Is the meat goat enterprise profitable and sustainable?

Producers have found that there are many budget software programs available to keep track of their expenses and income stream. However, these budgets are not useful if the producers don’t have the proper type of information to put into the budget program.

What was done and why?

Iowa meat goats sell for higher prices per pound than other typical livestock enterprises. However, in most cases, there is not enough income generated to cover the cost of production or yield a profit. One of the problems appears to be the lack of accurate, substantive record-keeping that would allow producers to make adjustments to improve the profitability of their operations.

Project objectives:

- Develop a Meat Goat Enterprise Analysis Program for producers to track, analyze and evaluate expenses, income and profitability for the tax year. This program will be used by five to 10 meat goat producers for one year and analyzed for enterprise outcomes.
- Develop relevant educational information for a one-stop location at the Agricultural Marketing Resource Center (AgMRC).
- In year 2, the core group of producers will be evaluated to see if they have made necessary changes to enhance the profitability of their operations.
- Five to 10 meat goat operations will start and complete the yearly Enterprise Analysis program.
- Develop a financial tool to budget for future expansion and purchases.
- Provide support in creating one or two area education opportunities that address challenges of meat goat production.

What did we learn?

In general, meat goat producers have difficulty finding the time and effort to keep accurate records. During the last few years feed costs have doubled while kid market price has remained stable. This seriously reduces the profitability and long-term sustainability of meat goat production. The small number of goats on inventory per farm makes it easy to cease production.

Significant improvements are needed in breeding herd management and efficiency to increase litter size. This will spread high input costs over more kids and increase total market income. However, this also would require producers to maintain proper body condition for each stage of production, improve internal and external parasite control, and regulate feed costs for all phases of production.