

Can YOU Afford to Eradicate OPP?

A better question might be: Can you afford *NOT* to test, and then eradicate OPP if you find the virus lurking in your flock?

You may be familiar with the figures in the box below, provided by the Schwebachs from South Dakota. These ewes are not pampered! Tom and Marilyn lamb the entire flock within a few short weeks. This adds stress due to crowded barns, and yet their ewes sail through for the most part without a hitch.

Note especially their comments between the red stars. OPP has been around for so long that many now consider a ewe past her prime and ready to ship by 5 or 6. But if healthy and given the chance, ewes can produce until 9 or 10, leaving many more ewe lambs to market or available for expansion.

Going into the trial we were fairly confident that this new strategy for getting rid of OPP was going to work, but there were no guarantees. On the preceding pages you heard from those producers who had the courage to stick with the project.

It wasn't all fun and games. There were numerous challenges, setbacks and some heartbreak along the way — but all say they'd do it again. Granted, those who were enrolled in the trial enjoyed the benefit of assistance from Board of Animal Health and USDA staff, as well as matching funds for tests.

But what would this cost *YOU*? Excluding sample collection, which you can learn to do on your own, we've prepared some rough guesstimates based on data from all four trial flocks

Below is what each producer would have paid per test-neg ewe *without* the \$\$\$ advantages of the Trial.

— Costs below based on: supplies at \$1 per test + VDL accession fee of \$10 per lot submitted + \$6 per test —
(Important to note that totals below do not include veterinarian fees to collect samples.)

30 ewes (96% infected at start; 3 whole-flock neg tests by end of trial) total cost would have been \$1,270 = **\$42 per ewe
400 ewes (64% infected at start; all positives will be gone by mid-2018) total cost would have been \$11,634 = \$29 per ewe
110 ewes (61% infected at start; 2 whole-flock neg tests by end of trial) total cost would have been \$2,709 = \$25 per ewe
70 ewes (21% infected at start; 1 whole-flock neg test by end of trial) total cost would have been \$4,340 = *\$62 per ewe

*The highest cost per ewe reflects management issues early in the trial; this was also the flock hit with copper toxicity. **Economy of scale also factors in: per animal accession fees of smallest flock 6x that of the largest.

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF OPP: Provided by South Dakota producers Tom and Marilyn Schwebach

— Comparison below illustrates how our flock's health improved as a result of eradicating the OPP virus. —

Our experience with 85% infected OPP flock:

- 500 ewes with 140% lamb crop
- Average 150–180 bottle lambs year after year
- Lambs lethargic due to lack of colostrum
- Slow rate of gain due to lack of milk
- Numerous down ewes
- ★ **Ewes dead or extremely thin by age 5**

Our experience with OPP-tested negative flock:

- 800 ewes with ≥185% lamb crop
- Average 20–30 bottle lambs (last year only 14)
- Lambs vigorous, up and nursing on their own
- Healthy good growing lambs
- An old ewe heavy with multiples may go down
- ★ **Ewes culled at age 10 (most in good condition)**

Noting the number of bottle lambs experienced with the two flocks puts the difference into perspective. In our operation, we use one bag of milk replacer per bottle lamb, at a cost this year of \$42.45 per bag.

OPP-Infected Flock:

- 500 ewes x 140% = 700 lambs; of these 700 lambs 150 were bottle lambs, or 21% of total lambs
- 150 bottle lambs x \$42.45 per bag of milk replacer = \$6,367.50
- \$6,367.50/500 ewes = **cost of \$12.74/ewe**

NOTE: This flock eradicated OPP years ago so was not in the Trial; data provided for educational purposes.

OPP-Tested Negative Flock:

- 800 ewes x 185% = 1,480 lambs; of these 1,480 lambs 30 were bottle lambs, or 2% of total lambs
- 30 bottle lambs x \$42.45 per bag of milk replacer = \$1,273.50
- \$1,273.50/800 ewes = **cost of \$1.59/ewe**

Additional cost of OPP-positive versus OPP-negative ewe: \$12.74 – \$1.59 = \$11.15/ewe

We ask the question, “Is the cost of \$11.15 per ewe, plus the extra labor and equipment needed to handle bottle lambs, slower growing lambs in the feedlot, and the cost of retaining and/or purchasing additional replacement ewes an economic factor in your sheep operation?”