6.5 million head; 80,000+ producers.
  - Western range systems traditional focus on wool.
  - Eastern farm flocks focus on both lamb + wool systems.
  - Southern forage-based lamb production
- Grow Our Flock through two-PLUS and Mentoring initiative seeking to increase inventory across all production systems.
Active Extension Involvement

Sheep research (and extension) programs in USA began in early part of 20th century.
- Focus on both eastern and western wool
- Focus on lamb in eastern U.S.
- Focus on dairy sheep since 1980’s.
- Reports from 1931 J. Animal Production,
  - Wool, parasites, genetics, forage & feeding, disease.
Active Sheep Research Programs based at Institutions Nationally and Regionally

- **Land grant Institutions and Institutes**
  - “1862” institutions
  - “1890” institutions (Historically African American)

- **Non-land grant Institutions, e.g.**
  - Berry College, Rome, Georgia
  - Bowdoin College, Brunswick, Maine
  - Tarleton State University, Texas
  - Cal-Poly Institutions, California
Active Sheep Research Programs based at Institutions Nationally and Regionally

- USDA - Agricultural Research Service (ARS)
  - USSES, Dubois, ID
  - MARC, Clay Center, NB
  - DBSFRC, Booneville, AR

  Grazinglands, Southern Plains, El Reno, OK

More than 1,000 projects happening annually.
Active Sheep Research Programs

- **Formal Regional Projects**
  - Southern Region (SCC-81) Sustainable Small Ruminant Production Systems. 10/19 Universities and 2 ARS stations.
  - Western (WERA-39) Coordination of Sheep and Goat Research and Education Programs for the Western States. 11 Universities.
Coordination – How it Happens?

Who has Input?

- Administrative Advisors Interact
- USDA/NIFA Program Leaders
  - Animal and Range/Grazinglands programs
  - Stakeholders (ASI) Input in Program Development
- Scientist Participation Across Multiple Projects
  - Statewide Advisory Groups help keep work grounded.
  - Commodity Groups such as ASI help keep work on target and aid in setting priorities.
Coordination – How Does It Happen

- Through meetings of Coordinating Committees – (usually annually).
  - Can not dictate directly the coordination activities.
  - Strong suggestions and arrangements for coordination.
  - Report on findings, propose direction for the future, critique, seek opportunities for collaboration.
  - Several principal investigators belong to more than one regional project.
  - Collaboration is encouraged indirectly by reductions in funding.
SCC-81 Sustainable Small Ruminant Systems


Southern geographic orientation.

10/19 institutions including ARS 2x w/ focus on sheep.

Objectives focus areas:

– Internal parasites and sustainable management.
– Develop forage-based feeding systems including suitable forages for animal performance.
– Evaluate production potential of animal germplasm under low-input, forage-based systems.
– Grazing systems for year around needs.
– Disseminate results and inform producers.
NCERA-214. Increased Efficiency of Sheep Production Systems.

14 Universities and 3 ARS stations.

Meeting locations rotated among members:
- 2012, Iowa State University, Spencer, IA.
- 2013, Utah State University, Logan, UT
- 2014, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI

Objectives:
- Improving reproductive efficiency.
- Efficiency in growing lean, carcass quality, and meat palatability.
- Evaluate milk production systems.
- Develop profitably and sustainable production systems.
- Disseminate results widely.
WERA-39. Coordination of Sheep and Goats Research & Education for the Western States

Objectives related to:

- Wool quality and enhancement of characteristics.  
  On the ranch and in the lab.
- Ewe nutrition for enhanced lifetime productivity.  
  Trace elements and energy availability.
- Invasive plant control and utilization.
- Germplasm options and mating systems.
- Integrated diverse grazing systems.

Eleven universities as participants.
Cross-project Coordination

Periodically, but not annually, members of coordinating committees from the several regional projects will meet to consider opportunities for collaboration across projects.

Summary

- Coordination happens.
- ASI has input
- Diversity in geography.
- Range in topics

- Scientists seek coordination and collaboration.
- ARS has a role.