

# Getting Started in Sheep Production

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# Type of Operation

- Economic vs. Lifestyle Goals?

## Examples:

- Add sheep to existing enterprise (feed and facilities)
- Want to produce a few freezer lambs
- Want a 4-H or FFA project for children
- Want to manage weeds on small acreage





Finished our Mar./Apr. lambing, 282 ewes, 764 lambs alive and tagged, 2.66/lambs per ewe, 11% artificially raised. All in 19 days with a team of 5 on shifts.



# Targeted Grazing Business

Mr. and Mrs. Riley Wilson- Wooly Weed Eaters

- Temporary Electro-net Fence
- Sole Owner Operators (77 yr wise)

Cash Flow

- 1100 Yearling Ewes
- \$0.16/day- Producers Pay
- \$5.00/head month- Landowners Pay

# Targeted Grazing Opportunities

## Cash Flow:

$$1,100 \text{ hd} \times \$0.16 \times 148 \text{ days} = \$26,048$$

$$1,100 \text{ hd} \times \$5.00/\text{hd}/\text{mo} \times 5 \text{ mo} = \underline{\$27,500}$$

**\$53,548**

Category	Wyoming	Utah	Idaho	USA
Geography	97,818 sq. mi <sup>2</sup> .	84,899 sq. mi <sup>2</sup> .	83, 642 sq. mi <sup>2</sup> .	9,797,000 sq. mi <sup>2</sup> .
Sheep Inventory (rank)	367,702 (4 <sup>th</sup> , U.S.)	300,749 (5 <sup>th</sup> , U.S.)	248,289 (6 <sup>th</sup> , U.S.)	5,391,252
<sup>1</sup> Sheep Operations	859	1,898	1,447	101,387
<b>1 to 99 hd (%)</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>93%</b>
100 to 299 hd (%)	11%	5%	3%	4.6%
300 to 999 hd (%)	8%	3%	1%	1.4%
1000 to 10,000 hd (%)	11%	4%	3%	0.01%

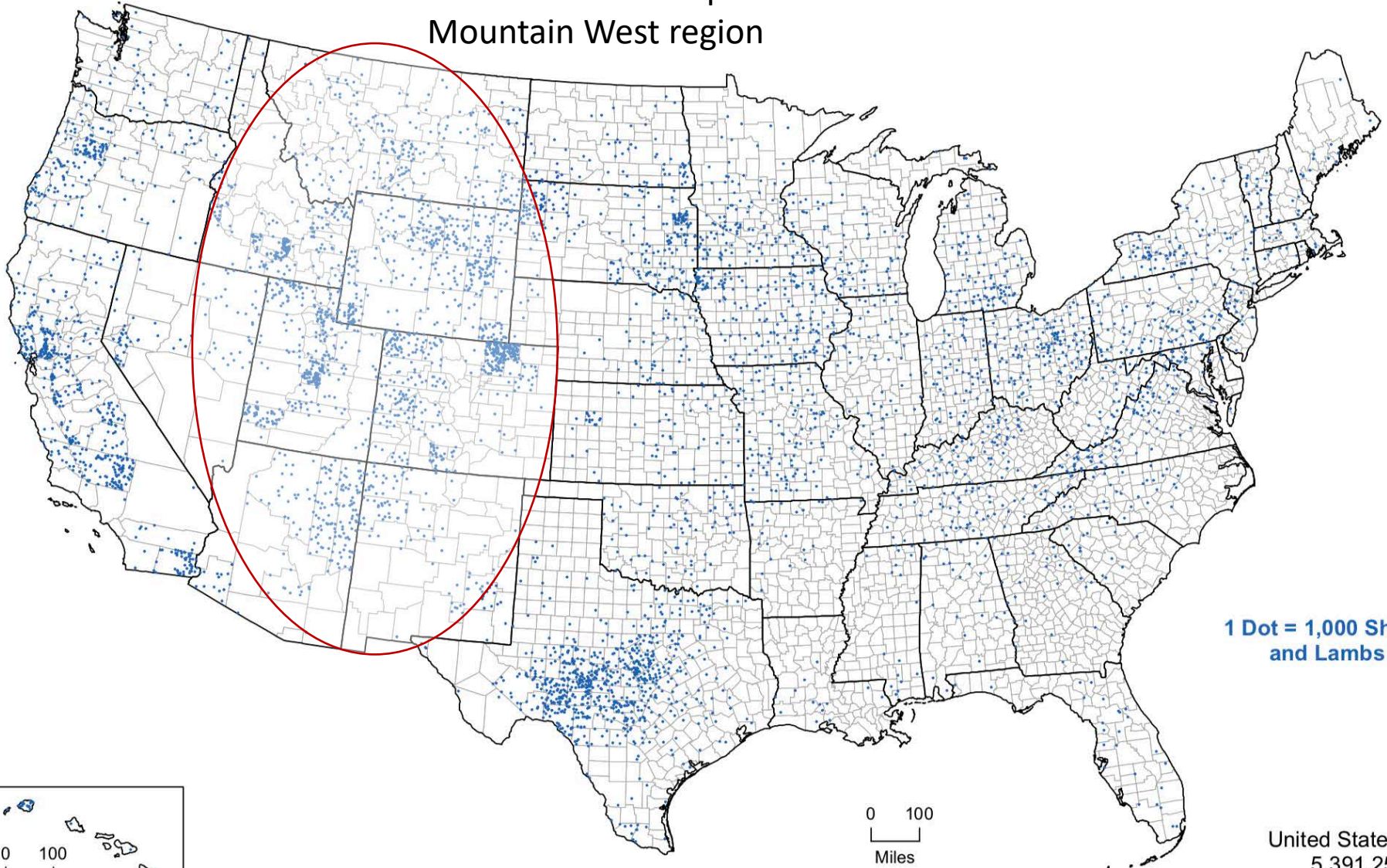
41% of all sheep produced in U.S. come from flocks >1000 hd  
54% of all sheep produced in U.S. come from flocks 300 to >5000 hd

