How I do Things at Gansvoort Farm

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Outline

• Overview of the farm
• The seasons
• Parasite management
Goals of the farm:

• Work with animals, produce food, be outside
• Improve the ecosystem through management
  – Biodiversity
  – Soil health (organic matter, microbes)
  – Water infiltration, reduce/eliminate erosion
• Do better than break even!
Numbers

• About 50 ewes, 100% grassfed, producing 100 lambs per year
  – Finn x Dorset x East Friesian x Icelandic
• Lambing on pasture in late April/early May
• 86 acres total, 60 pasture and grazed orchards
• Included a small herd of beef cows until 2012
• Direct market custom cut lamb; sell all wool, tanned pelts, and some whole carcasses to shop in NYC
• Very little permanent fencing

• Water lines above ground

• Shade available in all paddocks
Importance of Management-Intensive Grazing (MiG)

- Move animals every 24 to 48 hours
- Leave enough residual (4-5 inches)
- Try to keep stock density high (~15,000 lb/acre)
  - Spring/summer = 0.6 acres, 2 days
  - Late summer/fall = 0.6 acres, 1 day
- Results in:
  - Higher pasture productivity, sward composition
  - Better weight gain
  - Increase in soil organic matter (carbon)
Spring

- Start rotating in April to flush for lambing
- Lamb on pasture unassisted
- Each morning check new lambs, do ear tags
- Check flock ~3 times a day
- Paddocks large, 48 hour moves
Summer

• Lambs growing, move every 24-36 hrs
• Leave enough residual to keep soil surface cool
• I clip all paddocks after first rotation (ideally!)
• Watch for signs of parasites (slow moving, bottle jaw, diarrhea), worm as needed
Summer 2012 – Experiment with tall grazing
Fall

• Wean ram lambs in mid August, set stock
• All rams sold first, ewe lambs stay with moms until rams gone
• Ewes continue to rotate, high stocking density, daily moves
• Expect to graze until breeding begins, early/mid Dec
Post-grazing residual ➔
Breeding/Winter

- Two rams, two groups
- Time breeding for max fertility, lambing after 1 month of grazing
- Dense evergreen trees for shelter
- Walk the flock 1-2 times/week
- First-cut round bales
Parasite Management

Try to do it all right....

- Multi-species grazing
- Condensed tannins in pasture
- Select for parasite resistance/tolerance
- Rotational grazing
- Parasites still a problem!
Goals for future at Gansvoort

• Fence all fields with woven wire
• Reduce winter hay bills
• Improve sward density
• Plant more trees
Thank you!
http://www.gansvoortfarm.com