Livestock Handling Facilities

Sheep and Goat Handling and Facilities Options

Illinois

Why Handling and Facilities are Important

Profit, pride, good husbandry, instincts and training are the reasons that sheep and goat producers concentrate on care and management of their sheep and goats. Good management shows the producers that with proper handling and management skills, the result is comfortable, contented and productive animals. Experienced producers soon recognize that well-designed working facilities and buildings reduce work and physical exertion required to provide the necessary care for sheep and goats. This reduces tress on both the livestock and herder. Management jobs, such as health care, are scheduled and performed in a timelier and routine manner when good facilities are available, rather than being avoided or ignored due to lack of proper handling corrals and chutes. Also, carrying out these jobs is possible in a more humane manner with less risk of injury to the animals or handler. Finally, the animal's wool or hair is maintained cleaner and in a valuable condition. It is important to remember that proper handling and use of a well-designed facility will increase productivity and profit from the sheep and/or goat operation.

Determine What is Needed

What constitutes adequate handling facilities? If you have fewer that 200 sheep or goats, adequate facilities can be made from a few portable 8-foot panes and a few special purpose metal gates. Figure 33 shows how these panels and gates can be quickly arranged in an existing corral or building to form a simple, effective layout. For larger flocks, a more permanent handling facility should be considered. This will require some additional thought and planning.

First think about what sheep or goat management jobs need to be done on your farm or ranch. Make a list of these jobs. Beside each job, note what time(s) of the year it is done and the number of animals handled at each time.

This list will help you determine the facilities you need for your management system. For example, some shepherds control external parasites by dipping their sheep, others by spraying. Each of these techniques requires different types of facilities. It will also help in setting the priority since it points out the frequency of each task and the number of animals handled at any one time. In addition, items which require the most thought in design and special attention on construction will be identified. For example, the number of animals handled at one time determines the dimensions of the pens and chutes. If holding pens are too large, you'll waste time and energy chasing the animals. If too small, you'll waste time and energy moving sheep from pen to pen. Allow about 4-5 square feet per sheep or goats for holding pens. When completed, your list might look like this:

Task	Facility Required
Holding	Gathering pen and forcing pen
Sorting	Narrow sorting chute, sort gate, At least two holding pens to sort into
De-worming	3' wide chute or small pen
Vaccination	3' wide chute or small pen
Weighting	Weigh crate in chute
Foot trimming	Tip crate or small pen

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Determine What is Needed (continued)

Add or delete items and list the number of animals, as well as times to handle, to suit your situation. During the planning process, keep in mind a few basic principles. To work effectively, your facility should enable you to gather and hold your animals in a gathering pen, move them into a forcing pen, which will in turn allow you to force them into the treatment and sorting area, and then out into sort pens. To successfully get sheep to flow through pens with a minimum effort and stress on both you and the animals, basic principles of sheep and goat behavior should be understood.

Reference

The reference material for this article largely came from the Sheep Production Handbook. For more information on sheep handling principles and management contact the: American Sheep Industry Assoc., 6911 S. Yosemite, Englewood, Colorado 80112-1414; Phone: 303 -771-3500: web site: http://www.sheepusa.org/

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Figure 33. Simple Layout for Small Flocks

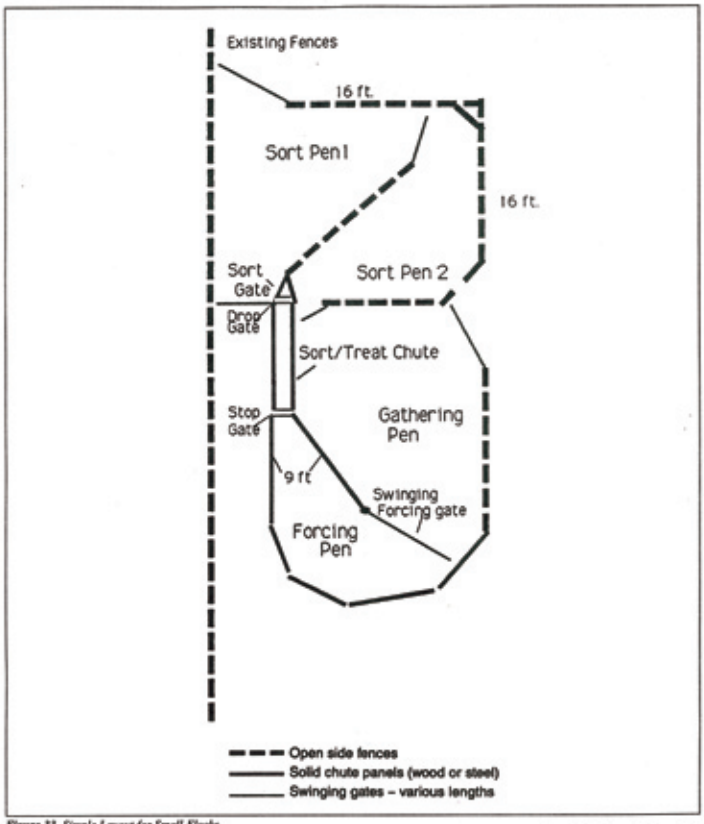

Figure 33. Simple Layout for Small Flocks.
Gathering pen holds 60+ ewes. Treat/sort chute holds 3+ ewes. If desired, expand by lengthening treat/sort chute from 9 feet to 18 feet or 27 feet. Setup will then handle 200+ ewes. Sort pens 1 and 2 will need to be lengthened, and a "pregathering" pen added to hold the larger flock. Approximately 24 x 50 feet.