<sup>1</sup>USDA-NASS, 2012; <sup>2</sup>USDA-NASS, 2017





~ 40% of lamb crop comes from the Mountain West region



1 Dot = 1,000 Sheep and Lambs

United States Total  
5,391,252

17-M212  
U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service



# Water

- Water intake affected by:
  - Type of feed consumed
  - Environmental Temperature
    - 24 to 66 °F (Thermonuetral Range)
  - Stage of Production
  - Rain, Dew, Snowfall
- Water Requirement Equation (NRC 2007)
  - Maintenance  $107-146 \text{ mL (g)/kg BW}^{0.75}$
  - Pregnancy  $215-290 \text{ (g)/kg BW}^{0.75}$
  - Lactation  $359 \text{ mL (g)/kg BW}^{0.75}$
- Rule of thumb=1.0 to 1.5 gallons of water (8 to 12 pounds) for every 4 lb. DM consumed

Sheep Type	Consumption gallons per head per day
<b>Feeder Lambs</b> (50 to 100 lb., .25 lb./day)	<b>.74 to 1.80</b>
<b>Ewe Maintenance</b> (154 to 200 lb.)	<b>.87 to 1.1</b>
<b>Ewe Gestation</b> (154 to 200 lb.)	<b>1.5 to 1.85</b>
<b>Ewe Lactation</b> (154 to 200 lb.)	<b>2.27 to 2.77</b>

