

Friedrich Family Enterprise Garners Top Honors

What started out as a 4-H project more than 29 years ago has evolved into a family enterprise for Joel Friedrich of Pine Island, Minnesota. As a young man, Joel showed Suffolk sheep as a 4-H member. Today, Joel and his wife, Pat, and their 3 children maintain a herd of 60 ewes, showing across the state garnering top honors. For more than 6 years, Joel has been feeding Vigortone to the lambs, ewes, and rams, with improved health and performance.

A ration of soybean meal, SoyPlus, molasses, corn, oats, and **Vigortone 78B** is fed to the mature and growing flock. The breeding ewe flock receives **Vigortone 77S** free choice. Bucks receive additional salt to alleviate problems with urinary calculi.

“It’s a superior product by far. A mineral block doesn’t give you what you need. When you look at the (Vigortone) label, it’s complete. The health of the whole flock is better,” said Joel.

Overall performance on the Vigortone program has been exceptional. Commented Joel, ***“They’ve been healthier, they’ve cleaned well.”*** The consumption has been consistent. ***“You have to watch out for white muscle disease in sheep lacking selenium. You can’t let the mineral run out like some people tend to.”***

Recently, Joel ran a trial on market lambs comparing rate of weight gain. Not only was it more economical to feed Vigortone, the market lambs on the Vigortone mineral had a higher rate of weight gain than the lambs on the competitive mineral.

The Friedrichs raise purebred Suffolks. People who buy from them generally want a show animal or desire quality seedstock to introduce genetics into their flock.

Genetics are introduced to the flock through the rams. Favored traits include size and depth. Progeny are sold throughout the United States from Minnesota to Texas and Ohio to South Dakota.

The Friedrichs raise all their own replacement ewes, keeping back a certain percentage of the top one-half to two-thirds of the flock each year. However, if there is market demand, a greater percentage will be sold. Show animals that have fared well in competition are routinely sold in order to help stimulate interest.

A few years ago, the Minnesota Sheep, Lamb, and Wool Producer Organization honored Joel with the State Silver Bell Award. The honor recognizes producers’ contributions to the sheep industry through promotion and production.