The Old Chatham Sheepherding Company

The Old Chatham Sheepherding Company was founded in 1993 on open land. We actually received the 115 Dorset sheep from Cornell University before we had the barn built and had to house elsewhere until the facility was completed.

- Wrong kind of sheep - needed East Friesian

Plan for the ultimate number of animals you will have.

- Make everything bigger than you expect.

We designed the first three buildings - the sheep barn, the hay barn and the shop as we were only going to milk the sheep and send the milk to a nearby cheese maker.
We designed the sheep barn with a center aisle and a very good amount of fenestration, windows and doors for ventilation.

- Wrong- needed more ventilation.

We designed the barn with a large door at each end and many garage doors at the side.

- Wrong- needed three doors at each end of the barn as we have two sheep pens with a center feeding aisle. We also
should not have had the center parlor bulge in the middle of the barn on one side keeping you from driving the cleaning skid steerer from one door to the other door at the opposite end of the barn.

- The side doors are good for ventilation and also allow the animals to go outside but you find they only want to eat and lie down, forget going outside.
We designed the barn with a dirt floor and a 12 foot center aisle

- Wrong- dirt does not work for a feeding aisle and is difficult to clean. We later put macadam down the center aisle which works very well.

- The dirt pens for the animals worked well for a while but then we wanted cleaner pens and added blacktop to the pen base which works much better allowing the manure pack to build up 3-4 inches and allows for easier cleaning of the pens completely every 5-6 weeks, breaking the cycle of parasites. This we learned the hard way.

- Wrong-The center aisle should have been 16 feet wide to accommodate the many differing pieces of equipment which need to be driven down the aisle.

- Feeding aisle should allow 6 ½ inches for head room in the head bar and 1 foot per sheep for feeding. i.e. if you have 200 sheep - your feeding pens should be 200 feet combined length. Feed should be right in front of the sheep – most efficient.

- We designed each animal pen with its own waterers.

- Maintain CONSISTANT feeding program so each animal gets the same nutrients.

We failed to realize the fact that the ewes are always having babies.

- We needed to have a separate barn for the pregnant ewes as they need to come inside from the fields, where they are for the first 4 months of gestation. The moms need to be fed a vitamin and mineral rich diet, not just field hay, getting them ready for birthing. So we changed the hay barn into the lambing barn.
Now where do you put the hay?

- Build a hay barn with storage for feed, square and round bales and bedding.
Where do you put the lambs after they are weaned from their mothers as you need the mom’s milk. You need to put them in the parlor. You can supplement the lambs with milk replacer.

- Build a greenhouse for the lambs. This works very well as there is plenty of sunlight which kills the bacteria in the pens.
The sides of the greenhouse go up for ventilation and they go up at the level you need for the correct ventilation for the babies.

- The entire greenhouse is blacktopped which makes it much easier to keep it clean for the babies.
  - Blacktop floor if retrofitting – we did it later
  - Cement floor if building from scratch

It is important to disinfect the floors for the lambs so blacktop or a cement floor is desirable.

There are other schemes for the layout of the barn.

- The key is to have the animals come to the parlor easily. You must have holding pen areas. This can often be done with changing gate latching systems in the aisle just outside the parlor.
• We also found that you needed a pit for the milking operation. Luckily we had designed this from the beginning. The girls come into the parlor on the same level as the barn.
• The milkers go down into the pit allowing for a low line DeLaval milking system.
• We have a DeLaval automatic take off system which we find really helps with the health of the moms and efficiency of your staff.
• For washing, everything needs to be slanted toward the drain.

• We also planned a basement under the parlor for equipment.

• You also need a place for sick lambs. We designed a vet room to keep supplies and a sick bay area just off the main barn.

No matter what kind of farm buildings, rodent control is always a necessity for rats, mice, squirrels, woodchucks, coyote, mountain lions, black bear and any other predators particular to your region.

• Companies have protocols rotating different poisons
• From Gemblar’s catalog we use 6 months HAWK, 3 months JAGUAR, and 3 months Rampage.

The sheep barn, lambing barn and the lamb greenhouse worked fine to only milk the animals but we fast found that we would be doing the cheese making also.

The creamery is now in the old mechanic shop.

• Retrofit the mechanic shop for the creamery
• Build a new mechanic shop
This center section is the original Mechanic shop.

The rest has been added in 3 phases. We have a 6 foot basement under the main new section which has allowed for the mechanical systems.

- Wrong- 6 feet of head room is not 6 foot of head room.
  - The pipes and other mechanical equipment hang below and there is only bent over body room which is VERY ANNOYING AND AWFUL!!!!!!
  - ALWAYS BUILD A FULL AT LEAST 8 FOOT BASEMENT IF NOT HIGHER.
• The creamery is situated where the old mechanic shop was but only the left hand door as shown above is the original building.
• The main floor of the creamery and the aging rooms and an office are in the old mechanic shop with no basement.
• The new section out front is the blue cheese make room on a slab.
• The new section to the left is 2 additional aging rooms on a slab.
• The 2 new sections to the right are the receiving spaces for the milk, the bulk tank room, the clean room, the clean in place room, the lab, the wrapping room, refrigerator, freezer, employee space and bathroom, and the wrapping and shipping spaces.
• YES YOU NEED ALL THESE SPACES AND LOTS MORE FOR STORAGE.
Great things about our creamery........

- The main section of the creamery, the creamery floor and the aging rooms are designed very well for the purpose of making cheese.
- The temperature and humidity controls of the whole creamery make for consistency in product. EXTREMELY IMPORTANT!!!
- Aging rooms are all adjacent to the main creamery floor.
- Floor drains work well
- Filtered HVAC separates filtered intake air
- BRILLIANT IDEA...An exterior Ice bank which runs off-peak at night and stores the ice until the day to be used to chill the coolers, pasteurizers and incubators.
• The aging rooms are all adjacent to the make room.

AGING ROOMS

• **BUT we have learned from our mistakes**
  - The hall in the aging area should be much wider so two persons with carts can pass.
  - Wider doorways
  - Might be using frozen milk and need space for storage and thawing
  - Oversize a little more when you begin your design
  - When you go from one style of cheese to another, you may need completely different set of make spaces and aging rooms.
  - When you try to add the yogurt production and a larger yogurt filler, you just are too crowded.
STEAMY PICTURE OF CHEESE AND YOGURT MAKE ROOM

And you need storage spaces!!!!!
And more packing space.....
And more storage space...
And more trash space

More space for the SEPTIC SYSTEM
AND more storage space and turning space for trucks

And don’t forget SPACE for storing boxes, shipping supplies, cups, stickers, labels, wrapping papers, salt, maple syrup, other flavorings, hairnets, milk samples, and empty milk sample units, refrigerators and the rest of the kitchen sink that goes along with the operation of milking and cheese and yogurt making.

If we did it all over again, we would start with a huge warehouse type building and infill with what you need as you need it.