Adapted by W. Stewart from equations from NRC, 2007





# How Much Hay and Pasture?

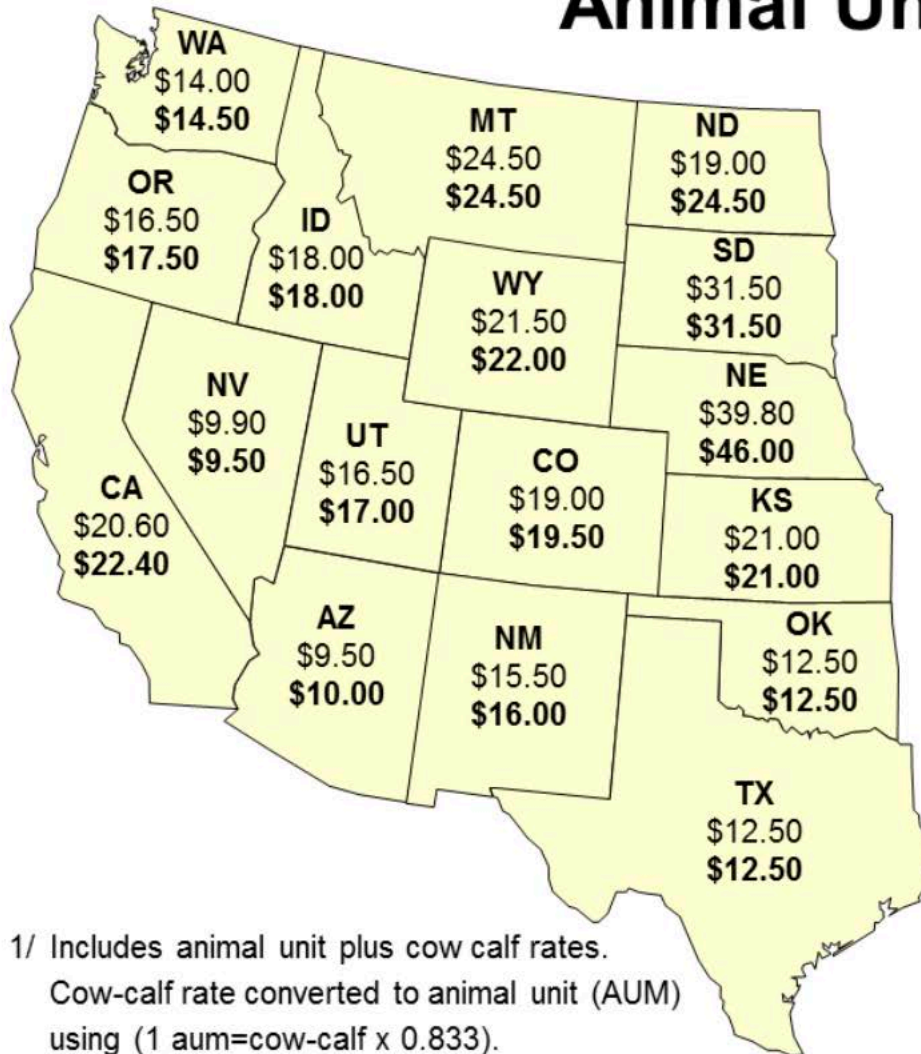
**Figure 1.** How much a 150 pound ewe producing twins will consume at different stages of production

Stage of Production (number of weeks)	% of Body Weight sheep will consume DM Basis	Pounds of Hay per day (as fed + 15% wastage)	Cost of Hay per ewe per day
Maintenance (13 weeks)	1.7 %	3.1 lbs	\$0.31
Early Pregnancy (15 weeks)	2.0 %	3.8 lbs	\$0.38
Late Pregnancy (6 weeks)	2.4 %	4.6 lbs	\$0.46
Lactation (14 weeks)	3.0 %	5.75 lbs	\$0.57

\$180/ ton = \$0.10/ pound of hay

5 lb dry matter of pasture – 10 lb as fed on pasture

# 17 State Grazing Fees Animal Unit <sup>1/</sup>



State Key	2017	2018
17 States	\$20.20	\$21.30
16 States (Excludes TX)	\$22.60	\$24.00
11 States: AZ, CA, CO, ID, MT, NV, NM, OR, UT, WA, WY	\$19.30	\$19.70
9 States: CO, KS, NE, NM, ND, OK, SD, TX, WY	\$20.50	\$21.70

1/ Includes animal unit plus cow calf rates.

Cow-calf rate converted to animal unit (AUM)  
using (1 aum=cow-calf x 0.833).

(S) Insufficient number of reports to establish an estimate

5 sheep per 1 AUM

22.50/AUM ÷ 5 sheep = \$4.50/month

NASS, USDA January 2019



# Relative Cost per/ewe

- Grazed forages are generally 1/3 of the cost of harvested feed.
- Grazing Feed Costs @ \$23 AUM = **\$4.60/month**
- Hay Feed Costs @ \$150/ton = **\$11.25/month**

Scenario:

What if you extend your grazing season 30 days?

That's **\$6.65** saved per head!

For 1000 ewe flock **\$6,650** in savings!

