

## Goat & Sheep News September 2015

[Click Here for  
Print Friendly Version](#)



We want to be your premier source of sheep and goat information. We welcome your feedback!

**Like Arkansas 4H  
Livestock on Facebook!**

[Like us on Facebook](#) 

**Like U of A Animal  
Science on Facebook!**

[Like us on Facebook](#) 

**FOLLOW  
OUR  
BLOG**



### About this Newsletter:

Welcome to the latest issue of the Goat and Sheep E-News Letter. With this newsletter, we strive to bring you the most current sheep and goat information. Feel free to forward this information to fellow professionals.

### Dr. Chelsey Ahrens

Dr. Chelsey A. Ahrens assumed her new role as the Specialty Livestock/Youth Education Specialist with the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service in June. She received her bachelor's in animal science from the University of Arkansas with minors in agricultural business and agricultural communications in 2010. She has a master's in agricultural leadership from The University of Georgia and received her Ph.D. in agricultural communications from Texas Tech University in May of 2014.

Dr. Chelsey is originally from Lamar, Arkansas where she grew up on her family's farm raising and showing cattle, sheep, and hogs. She was a member of Arkansas 4-H for 10 years and an Arkansas FFA member for five where she also served as a state FFA officer. Dr. Chelsey works closely with 4-H and youth as she is in charge of all Arkansas 4-H livestock programming. The specialty livestock part of her title also makes her responsible for sheep, goats, hogs, dairy cattle, and other specialty livestock programming. Feel free to contact Dr. Chelsey by email, phone, or text.



### Dr. Heidi Ward

Dr. Heidi M. Ward became the new University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service Veterinarian this past July. She received a bachelor's degree in Psychology with a minor in Zoology in 2000 and her doctorate degree in Molecular Cell Biology in 2005, both from the University of Oklahoma. Shortly after graduating with her PhD, she entered the veterinary program at Oklahoma State University. While a veterinary student, she also conducted research at the Lung Biology and Toxicology Laboratory and worked as a technician at the Oklahoma Animal Disease Diagnostics Laboratory. She received her doctorate degree in Veterinary Medicine in May of 2009.

Dr. Ward practiced veterinary medicine in Montana for six years. As an accredited veterinarian, she also provided disease surveillance for the Montana Department of Livestock. She joins the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension service with a strong background in immunology and infectious disease. Along with educating livestock producers on animal health, she oversees the Arkansas 4-H Veterinary Science Program. Dr. Ward enjoys talking to people of all ages and welcomes anyone to call or email her with questions, concerns, or ideas.



## Winter shelter needs for sheep and goats

With the arrival of fall, sheep and goat producers should start preparing shelter for their animals so they are not caught unprepared in the event of a winter storm or very cold weather.

Sheep and goats are hardy animals and do not require as much shelter as many new producers believe. As long as they can be kept dry and out of the wind, sheep and goats remain comfortable even when it is quite cold outside. Shelters should be built so that one wall faces the direction of the prevailing wind. Three-sided shelters should face south so that winter sunlight can provide additional warmth while stormy and cold northern and northeasterly winds will be deflected.

Build your shelter on slightly elevated ground with good drainage. Shelters with puddles of water or muddy floors will chill livestock seeking shelter. They also create manure management problems and potential fly and parasite problems in the warmer months. Before you site your shelter, decide whether you plan to install electricity and water. Shelters located in distant pastures are typically too expensive to power, but may have water.

New producers often think they have to completely enclose and insulate a barn to protect their livestock. But livestock actually do better with good ventilation and open air. Fully enclosing sheep and goats can make them more susceptible to respiratory infections. Ammonia from urine and fecal odors can build up rapidly in enclosed structures.

Take time to consider the type of bedding you plan to use. Livestock can be bedded on many materials. Straw is traditional, but wood chips are also commonly used. Sawdust is not recommended for woolled breeds of sheep because sawdust gets stuck in the fleece. Shredded newspaper can be used. It is very absorbent, but can be difficult to handle if it becomes too wet. Consider whether you will compost your bedding or spread it on pastures. Newspaper may be unsightly when spread, for example, but will compost well.

Sheep and goats must have enough space in the shelter so they can all utilize it. A mature ewe or ram requires 8 square feet of space. Lambs and kids need about 6 square feet. Of course, they will not distribute themselves evenly across the floor, but will cluster together to share body heat.

