

impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

Sheep and goat webinar series: Reaching a diverse and disperse audience

AT A GLANCE

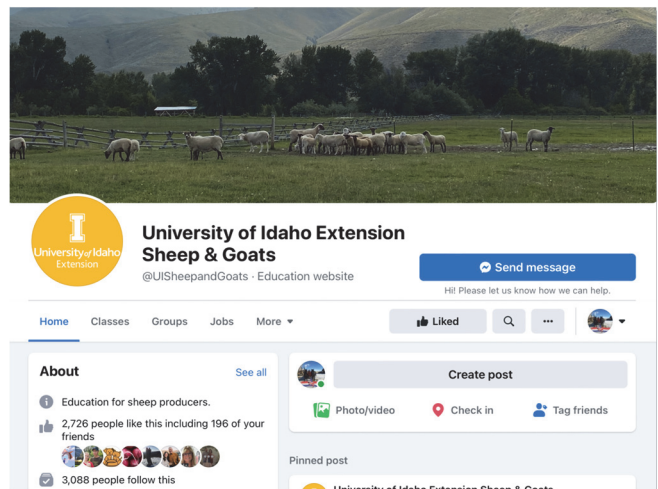
Providing highly valuable education to a diverse audience of sheep and goat owners throughout Idaho and the west.

The Situation

Over the past 10 years there has been a sizeable increase in the number of farms and ranches raising sheep and goats in Idaho and the West. Currently Idaho ranks 7th in the nation in sheep numbers, with Oregon, Utah and Wyoming ranking 9th, 5th and 4th respectively. Goat numbers in Idaho have also increased 150% from 2012 to 2017 with over 1,500 farms raising goats. As a result of this increase in small ruminant producers, many had expressed a need in education from the University of Idaho. Specifically in November 2019 at the West Central States Wool Growers annual convention, a group of Idaho sheep producers expressed an interest and a need for sheep-specific programming through UI Extension. A primary need identified for sheep and goat producers in Idaho was education across a broad spectrum of producers, which included small hobby herd producers, mid-sized herdsman and large multi-generational ranches.

Our Response

In response to this, two in-person workshops were planned to give producers the opportunity to gain more knowledge on raising sheep and goats. However, because of the Covid pandemic the in-person workshops had to be transitioned into an online format



Homepage of the UI Extension Sheep and Goats Facebook page.

which created the Sheep and Goat webinar series. While the format has changed slightly over time, the webinars are made up of one or several speakers discussing a seasonally relevant topic related to sheep and goat production.

Specialists from Idaho, Wyoming and Utah conducted needs assessments and met weekly to determine educational content for the webinar series. Much of the content assembled for the webinar series matched production calendar events (breeding, lambing, weaning) and covered management considerations that could improve efficiencies and overall profitability related to sheep and goat enterprises. The program initially was delivered weekly with one-hour webinars (2020), and then shifted to once monthly with a panel of expert

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speakers lasting up to two hours of presentations and discussion (2021). Specialists delivered curriculum for the series in addition to inviting other sheep industry experts across the country to participate in delivering new timely information. The webinars are advertised to stakeholders on the UI Extension Sheep and Goats Facebook page (3,034 followers) and to the email list serve (1,816 subscribers). Finally, all recorded webinars are uploaded and archived on the program YouTube channel.

Program Outcomes

Over the past three years 91 video resources have been created because of the webinars. The University of Idaho Extension livestock YouTube page has 1,450 subscribers with over 55,000 video views. Numerous individual contacts have also resulted from the series reaching over 40 countries and all 50 states.

As a result of the sheep and goat webinars many small ruminant producers are increasing their knowledge and improving production practices. In a post-webinar

survey completed by 586 participants, 84% demonstrated an increase in knowledge and adopted new techniques. Team members received two Extension awards for this program in 2022. The first was the University of Idaho Excellence in Extension Team Award. The second was a regional finalist award for Excellence in Livestock Production at the National Association of County Agricultural Agents 2022 Professional Improvement Conference.

The Future

In 2023 the team expanded again by inviting two sheep specialists from South Dakota State University to join the webinar planning team. The webinars are planned to continue with the addition of question and answer zoom meetings. These Q & A meetings will be held once every three months in the evening to allow sheep and goat producers access to the team of experts to ask questions about small ruminant production practices.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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