

THE BLEAT

A UGA Extension Newsletter for Georgia Sheep and Goat Producers



Covid-19: A Different World

*By Susan Schoenian
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The arrival of Covid-19 has changed all of our lives and continues to be a rapidly evolving situation. While our health and that of our loved ones is of primary importance, the care of our livestock and sustainability of our small ruminant enterprises is also important. Everyone needs to be prepared for how Covid-19 might impact their sheep/goat enterprises.

Covid-19 is having an impact on demand, markets, and prices. Some sale barns have closed. Others are limiting attendance to buyers. Voluntary price reporting by USDA has been suspended at some auction barns, including New Holland (PA) Sales Stables.

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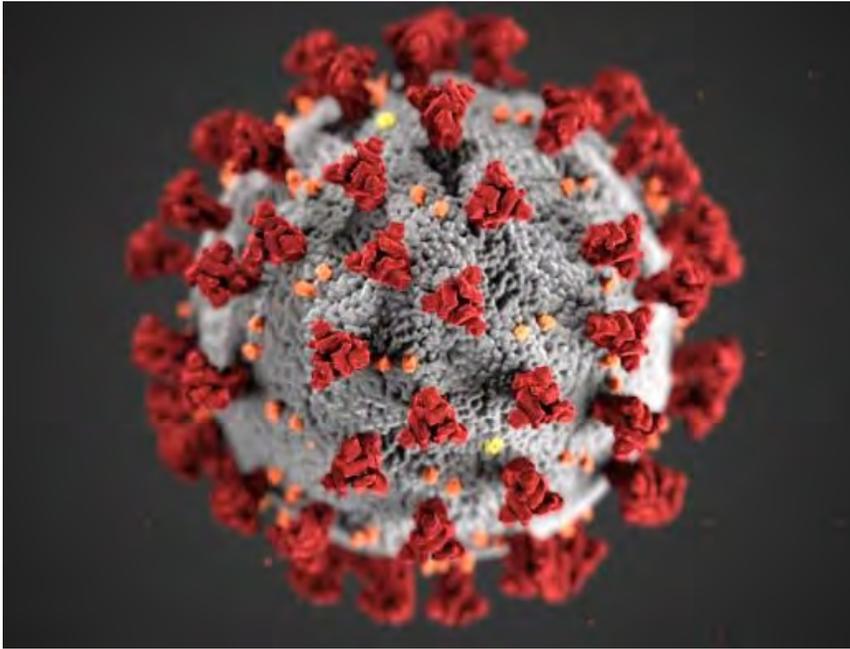
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The majority of American lamb is sold to food service industries, so the closing of restaurants is having a devastating effect on national lamb sales. The second largest lamb company has already filed for bankruptcy. The American Sheep Industry Association (ASI) has requested USDA to step up its purchase of lamb products.

Easter/Passover (April 8-19) is the single largest lamb consumption period of the year. It is not known how Covid-19 will affect demand/prices, but it is likely to be negative, as traditions are altered and slaughter capacity is reduced. Sheep and goat producers in the East may be better insulated from Covid-19 disruptions since many of our animals are processed in smaller facilities, some are processed on farm (by ethnic customers), and most end up in non-traditional markets. Local food may be one of the few "winners" in this horrible pandemic.

Agriculture is a critical industry, but producers need to be prepared for disruptions or slowdowns in supply chains. It is important not to wait until the last minute to secure feed sources and get supplies. It is possible that some products will be in short supply. Farm stores and veterinary offices are staying open but may have reduced hours.

While some producers sheared their sheep ahead of lambing, the shearing season is here for most others. Shearers may be harder to find. When you get someone to shear your sheep, be sure to protect yourself and your shearer by following distancing and hygiene recommendations. The same is true if you allow on-farm slaughter by live animal buyers. Don't put you (or your buyers) at risk.

While universities, Extension Offices and research centers have been closed temporarily, extension agents and specialists are teleworking and are available via phone or email. During these times, there will be increased educational offerings available online: social media, videos, webinars, etc. Be sure to take advantage of them. Now is a good time to catch up on record keeping.

