



2018 Shepherds of the Year

Each year, as you know, it falls to the previous three winners of the Maryland Shepherd of the Year award to select the awardee for the current year.

Through this award we recognize, as a community, people who stand out by representing genuine interest, involvement, and commitment to sheep and shepherding and to improving the related prospects for the sheep breeders community beyond themselves.

Frankly, it took almost no time at all for Geof Ruppert (2017), Liz Cavey (2016) and me (2015) to make the selection for 2018.

This year's award celebrates a couple who have steadfastly demonstrated the courageous understanding that farming generally, and shepherding specifically, entails an ongoing process of trial and error—by being always open to jumping in, learning from direct experience, as well as actively seeking and being receptive to advice from others, and adjusting course as needed based on all of these.

Jeff and Jan White, both working full-time off-farm jobs, grow vegetables, pigs and sheep and participate in a farmers market every week. Many of you know what a staggering undertaking this is. Any one of us knows it can bring you to your knees.

Jeff and Jan picked up their first sheep in 2008—mentored by David Greene. These were Katahdins, from David and from Susan Schoenian. They have since moved to wool sheep—Corriedale and Corriedale crosses, and have been successful at selling their fleeces at the Festival and elsewhere, while continuing to produce and sell lamb.

Along the way, both Jeff and Jan have embraced MSBA and our community of sheep and wool diehards. Jeff didn't hesitate to serve on the Board as a director, and then stepped up again in 2016

to become our vice president—and tonight on is the slate for a third VP term.

Jeff plunged into MSBA believing that this organization and community would be helpful and constructive to him in pursuing his goals.

His faith in us, and his willingness to be part of us, has lifted us up to be better. He has led the development of the Farmers' Market piece of the Festival, including rallying chefs to do lamb cooking demonstrations there.

He is steady and dogged in his pursuit of promoting and marketing lamb. He is eager to attend the American Sheep Industry Association Annual Meeting in January to get a better handle on how it can help us.

Meanwhile, Jan has also jumped into the deep end, taking on the critical and challenging role as Vendor Coordinator for the Festival.

Together they have graciously hosted MSBA Board meetings at their home, and even with their over-full schedules on and off the farm, are always ready for the spur-of-the-moment get-togethers to discuss how we can do more and better to promote sheep, wool and lamb products in ways that benefit us all.

As many of you know, Jeff had double knee replacement surgery earlier this week! As long as I've known him, he's been doing all the things I've described with seriously bum knees. I can hardly wait to see what he'll get up to when his new bionic knees are fully operational!

Our heartfelt congratulations to Jeff and Jan White, our 2018 Shepherds of the Year.

Taken from Lee Langstaff's remarks at the MSBA banquet in October.

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President's Message

Lee Langstaff
MSBA President

Lambs are hitting the ground fast and furious around here (you know the scene). I look forward to coming up for air (and I hope you do too) a little later this February to attend MSBA's Shepherds Seminar Day from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. February 23 at Linden Farm in Dickerson.

Experienced, new, and aspiring sheep and wool producers, managers, and users all will acquire new and useful knowledge from the speakers and topics we have lined up. Lunch is included in the fee (\$25 for members and \$35 for nonmembers).

To reserve your spot and lunch, contact Carolann McConaghy (stillpointfarmsheep@gmail.com, 301-829-6950) by Monday, February 18. Linden Farm is located at 20900 Martinsburg Rd, Dickerson, MD 20842.

Also, attention those of you with Southdowns, Suffolks, Hampshires, Shropshires, Dorsets, and

Youth learn how to do a necropsy on a lamb at the 2011 Lambing & Kidding School. [Image from Susan Schoenian. Reproduced with permission.]



other Down-type wool sheep! This year's Fleece Show & Sale will have a separate class for your wool—apart from other medium wool. We hope you'll take advantage of this opportunity to connect with the market reflected in the growing interest of handspinners and other fiber artists. There will be awards and premiums for the best Down-type wool fleeces.

We will be talking about how to optimize the value of your wool at the February 23 Shepherds Seminar Day, and I am willing to assist anyone who has questions or needs help choosing and preparing their fleeces for this market.

Shepherds Seminar Day, February 23

8:30 – 10:00 Evaluating the Death of a Lamb. Learn a practical approach to determining factors in the death (or still birth) of a lamb, including overview of anatomy and hands-on demonstration of how to conduct a basic necropsy examination for clues to cause of death.

