

MENTOR EVENT

Event KY Ag Vet Program

(Please use separate form for each event and specify which event took place)

Date 7/31/23

Total money spent for event \$2,496.50

Mentor money spent for event \$1000

Approximately how many producers, consumers or registrants were involved?

In 2023, as part of the KY Ag Vet program, KSWPA continued to work with the Kentucky Center for Ag Rural Development to create a mentor/mentee program for active military personnel getting ready to retire or recent retirees interested in small ruminant production. In 2022 and 2023, both mentors and mentees received education on basic small ruminant production. Because the education needed to be near the military base, an instructor was hired to help plan and conduct the education opportunities.

All mentors received training online in 2022, but received supplemental information and resources in 2023. Goal of the education is to provide an overview of hot topics within small ruminant production, as well as tips on developing and maintaining mentor/mentee relationships.

In order to reach active and recently retired veterans, education was offered online throughout the year, and in person near the Fort Campbell military base. Mentees had access to the online SRPS Course offered by the Kentucky Sheep and Goat Development Office. After watching education pieces, mentees would connect with a mentor to get hands on farm experience.

As mentioned, the contracted instructor managed all the education pieces, as well as mentor/mentee connections, and planned in person hands on experiences.

Most recent numbers show that **81** active or retired military personnel have engaged in the KY Ag Vet program. Not all of the participants are solely doing small ruminants as they are also interested in a variety of possible business ventures. However, there have been many just specific small ruminant folks who have come through the program. The most successful stories thus far are the interactions with retired veterans who are getting ready to purchase land and want to produce small ruminants.

What was accomplished at this event to further Mentor?

When association members were approached about being mentors to veterans, we filled our allotted mentor spaces within 2 weeks. All the mentors were very excited to have the chance to help military personnel enter into small ruminants.

The veterans who acquired a mentor are still in contact with the mentor. The plan is to continue the relationship as long as necessary to get the veterans into the business.

We feel this program has been very successful thus far as education opportunities have been well received and long-term relationships have been developed. Most mentors are also offering the veterans reduced priced breeding stock to help them get started.

What perception did a participant walk away with?

Thus far, all mentors and mentees have provided positive feedback to the program. One problem we had early on was getting the mentor/mentee placements connected fast enough. Mentors were ready to start, but mentees had not entered the program yet. Also, some mentors have not received a placement yet due to location difficulties. However, these mentors were still able to assist in answering questions during education programs.

Currently, the training program is due to end August 2023, however, we are working with the Kentucky Center for Rural Development to extend the program to August 2024.