DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

Dalhousie Agricultural Campus Report
Purebred Sheep Breeders Association of Nova Scotia

November 5, 2020

Greetings:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a report on behalf of the Dalhousie Agricultural Campus.

- Obviously managing the challenges presented by COVID-19 has been the focal point of the last 8 months, March 18th 2020 started a journey like no other we have ever experienced. As the broader campus community moved to work from home, we clearly did not have that option due to our on-site animal care commitments. Our initial approach was to scale back our staff to a minimum to maintain operations but minimize crossover of personnel. Over the next few months as protocols, procedures and PPE were put in place we were able to return to regular staffing, schedule and operations by July 2nd. We continue to maintain limited access to the Farm in the interest of the health and safety of our staff and animals. Despite the challenges of COVID-19, we have been able to maintain a full complement of student employees who have provided significant support and depth to our animal care team and had a successful growing season and hit all of our expected production targets.

In response to the COVID-19, Dalhousie made the decision to move to online learning for both the Fall and Winter semester. You can appreciate that this has been a monumental shift for both students and faculty. We are disappointed to not have students on campus as they certainly bring an energy to campus and we know they are missing out on the experiential learning and social aspect of the university experience, but it is in the best interest of health and safety.

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Despite the COVID19 challenges we have been able to make some progress in several areas.

- Student enrolment has remained steady despite the initial concerns that online learning may not be a dealbreaker for some students.
- Although most research activity has been curtailed we have been able to support some research activity at various units across the Farm.
- The RAC Feed Centre became operational in July. This building replaces the feed centre that was lost to a fire in 2015. In addition to a very modern computerized feed system this building also includes an interpretive area that will feature interactive and interchangeable displays designed to connect and engage the broader community on all aspects of agriculture in Atlantic Canada highlighting our role in addressing global challenges such as food security and climate change.
- We welcome Dr. Ghadar Manafiazar who has been hired for the Dairy Systems faculty position. Dr. Manafiazar is currently working from Alberta and will relocate to Nova Scotia in early 2021. My understanding is Dr. Manafiazar also has some sheep experience so we look forward to working with him on new research and teaching opportunities.
- Student Managed Farm is still in the development stages and has obviously been deferred due to COVID-19. SMF will be a diploma program intended to offer students the opportunity to interact with the Farm staff and make real life recommendations and decisions on all aspects of dairy production, ie animal care and husbandry, breeding and genomics, nutrition, calf and heifer rearing, data management and interpretation, feed storage and quality etc. Although the initial focus will be on dairy, it is hoped that SMF can equip students with skills and resources that can effectively be applied to other species.
- Cox Institute rebuild is nearing substantial completion after the east end suffered extensive fire and water damage in 2017. Although most faculty and staff are currently working from home, offices, classrooms, labs and support services will be set up in the coming months so we are ready to welcome students to this new modern, academic space when in person classes resume.

  As always, thank you for your interest and support for the Dal AC Farm. We hope you are all well and we look forward to interacting with you in person again when it is safe to do so.

  Kind regards,

  Jean Lynds
  Operations Manager
  Dal AC Farm