The number of people with Covid-19 is increasing. While the urban population seems to be more affected, no one is immune from this terrible disease. You need to have a plan in place if you or your family members get sick. Who will do the day-to-day chores? Make a list of chores, if someone has to care for your animals while you are sick.

It goes without saying that everyone should practice social distancing and good hygiene, according to CDC/government requirements/recommendations. Wash your hands regularly (with soap and warm water) and disinfect high-touch surfaces. Stay home. Enjoy your farm. Play with your lambs/kids.

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SHEAR BITS OF ADVICE

Caitlin Jackson
Monroe County ANR Agent

Now is the time when hair sheep shepherds really enjoy the fact that their sheep naturally shed out because it's shearing season! Shearing is arguably one of the most labor intensive activities in sheep production. While professionals can easily shear an average size ewe in less than a minute, for the old average Joe it takes many many many more minutes. For this reason, many shepherds contract professionals to shear their flock. Regardless if you are going to use a local professional or one of the several groups that travel state to state shearing flocks there are several tasks that you can do to ensure a secure and successful shear.

Prepare the area by making sure the area that you are going to shear in has electricity and good ventilation. Now is a good time to make sure that all parts of your working systems are in good order. You will also want to make sure the area is clean and easy to work in.

Have a system by having animals sorted and ready to be sheared. Also make sure that you know how you are going to pack your fleeces once a shearer is done with a sheep.



Sanitize and maintain bio-security by disinfecting before and after shearers are on your farm. Ask if and how they sanitize their equipment. Have disinfectant ready and available.

Maintain social distancing during this turbulent time of Covid-19.



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"Summer annuals such as soybean, cowpea, and pearl millet can provide excellent quality forage and extend the summer grazing season."

Working with Warm-Season Systems

Brooklyne Wassel | Pike Co. ANR Agent

Warm season forages such as bahiagrass and bermudagrass are the bread and butter of our pasture systems. They provide quality nutrition for livestock including small ruminants, but it is important to note these systems vary and often require supplementation to meet all nutritional needs of sheep and goats.

Bahiagrass is a widely popular pasture forage in Florida and can also be seen throughout middle Georgia. While bahiagrass is forgiving of droughts, lack of attention, and less than desirable soil, it is generally regarded as a lower quality forage. Possessing lower forage quality is the trade-off with having lower management needs. However, bahiagrass can be managed through utilizing improved cultivars, proper liming and fertilizing, and grazing management practices to improve overall forage quality. When managed properly, bahiagrass pastures can meet nutritional value of some bermudagrass pastures.

Bermudagrass pastures are by far the most common in the middle Georgia region and provide producers with a solid forage foundation if appropriately managed due to their resistance to heat stress and solid nutritional quality throughout the summer months. These pastures reach peak production by July and can meet many nutritional requirements, but they can pose similar hurdles to small ruminant producers as bahiagrass systems.

