

Georgia Small Ruminant Research and Extension Center at Fort Valley State University

The Georgia Small Ruminant Research and Extension Center (GSRREC) is the oldest of three Centers for Excellence in the College of Agriculture, Home Economics and Allied Programs at Fort Valley State University (FVSU).

The Small Ruminant Center was originally established in about 1983 as a Dairy Goat Research Center. The initial research emphasis was on feeds and nutrition, and on reproduction and cell biology. A herd of dairy goats was established which at the time included all five of the major breeds. Later, a decision was taken to utilize primarily the two breeds Saanan and Alpine.

As the Dairy program developed during the 80's and the early 1990's, research and development in the area of forages, lactation physiology, and goat health were added. In the mid-1990's it was recognized that opportunities for work with meat goats, sheep, farmed deer, and lamoids (llama and alpaca) existed in Georgia and in the Southeast. The name of the Center was changed to the Georgia Small Ruminant Research and Extension Center which better reflected the new areas of work and a more proactive approach to programs with these additional animals. Further, more aggressive efforts in Extension and outreach services were embraced.

New capacity was developed in the area of meat sciences and muscle biology, dairy product development, genetics and production systems, and internal parasite management beginning in about 1998. An animal science graduate program at the M.S. level was initiated at FVSU in 2002. The graduate program has enhanced the capacity of the Center to conduct more research with application to the farm and to create the next generation of small ruminant scientists.

The Center facilities located in several buildings on the FVSU campus include a meat technology laboratory, an abattoir, dairy creamery, experimental animal housing, pastures and woods for grazing animals, and office space for faculty and staff. The current adult animal inventory at the Center includes 50 Spanish meat goat does, 45 crossbred hair-sheep ewes, and about 60 dairy goat does. Additional groups of 50 to 100 animals are periodically bought and maintained for specific short-term experiments. On-farm research and development activities involve the use of animals, particularly meat goats, sheep, and llamas/alpacas, owned by farmers and other clients.

The current subject-matter and activity focus of the Center includes the following major areas:

- Nutrition and feeding.
- Forages and pasture utilization.
- Internal parasite control and management.
- Health and disease control.

- Reproduction and cell biology.
- Milk products and technology.
- Meat products technology and muscle biology.
- Enterprise economics and marketing opportunities.
- Genetics and breeding/production systems.
- Agroforestry and silvopasture.
- Youth livestock project promotion and support.
- Advisory service to Extension agents, Young Farmer Advisors, NRCS, and producers.
- Custom harvest services for goat, lamb, cattle, and swine.