10:15 – 11:15 Regenerative Grazing with Sheep. Learn how through pasture and sheep grazing management practices you can improve soil, promote carbon sequestration, provide quality forage for your animals and thereby reduce the cost of feed and chemical applications.

11:15 – 12:00 Participating in the Ethnic Market with Your Lambs.

12:00 – 12:30 Lunch. (provided)

12:30– 1:45 What about Your Wool? Learn what the options are, what you need to know and do to optimize the value of the wool from your sheep, including breeds typically thought of as primarily meat breeds.

1:45 – 3:00 Be Prepared to Deal with Common Medical Issues of Sheep. What basic information do you need to know, what products do you need to have on hand, when do you call the vet and what information should you provide them when you do? Learn basic evaluation of and approach to treating wounds, lameness, respiratory ailments, mastitis, etc., and their treatment.

3:00 – 3:30 Sheepskin Pelts – the Basics. Interested in having sheepskin pelts made from your butcher lambs or culls, but don't know how to go about it? A brief description of how to make this happen so you can enjoy an additional revenue stream from your sheep or comfy sheepskin pelts for yourself.

3:30 – 4:00 Highlights of MSBA Attendance at the American Sheep Industry Association Convention.

4:00 – 5:00 Refreshments and Social Time.

The convergence of a Lucky Brand clothing label on a polyester sweater, a Duluth Trading brand clothing ad advertising “no smelly animal fur here,” and a People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals' (PETA) billboard in Times Square of naked actress Alicia Silverstone and a banner entreating viewers to “leave

'Shearless' fleece, 'smelly fur,' and pushback

wool behind” garnered significant pushback from individual producers, the American Sheep Industry Association, and other organizations supporting the use of animal products in the United States this winter.

The wave of protest from wool producers and wool lovers gained the interest of the *Wall Street Journal*, which ran an article on January 7 by Sarah Nassauer documenting the kerfuffle.

“After clothing retailer Duluth Trading Co. recently advertised a fleece-lined shirt with the tagline ‘No smelly animal fur here, just soft, furnace-warm 200-gram polyester fleece,’ the retribution was swift.

“I beg of you, please stop throwing wool under the bus,’ Ms. Parkes wrote in an Instagram post. ‘You know as well as I do that commercial wool has no scent at all, and that it comes from a living animal who goes on living a very good life,’ said the 49-year-old who lives in Portland, Maine. ‘Fleece is just plastic and isn’t biodegradable,’ she said.

“The post drew thousands of supporters, and an about-face from Duluth Trading. “The company has taken anti-wool statements out of future catalogs after hearing concerns, said a spokeswoman. ‘We have a deep appreciation of the wool industry,’ she said.”

The biodegradable nature of wool versus polyester then quickly garnered posts and reinforcement on social media, with links to reports of scientific studies showing that microfibers from the washing and drying of polyester garments migrate into surface and groundwater, and from there into wells, drinking water, fish, and humans, accumulating toxins as they do so. (See “Microplastic contamination found in common source of groundwater,” <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/01/190125112312.htm>.)

Shepherds who meet consumers face-to-face at farmers markets, sheep shows, and community events have many opportunities to educate a public far removed from animal agriculture.



Two East Coast commercial woolen mills closed in the past few years; one reopened.

A victim of the continuing competitive challenge from abroad, the Woolrich mill in the Pennsylvania town of that name closed at the end of 2018, with about 40 employees losing jobs.

The mill had been operational since its opening in 1847. The manufacturing of blankets will be outsourced to other domestic companies; corporate offices will remain in the town of Woolrich.

More than 300 miles east, in Stafford Springs, Connecticut, another 19th century woolen mill closed in 2013. An article in the Brown University alumni magazine reports:

“...the mill had churned out gorgeous wool for Italy’s Loro Piana, a globally famous maker of high-end wool and cashmere fabric and apparel. But amid a recent sale to the luxury giant Louis Vuitton Moët Hennessy, Loro Piana had closed the Connecticut site, concentrating its manufacturing in Europe. Dozens of highly skilled, middle-aged employees in and near Stafford Springs had been let go with generous severances but no idea how to make a living the rest of their working lives.”

The following year two entrepreneurs reopened the mill in 2014 as American Woolen Company and hired back employees. Orders from J. Crew, Brooks Brothers, etc., have followed.

An East Coast wool mill closed, another reopened

Read the story of the revival of the Connecticut mill at <https://www.brownalumnimagazine.com/articles/2019-01-09/dyed-in-the-wool>

“One fabric, four seasons”: Three short U-Tube videos on American Wool were rolled out at the ASI convention. https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFhONGmym_OM8ZWxPqw9Fag

An ad and blog posts from the Ethical Omnivore Movement added to pushback to the PETA billboard.