Some producers worry when they see their sheep or goats lying outside on a cold day and try to move them into the shelter, only to have the animals return to the pasture as soon as their back is turned. As long as the weather is dry and not too windy, your animals will probably prefer to be outside allowing the sun to warm them. If they get too cold, the animals will go to the shelter on their own.

Shelters can be built from many inexpensive materials. Producers have made simple Quonset style covers on wheels, converted carports, pallets or reclaimed lumber, even tarps stretched over frames.

Caption for photo: A simple three-sided shelter faces south to maximize winter sun warming while protecting from winter storm winds.



A simple three-sided shelter faces south to maximize winter sun warming while protecting from winter storm winds.

## Plan your Work, Work your Plan

Do you spend your Saturdays working on a never-ending list of farm projects?

On our farm, there are always more ideas and projects than there is time, or money.

Of course, sometimes there are urgent situations that don't require thought-just action: The buck is out, or a tree fell on the fence. But to really make progress in your business, it is helpful to think about every aspect of that business, and put time and energy toward the projects that will give the best return. So how do farmers decide what should get their attention first?



That is exactly why we developed the ATTRA Program's [Small Ruminant Sustainability Checksheet](#): to help producers think through all aspects of their business, from soils to forages, animals, marketing, records, economics, and people. The Checksheet provides information and a series of questions to answer about your farm operation. These questions help you "see" factors that might otherwise be overlooked. At the end of the process, you fill out a summary page called the Farm Action Plan. Based on that summary and discussions with family members, you choose the top three concerns and identify actions to address those concerns. A list of information resources is provided on that page.

By identifying and addressing the main concerns—the weak links of your farm—you can be sure that your projects will indeed move your business forward, and Saturdays will be well spent.

By repeating the Checksheet evaluation every year, you can assess progress and choose the next set of three areas of focus. There is a lot of satisfaction in seeing improvement and knowing that your management is having great results.

Further information is available from your local Cooperative Extension agent, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) agent, the ATTRA Sustainable Agriculture Program, and many other sources, including many listed in the Resources section of the Checksheet. The Checksheet and a host of other publications can be downloaded free from [www.attra.ncat.org](http://www.attra.ncat.org).

This Checksheet was developed by collaborating with producers, Extension and NRCS agents, and university researchers. It was tested on several farms. Spend a few hours working through it, and then enjoy your well-planned Saturdays!

## What is ATTRA Sustainable Agriculture?

ATTRA is a program developed and managed by the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) as a source of sustainable agriculture information. It is a national service, with small, regional offices around the US, including one in Fayetteville. The NCAT agriculture specialists who work on the ATTRA program offer publications, videos, and webinars through the website, [www.attra.ncat.org](http://www.attra.ncat.org); a toll-free help line, 800-346-9140; free consultation by email or phone; and in-person trainings and workshops.



The specialists in the Fayetteville office who work in the livestock area are Linda Coffey and Margo Hale. Margo is the Southeast Regional Director and also manages Armed to Farm, a project that offers a week-long training for veterans. She manages other projects as well, and organizes workshops featuring business planning, grass-based livestock production, and internal parasite control for sheep and goats. Margo and her husband and children run a small farm near Prairie Grove, raising beef cattle, hair sheep, and meat goats.

Linda's areas of expertise include sheep, goats, and multispecies grazing. Linda and her family also manage a small farm, raising Gulf Coast sheep and dairy goats. Both Margo and Linda have enjoyed collaborating on projects with Cooperative Extension, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), and Heifer International, as well as some producers in the state.

In addition to the Fayetteville specialists, ATTRA has another small ruminant specialist in the Butte, Montana office. Dave Scott raises 200 ewes on irrigated pasture, and direct markets the meat from about 200 of the lambs. He brings his grazing experience and meat experience to help producers all over the country. The ATTRA Multimedia tab features several videos featuring Dave and his farm. Watch for an upcoming publication about Alternative Lamb Marketing, as well.

Publications offered free of charge through ATTRA include an extensive series on internal parasite control in sheep and goats as well as general production information and marketing tip sheets. Access all of these at <https://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/livestock/>.

The Fayetteville office phone is 479-442-9824. Email [margoh@ncat.org](mailto:margoh@ncat.org) or [lindac@ncat.org](mailto:lindac@ncat.org) for more information.

The information given herein is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names is made with the understanding that no discrimination is intended and no endorsement by the Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service is implied.