

Precision Flock Management

Flock Snapshot



Precision Flock Management (PFM) is a systematic management approach for getting the most from your flock. RFID technology and management tools can be used to enhance flock production and financial performance.

Your Technological Advantage - Flock Snapshot

What is the Flock Snapshot (FSS)?

Being able to collect, retrieve and analyze flock data to manage a flock is a challenge. As the Alberta Lamb Traceability Pilot (LTP) project worked with participating lamb producers it became obvious there were reasons why determining flock financial performance was difficult. Financial record-keeping is a challenge for many small and mid-size businesses. Standard farm financial records rarely separate the sheep enterprise data from overall farm data. To fine-tune flock management you need sheep specific data. Collecting or analyzing data is difficult so 'office work' tends to go to the bottom of the 'to do' list.


The Flock Snapshot was developed to assist producers to analyze flock performance. The FSS pulls together financial and production data to provide a "snapshot in time" of flock performance. This view of flock performance comes from EBLEX in the United Kingdom. Under the LTP project the Flock Snapshot was adapted to fit lamb production in Alberta and Canada.

Lamb producers need good financial records. There are a number of standard accounting programs. Agriculture-specific programs are being used by more and more farm business managers. Good financial software allows you to focus on the sheep part of your operation.

How does the Flock Snapshot work?

Producers enter data from flock financial and production records into the Flock Snapshot. The FSS does all the math calculations. It takes into account key variables that allow you to compare your own flock's performance from year to year; to set targets for your own flock and then to monitor whether or not the targets were achieved; and finally to compare your flock's performance to industry averages or benchmarks. Being able to compare your own flock's performance to industry benchmarks helps you assess how your operation compares to other similar operations.

The Flock Snapshot also can help do additional calculations. Being able to do 'what if' scenarios helps you evaluate the impact of making a change (like changing feed components based on SheepBytes ration balancing) to your operation. Different financial figures can be entered (lower feed costs per marketed lamb) so you can assess the effect of the change on your cost of production. And you can enter different production rates that can impact flock income (higher lambing percentage or more lambs to market). The 'what if' feature of the Flock Snapshot makes calculations so you can assess potential changes to see the impact on your business' bottom line.

Flock Snapshot		2011	
			
Owner Name(s):	Steve & Robin Tapp		
Business Name:	SET Sheep Ranch		
Operation Type:	Commercial medium/large		
Farm Summary			
Average number of ewes:	488		
Lambs sold:	821		
Marketable lambs:	691		
Size of operation (acres):	291		
Operation growth:	34%		
Performance Evaluation			
Performance	Your Farm	Target	Alerts
Lambing rate	152%	139%	
Lamb mortality	7.23%	6.07%	
Marketable Lambs	100%	102%	
Income			
Income per lamb sold	\$172.10	\$168.88	
Average price per lamb sold	\$190.20	\$189.53	
Income of Production - lamb sold	\$135.14	\$131.27	
Cost of Production (COP)			
Feed per lamb sold	\$69.45	\$69.34	
Labour per lamb sold	\$39.42	\$42.55	
All other costs per lamb sold	\$74.98	\$61.76	
Cost of Production per lamb sold	\$284.86	\$179.66	
Profitability			
Profit per lamb sold	\$8.24	\$11.72	
ROI	0.00%	2.90%	
Labour return / hr	\$14.89	\$25.48	
Financial return	\$22,297	\$36,101	

For more information on the Flock Snapshot:

www.ablamb.ca (producer management resources) • www.agriculture.alberta.ca (information/livestock/sheep&goats)

How does the Flock Snapshot help assess flock productivity and financial performance?

Flock and individual ewe productivity has a huge impact on flock Cost of Production (COP) and financial performance. Ewe productivity is based primarily on: conception rate, ewe prolificacy and lamb survival rate. Generally, as ewe productivity goes up COP goes down as there are more lambs to cover the fixed costs of the operation.

The sample projections in the table below show how increasing productivity can affect costs per marketable lamb. The costs are based on LTP project data for average Alberta sheep operations.

Effect of Productivity on Cost of Production per Marketable Lamb

	Feed / year	Labour / year	Other costs / year	Cost of Production
Ewe (single)	\$60 X 1 ewe	\$30 X 1 ewe	\$60 X 1 ewe	\$150
Lamb cost	\$35 X 1 lamb	\$30 X 1 lamb*	\$30 X 1 lamb	\$95
Total	\$95	\$60	\$90	\$245
Cost/lamb	\$95.00	\$60.00	\$90.00	\$245.00/lamb
Ewe (twins)	\$65 X 1 ewe	\$30 X 1 ewe	\$60 X 1 ewe	\$155
Lamb cost	\$35 X 2 lambs	\$30 X 2 lambs*	\$30 X 2 lambs	\$190
Total	\$135	\$90	\$120	\$345
Cost/lamb	\$67.50	\$45.00	\$60.00	\$172.50/lamb
Ewe (triplet)	\$70 X 1 ewe	\$30 X 1 ewe	\$60 X 1 ewe	\$160
Lamb cost	\$35 X 3 lambs	\$30 X 3 lambs*	\$30 X 3 lambs	\$285
Orphan cost	\$42 X 1 lamb	\$15 X 1 lamb	\$10 X 1 lamb	\$67
Total	\$217	\$135	\$160	\$512
Cost/lamb	\$72.33	\$45.00	\$53.33	\$170.66/lamb

*Labour includes time spent on lambs including lambing

Key production cost areas - use the Flock Snapshot to see the impact of improving productivity:

- Feed (including grazing) is the largest cost of production item averaging 39% of costs.
- Labour is the second biggest cost to lamb operations averaging 27% of costs.
- All other costs include depreciation, supplies, fuel, utilities, veterinary costs, etc., and account for an average of 35% of costs to produce every marketable lamb.

Traditional shepherding is changing. Alberta producers are rapidly adopting advancements in technology: Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tags, tag readers, with compatible flock management software, electronic scales and handling equipment; and new business tools like the Flock Snapshot and SheepBytes ration balancer. Adopting new flock management tools is helping lamb producers improve their flock businesses.

Content: Sue Hosford, Alberta Agriculture & Rural Development
 Tony Stolz, Stolz-Williams Consulting Ltd.
 Margaret Cook, Alberta Lamb Producers

Photos: THagedorn, Alberta Agriculture & Rural Development

Your partners in building better lambs