Image by Barbara Klein, of Nancy Cox Starkey's Kep

Using the right product

Different antibiotics are effective against different types of bacteria. It is not appropriate to use any antibiotic for an infection, just because there happens to be a bottle already on the shelf/in the refrigerator.

Farmers and vets have a wide variety of diagnostic tools which can be used to identify the type of bacteria causing an infection.

These include milk bacteriology testing for mastitis pathogens and conducting post-mortems to identify causes of pneumonia.

Greater use of diagnostics will enable better choices of antibiotic product to be selected.

Antibiotic products are licensed for certain bacteria under certain conditions and need to be administered at an appropriate concentration and route as prescribed by the vet.

If there is not a licensed product available for the specific case, then vets use a “cascade” system to identify the best alternative, combined with their experiences and expertise.

However, bacterial populations can change over time and while a farm’s mastitis may have been due to environmental bacteria in the past (e.g. E. coli), sometimes contagious bacteria (e.g., Staphylococcus aureus) can enter the system and product choice needs to be reassessed.

So, if an antibiotic starts failing, contact your vet so investigations into the cause can be made.

Do not just use the same antibiotic because you have always done so. Is it time to review your medicine usage with your vet?

The right route

Antibiotic treatments may be administered by topical/local application close to the target site (e.g., intramammary tubes) or systemically (i.e., injections).

The downside of systemic treatments is they rely on the antibiotic entering the bloodstream and this exposes not just the target bacteria but it may also kill other susceptible bacteria. These are the “innocent bystanders,” some of which are good bacteria which have a protective role blocking the bad bacteria.

Not all infections can be reached by topical treatments but, given the option, this is the more ‘responsible’ route. When using systemic treatments, injection routes may be intravenous, subcutaneous or intramuscular.

Why the different options? Because the companies which developed these products considered the easiest route for administration

Management

Using antibiotics correctly and effectively

Jim Willshire

is a veterinarian with Endell Veterinary Group, Salisbury, England.

This article reprinted with permission from Farmers Guardian, <http://www.fginsight.com>

In 2016 the World Health Organization (WHO) reprioritized the importance of all the antibiotics previously considered as ‘critically important’ (so that resistance is not allowed to develop) into three new categories.

Since then, those deemed to be the highest priority critically important antimicrobials (HP-CIAs) in the medical sector are now specifically reserved for use in humans only as a second line treatment where the bacteria’s sensitivity has been demonstrated.

However, in the livestock sector, there has not been the same categorization of antibiotic importance, and farming references to critically important antimicrobials (CIAs) are the WHO’s new HP-CIAs.

Nor have there been any official limits put on vets prescribing antibiotics from any of the WHO’s categories.

However, some [British] supermarkets and milk buyers have stipulated their livestock suppliers avoid use of the HP-CIAs. Some farmers and vets have also voluntarily decided to adopt the same policy.

Responsible use is about questioning the routine use of these antibiotics. So, if using an HP-CIA product, ask whether it can be traded for an alternative which is less “important.”

The HP-CIA product can then be held in reserve for second- or third-line treatment if the first option fails.

The relative importance of microbials

Medical classification (WHO 1996)	Antibicrobial type
HP-CIA. Highest priority critically important antimicrobials (Veterinary definition - CI - critically important microbials)	Third-generation cephalosporins
	Fourth-generation cephalosporins
	Macrolides
CIA - High priority critically important anti microbials	Quinolones, including fluoroquinolones
	Amonglycosides
HIA Highly important antimicrobials	Penicillins/Amoxicillins
	First-generation cephalosporins
	Amphenicols
	Sulphonamides
	Tetracyclines

and then conducted efficacy trials to formulate their products based on their chosen route.

So it is important to read the label and administer the antibiotic as instructed or else efficacy cannot be certain.

The right course of treatment

An antibiotic's activity may be either concentration-dependent or time-dependent and this dictates the treatment course which is prescribed.

Concentration-dependent antibiotics. The efficacy of concentration-dependent antibiotics relies on achieving a required peak concentration, which needs to be above the MIC (minimum inhibitory concentration).

These are the one-shot products favored for their convenience and include products containing fluoroquinolones and macrolides.

Their efficacy depends on the total number of antibiotic molecules which reach the bacteria. So products are focused on giving enough to get a surge in the blood plasma levels and this saturates the target receptors on the bacteria.

