**Production Advances on Puget Sound: LAI Experiences at Glendale Shepherd**

Lynn Swanson and her family live on Whidbey Island in Washington state, where they currently milk 90 dairy ewes and craft sheep’s milk cheeses that they sell at farmers’ markets as Glendale Shepherd. In 2017, Lynn hired technician Martin Dally to perform LAI – laparascopic artificial insemination – on 12 of her ewes, using Lacaune semen newly imported from France.

Lynn has been “very impressed” with the production of her F1 Lacaune yearlings and agreed to share her LAI experience as a way to encourage others to try it if it’s right for them.

In Lynn’s first group of 12 bred by Dally in 2017, 10 ewes lambed – a highly successful conception rate for LAI. There were more singles than normal for her flock, and she had a total of 16 lambs born, evenly split between ewes and rams.

The following year, 2018, after slightly adjusting the hormones administered to the ewes, Lynn had a more usual result of twins and triplets. Of 10 bred ewe lambs, 6 carried to term; of 10 bred mature ewes, 6 also carried to term. Those 12 ewes who had lambs gave birth to 23 live lambs – 11 ewes and 12 rams. (Three lambs from a ewe lamb carrying quintuplets were not born alive.)

Lynn’s flock is a mix of breeds that feed on alfalfa-grass hay from the Puget Sound area; she sources a 17% grain mix from a local feed mill that is primarily barley and wheat with some flax seed and alfalfa meal.

“My ewes were completely dried off both times when they were inseminated, and they were pretty fat and happy,” Lynn says. “I was careful not to move them around too much, their feed remained the same, and I followed the schedule as to when to give injections and when to pull feed and water.”

In 2017 she chose her highest-production ewes to be bred – all 2- and 3-year-olds. The following year, the 10 mature ewes she chose were older, between 3 and 5 years old. Lynn says two of the ewes who did not carry to term that year were 5-year-olds; “I think I’ll stay away from ewes over 3 years old next time,” she says.

In 2018, the ewe lambs that were bred laparascopically were between 120 and 130 lbs. and between 9 and 10 months old.

Lynn has noticed that milk production in her first F1 Lacaune-X yearlings is impressively high – “equal with some of my older ewes; the F1’s looking like 2- or 3-year-olds.” And she is noticing that over the course of their first lactation, the F1’s are not dropping off in production as fast as her non-Lacaune yearlings.

This year Lynn doesn’t plan on artificially inseminating any of her ewes. She wants to see how the current groups fare and wants to focus on her recent decision to start breeding throughout the year for a year-round milk supply. (She was inspired by Tommy LaVoie’s presentation on his system of year-round breeding, management, and milking, which she saw at DSANA’s 2017 Dairy Sheep Symposium in Quebec.) “I’m so tired of working with frozen milk…” she says.

Now a board member of DSANA, Lynn also intends to become part of DSANA’s Production Improvement Program (PIP) so she can enter her flock records into an analytical database that will make it possible for her to make even more informed breeding and culling decisions.

*-Interview by Carrie Wasser*