Does Raising Sheep Pay?
Part 1: Costs of starting up a grass-fed sheep enterprise

By Ulf Kintzel

Many farmers who raise animals in my area either have a dairy farm or they raise beef. Few raise sheep for a living or as a side income. Thus, the question I am often asked is “Can you make money with raising sheep?” Yes, you can make money raising sheep. How much really depends on many factors.

I will outline in this article the economics (costs, productivity, and income) of raising sheep as I see it. In Part 1 I will discuss the major startup costs, and in next Spring's issue of Small Farm Quarterly I will talk about ongoing expenses and about income. I will not make a complete calculation since no two farms are the same. I will, however, name the cost of all necessary equipment and expenses and you, dear reader, can calculate what applies to your farm.

PASTURE SYSTEM BASICS

There are various ways of raising sheep. The one I will be discussing is raising sheep on pasture in a rotational grazing system.