

ASI Let's Grow Funding Report—2016 Allocation

Project Title: *Let's Grow the West! Hands-on Interactive Farm to Table Workshops to Improve Productivity, Quality and Marketability of Sheep and Sheep Products*

Project Leaders/Team:

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Organization : Superior Farms, Washington State University, University of Wyoming, Oregon State University, and Oregon Sheep Growers Association, Wyoming Wool Growers Association

Need: The expansion of sheep farms is not only limited by economically viable opportunities, but also by the availability of knowledgeable producers and a skilled workforce. The western U.S. has a diverse and bountiful agricultural industry, which provides an excellent opportunity for the number of sheep produced in the region to expand. The opportunity for future expansion of lamb production and sheep operations can only be achieved and sustained by developing knowledgeable producers that can be profitable in their production systems. Educational outreach programs for sheep producers, stakeholders and the workforce need to support recruitment, education, training, and retention of quality individuals within all segments of the sheep and wool industry to enable them to increase the pounds of quality lamb and wool produced and marketed; ultimately increasing their profitable, sustainability and future growth of the industry.

Action:

2016 PNW Let's Grow Lamb and Wool Symposium, Aurora, OR. Cancelled due to lack of pre-registrations.

CALIFORNIA LAMB 300, Dixon, CA, June 9-10, 2016. 39 participants learned about marketing; live animal and carcass evaluation, lamb fabrication and processing, meat quality/safety, new technology and adding value to lamb carcasses.

WYOMING LAMB 300, Laramie, WY, November 3-5, 2016. 38 participants learned about marketing; live animal and carcass evaluation, lamb fabrication and processing, meat quality/safety, new technology, wool quality/production, and adding value to lamb carcasses.

LAMB 300 participants received approximately 30-hours of hands-on instruction addressing the production, processing, distribution and merchandizing practices that affect the consistency, quality, palatability, and wholesomeness of lamb products. This hands-on program enhances the understanding of attributes affecting consumer acceptability and ultimately consumer demand for lamb products.

Impact:

CALIFORNIA LAMB 300: Average knowledge increase on topics covered at Lamb 300 was 1.2 units on a 5-point scale. Sixty-two percent of participants reported that CALIFORNIA LAMB 300 significantly increased their knowledge of the sheep industry. More importantly, 100% of participants plan to implement changes to improve the overall sustainability of their sheep enterprise; 71% of participants indicated that they plan to apply what they learned in the course to capture higher prices (premiums);

with 81% of participants responding that the information provided would positively impact the economic status of their sheep operation over the next year. Individuals plan to improve the production/quality of the lambs produced through genetic selection (80%), nutrition (70%), marketing at yield grade 2 or 3 (55%), and producing lamb for specific market opportunities (55%). Also important, was 75% of participants responding to the evaluation indicated that they plan to increase their flock size over the next 2 years, while 6% reported they intend to decrease their flock size. Evaluation conducted 2 months following program: 21 responded out of 36 participants; representing approximately 12,000 head of ewes, 20,000 feeder grass lambs, and approximately 80,000 head of annual feedlot lambs.

WYOMING LAMB 300: Average knowledge increase on topics covered at Lamb 300 was 1.09 units on a 5-point scale. Seventy-four percent of participants reported that WYOMING LAMB 300 significantly increased their knowledge of the sheep industry. More importantly, 94% of participants plan to implement changes to improve the overall sustainability of their sheep enterprise; 87% of participants indicated that they plan to apply what they learned in the course to capture higher prices (premiums); with 80% of participants responding that the information provided would positively impact the economic status of their sheep operation over the next year. Individuals plan to improve the production/quality of the lambs produced through genetic selection (86%), nutrition (50%), marketing at yield grade 2 or 3 (36%), and producing lamb for specific market opportunities (50%). Also important, was 59% of participants responding to the evaluation indicated that they plan to increase their flock size over the next 2 years, while 36% will maintain their flock size and 5% reported they intend to decrease their flock size. Evaluation conducted 1 month following program (evaluation conducted sooner than CALIFORNIA LAMB 300 to allow reporting for grant): 23 responded out of 38 participants; representing approximately 12,000 head of ewes and 6000 feeder lambs.

Comments from participants on evaluation:

CALIFORNIA LAMB 300

- *We are going to increase the number of sheep we have - the future of the sheep industry looks good*
- *Market lambs at their peak market ready condition and thus save feed and produce a higher quality product which will bring more income.*
- *Change to accelerated lambing, put on more ewes, split the revenue stream between a few buyers, instead of just selling to one.*
- *Breed specific for high lamb crops, and producing a premium choice product.*
- *Genetic improvements via EID tags and data system.*
- *An outstanding program that every lamb producer should have the opportunity to take. The chance to learn about the various types of lambs and to see the newest processing plant in the country along with excellent presenters made it a very worthwhile experience.*
- *Excellent program - PLEASE DO NOT STOP! This is the best and most well-presented educational university based program I have ever attended.*
- *I think it is a very informative program to help new and old producers better understand the industry they are in, I wish there was something like this 25 years ago when we started.*

WYOMING LAMB 300

- *Be mindful of genetic potential, regarding finish, and set a marketing schedule.*
- *Not feed to the point of YG 4 and 5.*

- *We will implement ultrasound technologies with our flock and utilize university Extension Services in the future.*
- *This program was exceptional. Even though I have a small flock, due to college commitments, I plan to expand my operation significantly after I graduate. The LAMB 300 program exposed me to information which I will not encounter in the classroom.*
- *Great program that was well organized and carried out. Continue to have programs throughout the US.*
- *I was very impressed with the Lamb 300 Program and have brought ideas back to the flock but just as importantly the students I am in contact with. I have been to a lot of seminars over the years and it was truly one of the best I have been to. The small class size allows for the opportunity for extensive networking throughout the week. I have already used some of the contacts I gained in Wyoming to further the education of my students.*
- *The information, networking, and programming were all quite good. I liked the 'team' approach to the 'contest' and all the hands on experiences. The food was incredible. Thank you to everyone who helped put it on. I found it very worthwhile and hope to attend another one in the future. I really enjoyed following the lambs from live evaluation through the entire process. I have a much better understanding of the marketing challenges we face as an industry. I also see this program as an opportunity for producers, marketers, feeders, and processors to do a much better job of communicating.*