

## Sonora Ram Test Starts September 14-15

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SONORA - The annual ram performance test conducted at the Texas AgriLife Research Station at Sonora will begin Sept. 14-15 with delivery of rams to the station.

The station is located on State Highway 55 between Sonora and Rocksprings.

An annual field day and sale highlighting the end of the test is scheduled for March 19, 2010.

Dr. Dan Waldron, San Angelo-based AgriLife Research geneticist and the program's coordinator, said the performance test has become a tradition that Rambouillet sheep breeders have long used as a tool to improve their flocks.

"Since its start in 1948, the Sonora Ram Performance Test's main goal has been to identify and document superior rams," Waldron said. "Each year the rams are evaluated and their findings are documented on several key economic traits so producers can keep their own rams or buy from others to improve their flocks."

Test animals may be registered or non-registered. Only registered rams born between Oct. 1, 2008 and April 30, 2009 will be eligible for the American Rambouillet Sheep Breeders' Association Registry of Merit program.

Cooperators wishing to enter more than 20 animals are asked to give Waldron advance notice.

Animals should be lambs at the start of the test. Those showing yearling teeth will not be accepted.

Complete animal information - including sire, type of birth, age of dam and birth date - is required by the first weigh day. Animals without this information will be considered commercial rams.

Rams also should be individually identified by ear tag or tattoo, and tagged with the mandated scrapie tag. They should have at least one-half inch of wool at delivery and will be treated against internal parasites and vaccinated against enterotoxemia immediately after arrival.

Waldron recommends test animals be taught to eat from a feed trough before delivery.

A deposit of \$350 per ram is due upon arrival. Any unused funds will be returned when the test is over.

Rams will be shorn before going on the test on Sept. 29. The initial weigh-day is set for Sept. 30. Other weigh-days are Nov.18 and Jan. 6, 2010, with the final weigh-day on Feb.17. The final shearing is set for Feb. 18.

Waldron said a pasture-based ram performance test is being planned by some cooperating breeders to complement the Sonora test. This will allow breeders to obtain performance information on a larger number of rams.

For more information on the Sonora ram test or the pasture-based test, contact Waldron, Dr. Frank Craddock or Dr. Chris Lupton at 325-653-4576, or call Dr. Charles "Butch" Taylor at 325-387-3168. The test program's Web site is: <http://sanangelo.tamu.edu/genetics/ramtest.htm> .

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