

SheepBytes Ration Balancer

Why ration balancing software?

Feed cost is the highest cost in producing a lamb. Ration balancing, feed testing, good feeding systems, feed waste monitoring, body condition scoring, flock health management are all essential tools in profitable sheep operations.

Why not use paper and pencil to formulate rations like we used to?

Electronic technology is changing the shepherds' toolkit. There are growing numbers of larger, more competitively managed lamb production businesses. This trend will continue. The magic of software is that it takes a huge amount of data and analyzes it almost instantly providing information the flock manager can use in daily decisions or annual planning.

Can I purchase my subscription the old fashioned way?

Please consider purchasing your subscription using the automated credit card method, you will have access to your account in minutes versus days. Manual subscriptions may be made by sending a cheque made out to:

Alberta Lamb Producers
Agriculture Centre
97 East Lake Ramp NE
Airdrie AB T4V 0C3

Please include the email address you used to register for your SheepBytes account.

How many rations can I make?

As an individual user, you can generate unlimited rations and can store twenty-five. Commercial users enjoy the ability to generate and store multiple rations in folders with an unlimited ration capacity.

What technology do you need to run SheepBytes?

For best performance we highly recommend using a current version of Google Chrome or Mozilla Firefox. Other browsers tested suffer performance issues and are to be used at your own risk.

We recommend a screen resolution of at least 1280x1024 or you will spend a lot of time scrolling. Tip: zoom in and out by pressing CTRL + or CTRL - respectively, CTRL 0 will return to default zoom level

News Release

New online application provides leading edge technology to help produce better lambs

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AIRDRIE, Alta. September 27, 2012 – A newly launched online software application aims to help reduce the single biggest input cost for lamb producers. Over forty percent of the cost of getting a lamb to market is the cost of feed. SheepBytes is an online tool that helps adjust feeding rations not only to make them more cost effective, but also to provide optimal flock nutrition for sheep in every stage of production.

“Test users, producers, veterinarians, nutritionists, consultants, college students and staff helped assess the program to make sure it meets the needs of today’s producer,” says Margaret Cook, Executive Director of the Alberta Lamb Producers (ALP). ALP will be marketing SheepBytes as well as arranging industry training. “The lamb market is a tough one and we are working to ensure that producers have every possible opportunity to make their operations profitable and their lamb competitive.”

This new web-based program has been developed through lamb industry collaboration. A remake of an older Alberta Agriculture DOS based program used by Alberta producers since the early 1990s, SheepBytes was funded by the Alberta Livestock & Meat Agency as part of an ongoing commitment to help Alberta producers lead the way in innovation and production of high-quality products.

“Developing new electronic tools along with the skills to implement new technology has been the focus of collaborative industry projects,” says Susan Hosford, project manager and Industry Specialist with Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development. “Cloud computing technology makes the SheepBytes application accessible by lamb producers across Canada and the United States. It incorporates the 2007 National Research Council nutrient requirements for fine-tuning rations for larger, more productive ewes.”

SheepBytes users can input their own feed test results for rations suited to their flock. Another option is to use the generic ‘Feeds Library’ that includes average analyses of feeds from Eastern and Western Canada. Rations can be formulated for lambs, ewes, or rams at any and all stages of production, body weight or body condition score. SheepBytes can calculate the different ingredients in a batch of feed, yardage costs or estimate feed wasted during feeding. It can generate feed reports and feed inventories. SheepBytes also can take into account different types of water and environmental conditions. Users can input the cost of each feed in a variety of rations.

“Flock profitability isn’t all about least-cost rations, though SheepBytes can compare feeds and rations to help manage costs,” says Hosford. “A profitable flock is one where feeds and feeding are managed for optimal animal nutrition and flock performance.”

The program is made up of modules that can be accessed via desktop, cell phone or mobile applications so the information can be put to use in the field. Feed company nutritionists or veterinarians can even be given access to consult on any ration or feed problems that producers may have.

“Through government, industry and ALMA support we’ve been able to keep the cost of SheepBytes very low for end users,” says Cook. “This technology can be used to help improve the profitability of all operations, from the very small to the largest flocks. To improve flock nutritional expertise and to provide training on SheepBytes, courses will be available for Alberta producers, feed companies and private animal nutritionists.”

The program is available by on-line subscription at www.sheepbytes.ca. Individual subscribers will pay an initial \$100 fee for the first year with a \$50 annual renewal. Commercial subscribers will pay a \$300 annual fee. Commercial subscribers have added tools to help manage multiple clients and numbers of rations.

“Market fluctuations, increasing foreign competition and increasing costs are just part of the challenges that producers face today,” says Cook. “Alberta producers continue to lead the way in using technology to gain every business advantage possible and to raise the best product we can. SheepBytes is yet another tool to support them in doing that.”

For more information, to try out the free demonstration, or to sign up for a subscription to the program, visit: www.sheepbytes.ca.

Alberta Lamb Producers is a producer directed and funded organization that is a dynamic partner in building a sustainable, thriving industry for sheep producers. ALP provides every producer with a voice and ongoing representation to government and other industry members. ALP is responsible for a variety of programs all aimed at supporting producers and ensuring the continued growth and profitability of the industry.