

MENTOR EVENT

Event KY Ag Vet Program

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

Date 8/8/22

Total money spent for event \$3,116

Mentor money spent for event \$1000

Approximately how many producers, consumers or registrants were involved?

As part of the KY Ag Vet program, KSWPA has worked 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. 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.

Education was offered online and in person using resources created for SRPS and by the contracted instructor. Goal of the education was to provide an overview of hot topics within small ruminant production.

Mentees were then educated online and in person. 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, 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, or one person already has land and is in the process of securing more so that he can have 100 sheep.

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.

We plan to continue this program into the 2023 year with a completion date of July 1st. This will give us time to determine the next phase of the program.