Notes

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Figure 34. Possible Simple Layout for Small Flocks

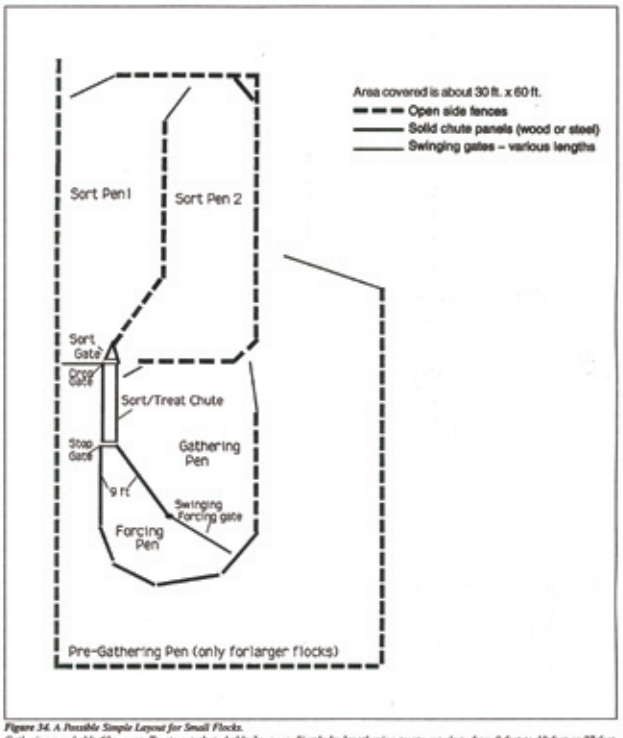

Figure 34. A Possible Simple Layout for Small Flocks.
Gathering pen holds 60+ ewes. Treatment chute holds 3+ ewes. Simply by lengthening treatment chute from 9 feet to 18 feet or 27 feet, twice as long, setup will handle 200+ ewes. By adding the extra pregathering pen (as illustrated) and increasing length of sort pens, setup will handle 300+ ewes.

Figure 35. Possible Simple Layout for Farm Flocks up to 800 Ewes

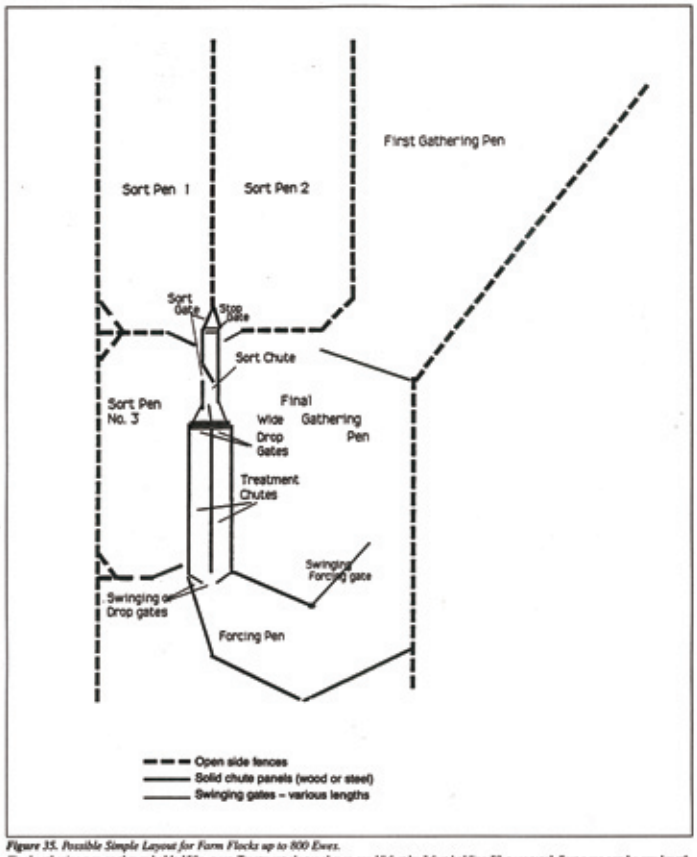

Figure 35. Possible Simple Layout for Farm Flocks up to 800 Ewes.
Final gathering pen as shown holds 150+ ewes. Treatment chutes shown are 18 feet by 3 feet holding 50 ewes total. Sort pens can be any length.

Notes

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