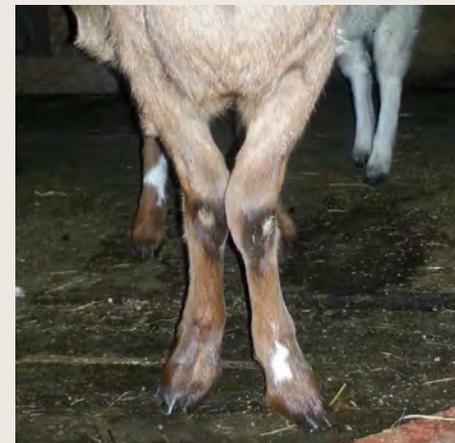
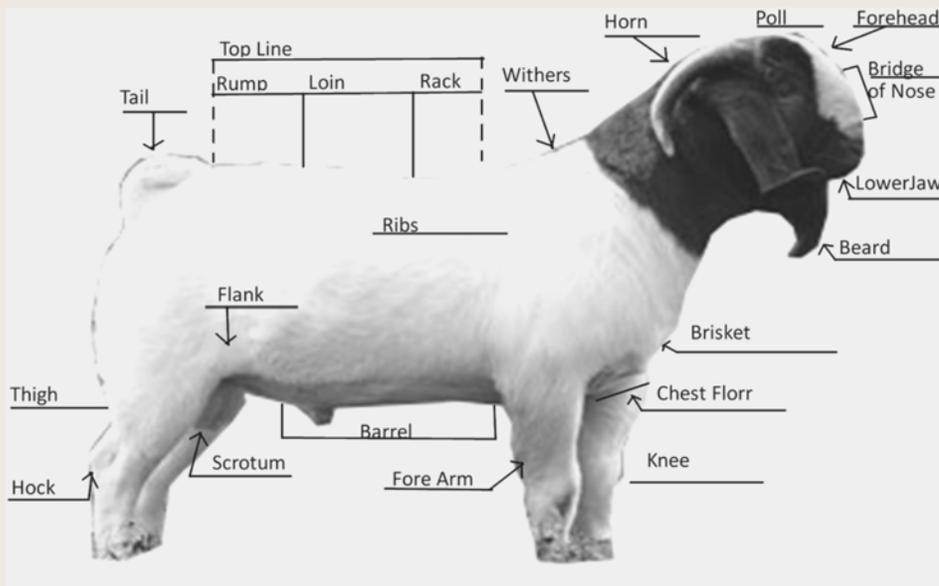
While monoculture systems can often be desirable, this might not be the case for small ruminant producers. Perennial grass-only-systems, such as bahiagrass and bermudagrass, can present issues such as grass tetany, not meeting nutritional requirements, and having limited forage quantity throughout the season. Consider “planting the supplement” as opposed to simply feeding a concentrate to compensate for pasture nutrient downfalls. Summer annuals such as soybean, cowpea, and pearl millet can provide excellent quality forage and extend the summer grazing season. These do not always agree with warm-season perennials, so consider having a supplemental pasture to limit graze and allow for proper establishment. Additionally, while we often are guilty of planning only a season or two ahead, take this time to consider cool-season annuals for use this fall as our warm-season pastures complement these well and help to extend our grazing season.

Set your pasture up for success by improving what is already established. Take a soil sample to ensure proper pH for plant nutrient uptake and successful establishment of annuals. A soil report will also give recommendations for fertilizing pastures to provide peak growth of the selected forage type. Skipping this simple step will likely result in overall lower quality pastures and an increased need for concentrate supplementation. Use what you have, treat it well by liming and fertilizing, add some annuals, and utilize grazing management to see improvements in your herd this year.

Recognizing Structural Issues

Hailey Robinson
Upson/Lamar ANR Agent

Structural correctness is very important in livestock management, especially with grazing animals.

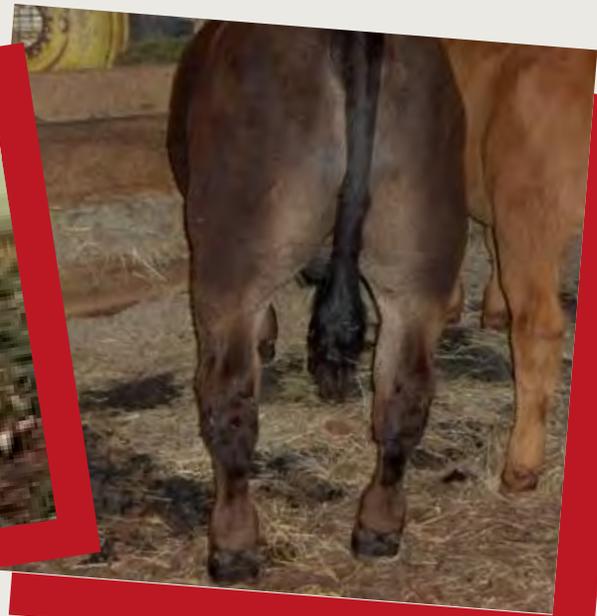
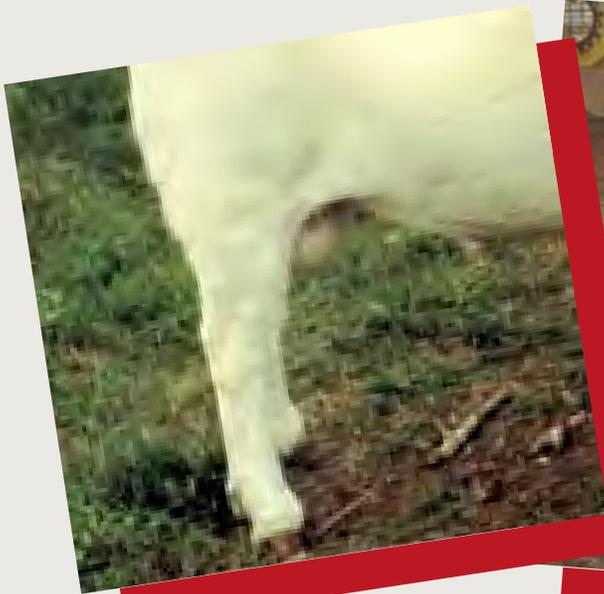