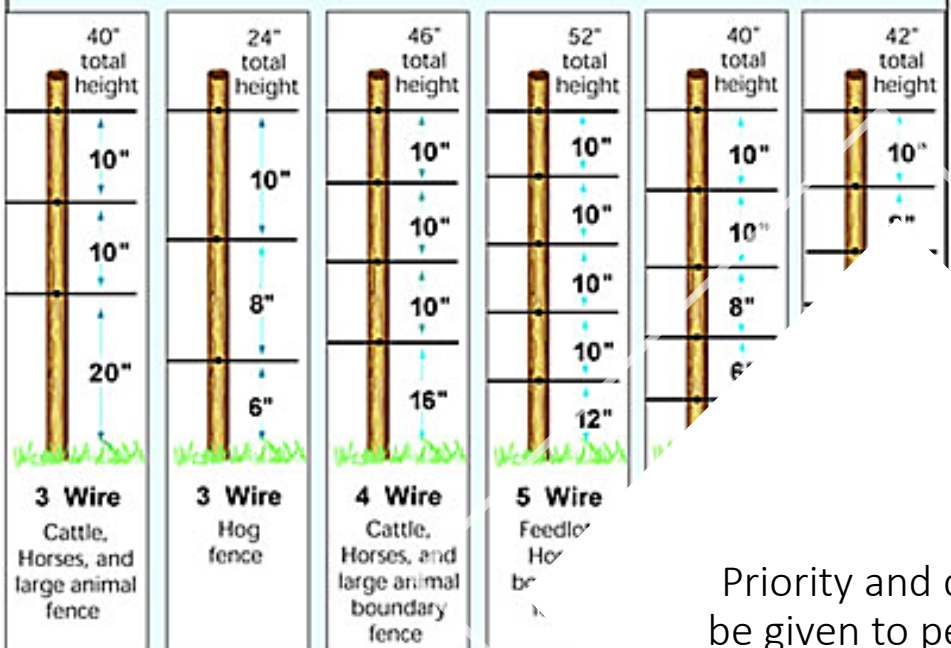




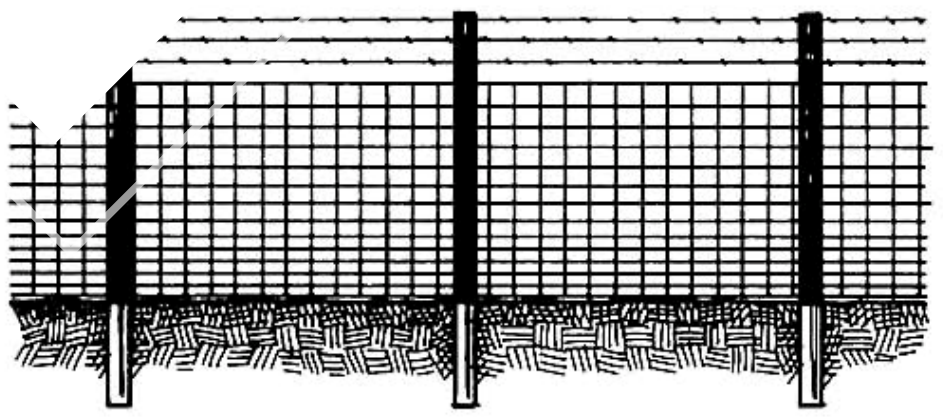
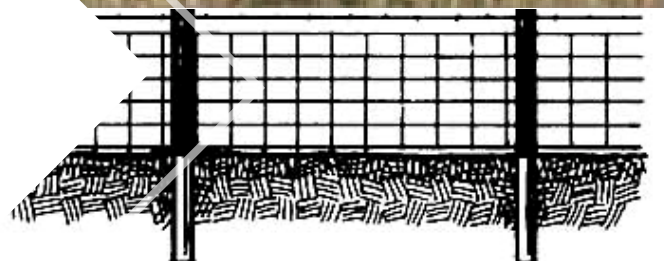
# Fencing Options



# Electric Fence Wire Height and Spacing



Priority and quality should be given to perimeter fence to keep sheep in and predators out



## Advantages of Temporary Fence

- Portable for available grazing
- Electric fence is successful at deterring predators
- Black and white braid on fence highly visible for sheep and predators

## Specs and Costs:

- \$125
- 164 ft by 35" tall
- PVC Post every 12.5 ft

<https://www.premier1supplies.com/p/electronet-9-35-12-electric-netting>



# Sheep Breeding Considerations

Age at Puberty	4-14 months Avg. 7 months
Length of Estrous Cycle	13-19 days Avg. 17 days
Duration of Estrus "Heat"	18 – 48 hours Avg. 30 hours
Ovulation	Near the end of estrus (24-30 hours)
Gestation	143 – 152 days Avg. 147 days

