

Resources – Options during Periods of High Feed Costs

1. Purchased Feeds and Other Inputs

Feed prices fluctuate throughout the year, generally being lowest at or near harvest time. Options to consider include:

- Increase on-farm feed storage for flexibility in purchasing grains and forages at harvest time.
- Use Hedging and Options to manage commodity price risks [OMAFRA Factsheet Managing Commodity Price Risk Using Hedging and Options](#)

2. Optimizing Manure to Offset Purchased Fertilizer

Fertilizer value of manure is often underappreciated. As commercial fertilizer costs increase so too does the value of manure. OMAFRA has a wealth of resources on [manure and its management](#). For sheep manure nutrient values, look to the bottom of this factsheet [Available Nutrients and Value for Manure From Various Livestock Types](#)

3. Forage Analysis and Ration Formulation for Efficient Feed Usage

Feeding to meet nutritional demand while avoiding overfeeding ensures optimal performance while managing feed costs. The ewe flock has the highest feed needs and forages make up 50 percent (or higher) of the ration. Knowing the nutrient content of the forages used, and having rations formulated by stage of production, will help manage feed costs. OMAFRA Factsheets [Nutrient Testing](#), [Feed Analysis Reports Explained](#) provide good overview. Now is the time to enlist the services of a ruminant nutritionist.

4. Evaluating Feed Wastage in your production system

Feed losses occur at all stages of harvest, storage, delivery and feeding. Some losses are inevitable, others are a result of our management. This [article](#) provides an overview of how management can influence losses from harvest through to feeding.

Wastage due to poor feeder design, improper feeder height, or poorly maintained feeders also increase cost of production. Although written for swine, the recommendations in OMAFRA Factsheet [Feeder Management in the Grower-Finisher Barn](#) applies equally to sheep and lamb feeder management.

Losses from rodents can be significant as well. Did you know that for every mouse or rat you see, there are at least 25 others?and that a colony of 100 rats will eat a tonne of feed per year? OMAFRA Factsheet [Rodent Control in Livestock and Poultry Facilities](#) reviews key aspects of rodent behaviour and steps to implement effective rodent control.

5. Optimizing Forage Yields

Forages are a significant portion of the annual sheep feed costs. Whether stored forages or grazing pastures, optimizing forage yields is that delicate balance between costs and productivity of the animals being fed. OMAFRA has a wealth of resources on their [Forages and Pastures](#) webpage.

6. Buy versus grow your own feedstuffs

Do you know what it costs you to grow your own feedstuffs? Would it be cheaper to purchase rather than own the necessary equipment? Partial budgets can help you decide which is your best option.

7. Alternative feedstuffs – do they fit into your production system?

For those interested in how to price alternative feedstuffs, an excellent review is included in OMAFRA Factsheet [Comparative Feed Values For Ruminants](#) as well as [Alternative Feeds for Beef Cattle](#). A synopsis of possible feedstuffs from North Dakota [Alternative Feeds for Ruminants](#), many of which are available here in Ontario.

8. Business Planning and Honing your Business Management Skills

Higher input costs mean narrower profit margins. Coupled with lower market prices, rising interest rates and inflation may mean negative returns for some producers. Keeping your financial books current has never been more important. Review of your business plan should be one of your short-term goals this year. OMAFRA Business Management resources and budgeting tools can be accessed through their [Business Management](#) homepage.

9. Staying informed

Advances in technology enable us to more easily know what is happening in other key agriculture producing countries. Podcasts have become popular because they can be listened to anywhere, anytime. The following are some you may be interested in if you haven't already signed up for them: [RealAgriculture](#) focuses on the issues that are impacting agriculture.

[Talking Farm and Food](#) from Farm Credit Canada advice on money and finance, transition, managing people, strategy, leadership and more.

[Head Shepherd](#) focuses on sheep and beef farming in Australia and New Zealand and the people doing great things in those industries in particular livestock, genetics, innovation and technology.

[Farm4Profit](#) goal is to share tips to help your farm be more profitable all while entertaining you.

[SharkFarmer](#) Agriculture's most entertaining & boundary pushing podcast with farmers, ranchers & attitude.

[AgTech...so what?](#) Stories of innovators working at the intersection of agriculture and technology.

[Australian Farmers: Telling Our Story](#) dedicated to connecting our wonderful farmers with health-conscious consumers and ethically minded shoppers.

[Sheep Stuff Ewe Should Know](#) California Ranchers, Dan Macon, Dr. Rosie Busch and Ryan Mahoney, discuss all things sheep.

10. OMAFRA Resources

OMAFRA has a multitude of resources easily accessible on their website. They have compiled a short-list to help [livestock producers](#) with decision-making in these challenging times including [sheep-specific ones](#).