



2024 University of Florida Ram Test & Sale

Welcome

We are very excited to initiate this unique program and to work with producers to quantify the desirable qualities of their rams. We hope that this program will provide value to your operation. The primary goal of this test is to help identify superior rams who can perform in the harsh Florida summer climate. This performance test is open to producers nationwide, with requirements specifically outlined in our **rules and eligibility section** of this document – *please read carefully*.

Overview

Rams will arrive at the UF Small Ruminant Unit (2108 Shealy Drive) on **Saturday, May 18, 2024**, from **7:30AM til 10AM (EST)**. A 12-day acclimation period will be used to adapt rams to their new environment and ration, mitigate the effect of shrink on calculated growth performance, and assess incoming parasite load with the goal being to reduce parasite levels. Following the acclimation period, rams will begin an 84-day gain test. During the test, rams will be housed on Bahiagrass pastures and supplemented with 'UF Ram Test' concentrate in their respective contemporary groups with a target consumption of 2% body weight. Free-choice mineral supplementation will be available at all times. Data will be collected to determine body weight, body condition score, fecal egg count, and FAMACHA score on 14-day intervals throughout the test. This data will be used as an indicator of the ram's ability to cope with parasites and grow during the hot and humid Florida summer. At the end of the trial, rams will be ranked based upon their growth performance and resistance to parasites. The top performing rams will be offered at an online auction (open for 24h) on Friday & Saturday, September 20-21, 2024.

Program Purpose

1. Standardize the environmental conditions for evaluating post-weaning performance of ram lambs as it relates to growth performance and parasite resistance.
2. Provide useful unbiased data for both the consignor and the buyer of performance tested rams.
3. Provide a source of high quality, performance tested rams for sheep producers.
4. Provide educational opportunities for the improvement of the sheep industry.
5. Provide networking opportunities for sheep producers.
6. Provide an opportunity for sheep producers to showcase their breeding programs.
7. Facilitate the transfer of desirable genetics between breeders.

We encourage you to indicate your intent to consign animals to this program. **Rams must be pre-registered by May 6, 2024**, to be enrolled in the program. This process will take place via our online registration portal. Please contact Clay Whitehead for enrollment or questions, at (904) 796-0441 or jacobcwhitehead@ufl.edu.

Schedule of Events

May 18, 2024: Arrival of weaned rams at UF Small Ruminant Unit (2108 Shealy Dr.). *Check-in will take place from 7:30AM til 10AM EST.* Administration of anthelmintics and vaccination.

May 30, 2024: 84-day gain test begins, vaccination booster, beginning weights and measures collected. Rams with inadequate FEC reduction will be eliminated from the test.

June 13, 2024: Interim weights and measures collected

June 27, 2024: Interim weights and measured collected

July 11, 2024: Interim weights and measured collected; 42-day mid-point test report

July 25, 2024: Interim weights and measures collected

August 8, 2024: Interim weights and measures collected

August 22, 2024: 84-day gain test ends, final weights and measures collected

September 20-21, 2024: UF Ram Test Sale (online via Willoughby Livestock Sales)

Rules and Eligibility

- **Rams must be born between December 1, 2023 and February 15, 2024.** We encourage producers to consign rams born earlier in this period as we expect them to perform better.
- **Rams must weigh a minimum of 55 pounds at delivery.** There will be a 5% body weight allowance (3 pounds) for rams being shipped outside of Florida. Test admittance is at the discretion of the UF Ram Test program coordinators.
- Both registered and commercial bred rams will be accepted for entry into the test and eligible for sale. For breeds with open herds or appendix registries, breed percentage will be indicated on the ram's pedigree.
- **Rams must be weaned prior to May 1, 2024. Please have rams started on consuming grain/forage at least 2 weeks prior to drop-off to minimize stress.**
- Rams must be pre-registered for the UF Ram Test by May 6, 2024.
- A one-time, non-refundable, consignment fee of \$200.00 must accompany each ram upon arrival on May 18, 2024, to cover the direct costs associated with the UF Ram Test. Please see cost breakdown below.
- **Rams must be vaccinated and boosted against CD&T at least 3 weeks prior to delivery.**
- Rams must have their hooves trimmed within one week of delivery.
- Producers entering wool breed rams into the test must shear their rams prior to test entry if they desire them to be shorn for the summer months. No shearing will be performed during the pre-test, test, or post-test period.
- Rams must have a Certificate of Veterinary Inspection at the time of delivery.
- Rams must have an official Federal scrapie tag identification at the time of delivery.
- All incoming animals will be evaluated for health-related issues on the truck before they are unloaded at the University of Florida. The University of Florida reserves the right to turn away or disqualify any animal at their discretion.
- Rams with any of the following will not be allowed in the test: Lameness, pizzle rot, presence of possible contagious diseases (abscesses, swollen lymph nodes, footrot, sore mouth, pink eye,

conjunctivitis, boils, ringworm), evidence of inherited undesirable traits (i.e., entropion or ectropion, overshot or undershot jaws, wool blindness), rectal prolapse, epididymitis, inguinal hernias, abnormal soft or hard testicles, external parasites, evidence of profuse diarrhea.