They must have the proper “running gear” to be able to track through those not-so-level Georgia pastures. It is also important, as a farmer, to be able to recognize structural incorrectness and their proper terms. There are three main views for assessing structure; front view, rear view, and side view.

When evaluating livestock from the front, ideally you would like the animal to be square from the ground up, with the hooves setting in-line with the shoulders. Some structural issues to keep an eye out for are:

- **Bow-legged** is when the legs curve outward at the knee.
- **Knock-kneed** is when the legs curve inward so that the feet are apart and the knees are touching.
- **Splay-footed** is when the feet face outward, with the heels together.
- **Pigeon-toed** is when the feet face inward, with the heels apart.





When evaluating livestock from the rear, ideally you would like the animal to be square from the ground up, with them being in line from hooks, to pins, to hocks. Similar to the front view, some structural issues to keep an eye out for from the rear are bow-legged, cow-hocked, splay-footed, and pigeon-toed. The only difference is from the rear we call it cow-hocked, instead of knock-kneed.

- **Cow-hocked** is when the legs curve inward so that the feet are apart and the hocks are touching.



When evaluating livestock from the side, ideally you would like the animal to be level topped, with some set to the shoulder, hip, hock, and pastern. Some side view structural issues to keep an eye out for are:

- **Buck-kneed** is when the knee is inclining forwards, full extension of the knee cannot occur.
- **Calf-kneed** is when the knee is declining backwards, full extension of the knee cannot occur.
- **Sickle-hocked** is when the hock has too much angle or set, causing them to stand too far under themselves.
- **Post-legged** is when the hock has too little angle or set. The animal is too straight through the joint, resulting in stiff, restrictive movement with lack of flexibility.
- **Still Pasterns** is when the area between the fetlock and hoof is exhibiting a lack of appropriate angle.
- **Weak Pasterns** is when the area between the fetlock and hoof is exhibiting an excess of appropriate angle.

All of these structural issues can cause complications for the movement of livestock, which can restrict tracking in the pasture and breeding capabilities. When purchasing or deciding to retain animals, be sure to evaluate them from the ground up, and then make the decision to keep or cull.

SMALL RUMINANT VACCINATIONS

Just like pets (dogs, cats, etc.), livestock also need the protection against diseases that vaccines can provide. A vaccine that costs 50 cents could prevent the death of an animal worth much more than that.

The primary vaccine sheep and goats are given is known as “CDT” or “CD&T”. It helps protect against the diseases overeating, bloody scours and tetanus, caused by *Clostridium perfringens* type C and D and *Cl. tetani* (tetanus). The label directions should be followed closely, including those for handling and storage.

Adult females should be given the vaccine 30 days before giving birth so the kids can get some protection against disease through the first milk (colostrum). If the female was not given two vaccine injections three to four weeks apart at some time in her life, this pre-kidding annual shot may not work well. The priming set of two shots is usually given when the female is a young lamb or kid but it can be done at any age.

Lambs and kids are vaccinated at five to six weeks of age if their dam (mother) was properly vaccinated, or as early as 7 to 21 days old if they were born to a female who was not vaccinated or they did not get enough high quality colostrum within 24 hours of birth. Booster shots of the vaccine would be given three to four weeks later.

