



DAVIS COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, NATURAL RESOURCES AND DESIGN

May 18, 2018

Dear Cooperators,

Let me take this opportunity to formally welcome you and your bucks to the 2018 WV Buck Test. We are excited to have so many bucks here this year and your willingness to allow us to conduct a research project using your goats. The graduate student that I have assigned to this project is Mr. Reese Tuckwiller. Reese is from Lewisburg, WV and his family runs a large cattle operation there. Reese completed his BS degree at the University of Nebraska majoring in animal science. While Reese's main focus is the Buck Test, he is also studying parasitism in beef cattle through evaluation of bulls at our bull test station. Reese is also responsible for coaching the WVU livestock judging team. I have attached his email below – he has eyes on your goats every day and is responsible to make sure feed bunks are full and that all goats are doing well. We are lucky to have a real stockman-scientist keeping an eye on your bucks!

One other person that I wanted to recognize, who is an instrumental part of our team, is Mr. Eric Nestor. Eric is a research technician in the Division of Animal and Nutritional Sciences and has been in that position for over 20 years. In that time, he has facilitated and has really been a key player in the implementation of GrowSafe technology in both ram/buck, bull and heifer tests. Eric gets reports daily from GrowSafe that indicate which animals have eaten, how much they have eaten and if any weird is going on with the instruments. Eric is invaluable to this test because he optimizes the head opening to the bunks so that only one goat can be in there at a time. This is a tedious process that requires a lot of trial and error but is always done before the start of the test!

For those of you that don't know me well, my name is Scott Bowdridge. I grew up on a small sheep farm in the desert of southern California. My family raised Rambouillet sheep and now raises a composite breed that my father and I developed to make his management system easy. I received my BS in Agriculture Science from Cal State Chico, I taught high school agriculture in central California, then ran a non-profit rare breeds farm in Maine where I became interested in parasitism in sheep. I earned a MS degree from the University of Maine studying parasitism in Katahdin hair sheep. After a short jaunt to North Carolina to meet my wife, I attended Virginia Tech to complete my training in parasite immunology. I have been at WVU for 7 years now and have been conducting cutting-edge research on immunologic mechanisms of parasite resistance in St. Croix sheep. I currently have 6 graduate students in my lab in addition to one postdoctoral fellow. The greatest part of my job is the interplay between basic science and being able to provide information to producers that originates from our research. Please keep in mind that I have no formal extension appointment and that I run this test as a side job to make sure that we are still servicing small ruminant producers. We will do our level-best to get data out to everyone as fast as possible and be as responsive as possible about problems or concerns. I have a great team of people helping me with this evaluation program and we all want to see this continue into the future!

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We have an exciting evaluation program this year. With so many participants representing the genetic base of the US Kiko breed, we can really generate some meaningful data that I hope will be useful in improved management of parasitism in your herds. In our attempt to keep everyone informed on a regular basis I have included a summary of delivery information that is an average for each farm. I caution producers to be careful with data interpretation, just because one producer has a FEC of 0, that does not necessarily mean his/her goats are resistant. Rather it could mean that their goats have been challenged yet. Conversely be cautious in interpretation of higher FEC. Bucks with higher FEC now could just mean that they have been exposed to parasitism for a greater period of time. Please consider geographic locations and temperature as environmental factors in timing of parasite egg shedding. Also keep in mind that counts done at delivery are simply what we call "strongylid" egg counts and have not been speciated, meaning that the counts could be reflective of different parasite species. During the test, goats will only be infected with *Haemonchus contortus* (Barber-pole worm). Your goats have been dewormed with Cydectin, Valbazen and Prohibit according to recommendations that can be found on the small ruminant consortium's website: www.wormx.info. Additionally, all bucks received soremouth and CDT vaccination, and had their feet trimmed. As of 5/14/18 all bucks had recorded feed removal from the bunks which is great sign and indicates that our transition is going well!

This is probably the most enthusiastic group of producers that I have had the pleasure to work with. Your love for this breed is palpable and I have a lot of respect for producer dedication to performance evaluation. When data are released please be cautious in your interpretation and development of conclusions before the test is complete. If you have any questions about any part of the test, please feel free to contact me directly and I will answer your questions to the best of my ability. I look forward to a spirited performance evaluation and would like to thank each of you for submitting bucks this year.

Sincerely,



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