- **Producers will be allowed to enroll up to 10 ram lambs in the test each year.** Producers are encouraged to only enroll their best animals with the greatest breeding potential.
- The UF Ram Test facility has a capacity of 50 animals. Should more than the maximum capacity be consigned, the UF Ram Test Committee reserves the right to reduce consignments in an equitable manner beginning with the largest consignors. A standby consignor list will also be kept, should an eligible consignor not participate – those next in line will be notified.

2024 UF Ram Test estimated cost per ram

Item	2024 Cost
Feed	\$90.00
Yardage	\$25.00
Veterinary/Medical	\$70.00
Codon 171 Genotyping	\$15.00
Total	\$200.00

Testing

Pre-test Period: Upon arrival, rams will be weighed and dewormed with Levamisole (8 mg/kg), Albendazole/Fenbendazole (7.5-10 mg/kg), and Cydectin (0.2 mg/kg). Each animal will also receive an 8-way Clostridial vaccine, soremouth/orf vaccine and go through a zinc sulfate foot bath solution. Other data collection upon arrival will include body weight, body condition score and FAMACHA score. Animals will be grouped in their cohort group(s) at the discretion of the UF Ram Test Committee. Animals will be turned out to pasture in their assigned group(s) the same day and offered feed. This will begin the 12-day acclimation period. A fecal egg reduction test will be performed on May 30, 2024. Any ram not showing acceptable reduction in parasite load as determined by the consulting veterinarians (fecal egg count >500 epg) will not be allowed to participate in the test due to parasite resistance to dewormers.

Test Period: Body weight, body condition score, FAMACHA score, fecal egg count, and scrotal circumference will be collected on 14-day intervals beginning on May 30, 2024, and ending on August 22, 2024. Scrotal circumference will only be collected at beginning, mid-point, and end. Rams will be housed on Bahiagrass pastures and supplemented with “UF Ram Test” concentrate in their respective groups with a target consumption of 2% of body weight. Free-choice mineral supplementation will be available at all times. Pastures will be rotated every 14 days. Any ram with a fecal egg count above 3,000 epg will indicate a threshold for deworming. The ram will be allowed the opportunity to mount an

immune response (14-days). If the ram's FEC is >3,000 epg at a given collection interval and the FEC remains (>3,000 epg) at the following collection interval (14-days later), this will result in deworming of the ram. A FAMACHA score of >4 and/or BCS <1.5 also indicates deworming will be performed. Disqualification from ram test sale eligibility occurs after one deworming during the test period.

Post-test Period: Body weight, body condition score, FAMACHA score, fecal egg count, and scrotal circumference will be collected on August 22, 2024, at the end of the gain test. Parameters of parasite resistance and growth performance will be evaluated at this time. Rams will be ranked based upon their performance during the test, and ratios within contemporary group(s) will be calculated. Animals will be ranked based upon Fecal Egg Count Ratio and Growth Index. ***Rams that achieve an index greater than 90 for both Fecal Egg Count Ratio and Growth Index will be automatically consigned to the sale.*** Any animal who fails to achieve a minimum index of 90 for either trait will not be eligible for sale. Carcass ultrasound and USDA grading data will also be collected at the conclusion of the test period on all enrolled test rams. All rams will be inspected at the end of the test period for structural soundness and type by the UF Ram Test Committee. Only those rams of acceptable type, quality, and soundness will be sold. The decisions of the UF Ram Test Committee shall be final. Producers of rams that qualify for the sale have the option to withdraw their animals from the sale at the end of the test period and take them home. Owners of animals not qualifying for the sale will be notified as soon as possible at the conclusion of the test period. At this time, we would ask the owners to pick up rams no later than September 21, 2024, at the conclusion of the Ram Test Sale to prevent any additional charges. Transportation of non-sale eligible rams to the local sale barn can also be facilitated on an as needed basis – producers must contact the UF Ram Test Committee ahead of time if this option is chosen. Producers are encouraged to keep all qualifying animals in the sale in order to fulfill the mission of this program. All rams consigned to the sale will undergo a Breeding Soundness Evaluation (BSE) prior to the sale. A 'Satisfactory' classification, according to the guidelines published by the Society for Theriogenology, must be achieved on BSE to participate in the sale.