All adults and yearlings get annual boosters when others in the herd are given booster vaccines. New breeding males and females with unknown vaccination history can get two initial doses, three to four weeks apart, and then annually. Some research has shown that goats might benefit from booster vaccinations twice a year, around six months apart.

There are other vaccines for diseases in small ruminants that are not necessarily labeled for use in sheep and goats, including for soremouth (ORF or contagious ecthyma; labeled), CL (Caseous lymphadenitis, labeled; caused by *Corynebacterium pseudotuberculosis*), foot rot (labeled for cattle), pneumonia (*Mannheimia/Pasteurella*; labeled), rabies (labeled for sheep), additional clostridial diseases like blackleg/combinations (sheep), and abortions (different organisms; as available, labeled for sheep or cattle).



Your veterinarian or local extension office may be able to help you decide if there are other vaccines you should give based on diseases commonly found in your area and can teach you how to give vaccinations correctly.

**BY DR. NIKI WHITLEY,
ANIMAL SCIENCE SPECIALIST
Fort Valley State University**

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**"A VACCINE
THAT COSTS
50 CENTS
COULD
PREVENT THE
DEATH OF AN
ANIMAL
WORTH MUCH
MORE THAN
THAT. "**





At the Georgia Sheep Association, we are getting more inquiries about heritage breeds. We've even had a few 4-H families express interest in raising heritage livestock.

International Heritage Breeds Week is the third week in May.

What are Heritage Breeds?

Heritage breeds are traditional livestock breeds that were raised before industrial agriculture became a mainstream practice. These breeds were carefully selected and bred over time to develop traits that made them well-adapted to local environments and they thrived under farming practices and cultural conditions that are very different from those found in modern agriculture. Traditional, historic breeds retain essential attributes for survival and self-sufficiency – fertility, foraging ability, longevity, maternal instincts, ability to mate naturally, and resistance to diseases and parasites.

International Heritage Breeds Week is an opportunity for livestock conservation organization members, fans, and sponsors to advocate for conservation of heritage breeds in agriculture. It's a time to share with local, state, national, and international audiences what livestock conservation is all about and the impact it has on heritage breeds and agriculture every day.

Excerpt from *The Livestock Conservancy*

GREEK SLOW ROASTED GOAT LEG



PREP TIME: 20 MINS
COOK TIME: 2 HRS 30 MINS
TOTAL TIME: 2HR 50MINS

INGREDIENTS

For the meat

- 3 pounds (1.3 Kg) goat leg with the bone (you can also use lamb)
- 2-3 cloves of garlic cut into little sticks
- 3-4 sprigs of rosemary
- Juice from 1 lemon
- 1/4 cups olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 tablespoon dried oregano
- 1 cup white wine
- 2 pounds baby potatoes or potatoes peeled and cut into wedges

For the glaze

- 3 tablespoons pomegranate syrup, or grape syrup, maple syrup or honey
- 1/2 teaspoon ground coriander seeds
- Pinch of salt and pepper
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- Pomegranate arils for decoration, optional

Others:

- Aluminum foil

Submitted by:
Nicole Walters
Monroe County FACS Agent

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat your oven to 356°F (180°C)
2. Rub the meat with salt and pepper. Make small incisions throughout the meat and put inside one stick of garlic and some rosemary.
3. Place the meat and potatoes in a pan, add the wine and lemon juice, drizzle with the olive oil and sprinkle with the oregano. Wrap well with foil and bake for 2 hours.
4. Combine all the ingredients for the glaze in a bowl, and mix well. Remove foil and brush the meat with half of the glaze.
Return to the oven and bake uncovered for at least 30 more minutes or until the surface of the meat is deep brown and you can see the tissue separating from the bone.
5. When the meat is almost done, brush once more with the rest of the glaze and bake for additional 5 minutes (this is the time to throw in some pomegranate arils). Take out of the oven and let it rest for 15 minutes before serving.

Eat!

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Recipe Notes

For a more traditional recipe, use only goat leg, salt and pepper, olive oil, some lemon juice and potatoes. Bake covered in the oven for 2 hours, uncover and continue baking until crispy and browned on the outside.

- Cooking times may vary, depending on the type and age of the meat.
- If using lamb, increase baking time approximately 30 minutes.

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