Performance measures determined at the end of the test period:

Average Daily Gain (ADG) = total weight gain on-test / number of days on-test

ADG Ratio = (individual ADG / test group ADG)*100

Weight Per Day of Age (WDA) = final test period weight / days of age

WDA Ratio = (individual WDA / test group WDA)*100

Growth Index = (((ADG ratio)*0.5) + (WDA ratio))/2

Average Fecal Egg Count (FEC) = Average of seven FEC taken on two-week intervals during test period

FEC Ratio = (test group average FEC / individual average FEC)*100

Overall Index = ((Growth Index) + (FEC Ratio))/2

Health Management

1. The health of all animals will be overseen by the UF College of Veterinary Medicine.
2. Rams showing significant parasite burden during the test period will not be eligible for the sale. These animals will be identified by the UF College of Veterinary Medicine at the scheduled 14-day health assessments. Parameters for disqualification are fecal egg count (FEC) >3,000 epg at two consecutive health assessments, BCS of <1.5 and/or FAMACHA score of 4 or 5.
3. Consignors will be notified if an animal becomes ill or dies unexpectedly.
4. Any ram that dies will be necropsied by the UF College of Veterinary Medicine and the consignor will be provided with the necropsy results at no cost.
5. Rams may be removed from the test by the UF Ram Test Committee in the case of a chronic condition impairing the usefulness of the animal. The consignor will be notified and required to remove the animal within 7 days in such a case. Potential events that may result in animal removal include but are not limited to, chronic lameness, infectious disease, or persistent parasite burden.
6. Additional veterinary healthcare costs due to illness will be the responsibility of the consignor. In cases of illness that require immediate treatment, the treatment will be initiated promptly, and the consignor will be contacted as soon as possible. Additional follow-up treatments will be provided as directed by the veterinarian at the UF College of Veterinary Medicine and an additional cost estimate will be provided to the consigning producer.

Administration and Management

The UF Ram Test program coordinators will be solely responsible for consignment, record keeping, correspondence, and general oversight related to the program. All daily management of the rams will be conducted by the UF Department of Animal Sciences staff. Faculty from the UF College of Veterinary Medicine will serve as consulting veterinarians for the program. The program coordinators will share the test data for all rams enrolled in the test on the UF Ram Test webpage at midpoint and final data collection. The program coordinators will provide consigning producers with data points at each 14-day collection, beginning at the second test data collection interval. All consignors agree to this data release when consigning rams to the test.

Liability

University of Florida personnel will make every reasonable effort to safeguard the health of the animals and to obtain professional veterinary services when necessary but will not be responsible for the loss by fire, theft, injury, sickness, death or in any other way.

UF Ram Test Sale

- The 2024 UF Ram Test Sale will be held online via Willoughby Livestock Sales. The sale will be open for 24 hours, beginning at 11AM EST on September 20, 2024, and closing 11AM EST on September 21, 2024.
- Rams enrolled in the UF Ram Test Sale will be available for in-person viewing on Friday evening, September 20, 2024 (6pm EST) and Saturday morning, September 21, 2024 (8am EST) during the UF Small Ruminant Short Course at the UF/IFAS Horse Teaching Unit, 1934 SW 63rd Ave., Gainesville, FL 32608.
- A maximum number of 20 of the highest performing rams will sell.
- To qualify for the sale, rams must achieve an index greater than 90 for both Fecal Egg Count Ratio and Growth Index.
- Any ram that has a fecal egg count >3,000 epg at two consecutive health assessments, BCS <1.5 and/or FAMACHA score > 4 during the test, will not be eligible for sale.
- Both registered and commercial rams are eligible for sale. Sale order will be determined by test performance with those rams who performed the best, highest FEC Ratio and Growth Index, will sell first.
- Sale order will be determined in descending order beginning with the highest ratioing animal for the combined traits of Fecal Egg Count Ratio and Growth Index. In the event of a tie, the tie will be broken by the Fecal Egg Count Ratio.
- All rams will sell with a 'Satisfactory' Breeding Soundness Evaluation (BSE) performed within 30-days of sale by a licensed UFCVM veterinarian.
- UFCVM veterinarians will be on-site to provide an official Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (CVI) for interstate or intrastate travel to the purchaser's facility after the sale.
- A sale commission of 10% will be deducted from the sale price of each sale animal to recover sale costs and additional feed/yardage costs from the end of the performance test.

Ram Test Sale Format

The 2024 Ram Test Sale will be conducted online through Willoughby Livestock Sales. It will be open for 24 hours, beginning September 20, 2024, at 11AM EST and closing September 21, 2024, at 11AM EST.

Sale rams will be eligible for viewing on Friday, September 20, 2024 (6PM EST) and Saturday, September 21, 2024 (8AM EST), at the UF/IFAS Horse Teaching Unit, 1934 SW 63rd Ave. Gainesville, FL 32608.

Please note: Attending the Small Ruminant Short Course (SRSC) is not required to come view sale animals.

UF Ram Test Program Coordinators

Clay Whitehead
Sheep Unit Manager
UF Animal Sciences Department
(904) 796-0441
jacobcwhitehead@ufl.edu

Brittany Diehl, DVM, MS
Clinical Assistant Professor & Small Ruminant Extension Specialist
UF College of Veterinary Medicine
(352) 294-4387
bn.diehl@ufl.edu

Online Platforms to Follow/Reference

UF Ram Test website link: <https://animal.ifas.ufl.edu/smallruminant/ramtest/>

UF Small Ruminant Short Course website link: <https://animal.ifas.ufl.edu/smallruminant/small-ruminant-short-course/>

Social Media – Facebook: UF Small Ruminant Extension

Social Media – Instagram: @UF_SMALLRUMINANTEXTENSION