But failure to achieve a bacteriological cure will occur when the animal's weight is underestimated, or the full dose is not given.

Time-dependent antibiotics. For time-dependent antibiotics, it is not only important to finish the course but also to "follow the course" and give every dose regularly, as prescribed. For efficacy, these products are focused on the period of time the antibiotic concentrations are above the MIC.

Graphs 1 and 2 illustrate examples of good and bad practice. Graph 2 shows how missing a dose results in an under-dosing of the animal, giving two opportunities for bacteria of a more resistant genotype to multiply up.

Penicillins and cephalosporins are time-dependent antibiotics. The length of any course will depend on the infection site as some targets/organs will have a better blood supply to them than others.

Also, infection levels will vary and some antibiotics need more time to target the receptors in the bacteria. Vets take all this into account when prescribing treatment courses.

Consequences of poor application. For both types of antibiotic, failure to administer an appropriate dose or follow the full course can result in the infection appearing to have been cured, only to flare up again.

This is because a clinical cure was achieved but not the required bacteriological cure. Depending on the animal's immunity and environmental conditions, it may self-cure or it may succumb to a recurrence of the infection.

In the latter case, changing to an antibiotic with a different mode of action is sometimes required.

Action plan for change

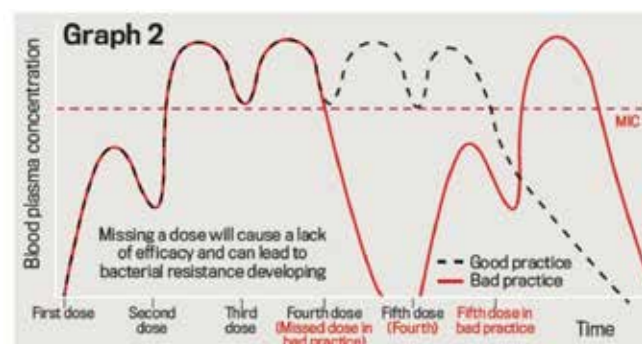
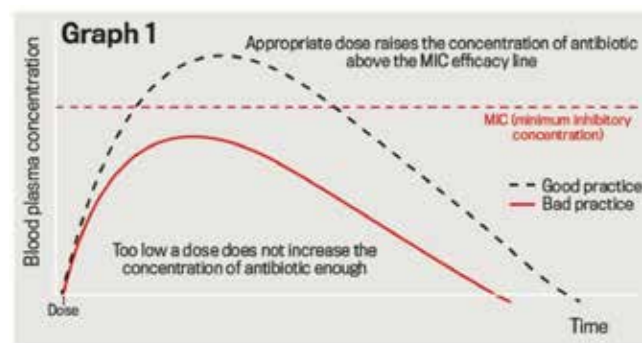
Involving your vet is key. Some changes can happen quickly while others will need to be ongoing.

Reduce the need for antibiotic treatments in the first place by improving the environment and general health of animals. This may involve investing in better cubicles, improving shed ventilation, vaccinating, reducing stocking densities.

Replace HP-CIAs with alternatives. Talk to your vet. Look at changing treatment protocols and substituting alternatives to the 'critically important' fluoroquinolones, macrolides, and third-/fourth-generation cephalosporins

Record all infections, treatments and animal responses. This will help when evaluating the health and financial consequences of the changes to the treatment protocols and alterations to the management of livestock and their environments

Refine farm practices. Have a six-monthly, or at least annual, review with your vet to look at the outcome of any changes made. Is it possible to further reduce antibiotic use now? Or do protocols need tweaking?



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The fungus is coming

Susan Schoenian

is a University of Maryland Extension Sheep & Goat Specialist at the Western Maryland Research and Education Center. This article was initially published in the Delmarva Farmer.



Above: The product packaging. Below: a *H. contortus* larvae encircled by strands of *D. flagrans*.



The naturally occurring fungus *Duddingtonia flagrans* traps and kills infective worm larvae. When it is consumed by grazing livestock, it reduces pasture infectivity, thereby lowering fecal egg counts and worm burdens in livestock.

After more than 20 years of study, an animal health company in Australia has commercialized the fungus. It is being sold under the trade name BioWorma®. A companion product called Livamol® with BioWorma® is also being marketed.

According to the product label, BioWorma® contains 34.6% fungus (500,000 units/gram). Due to EPA restrictions, its distribution is limited to veterinarians, feed mills, and premixers. Livamol® with BioWorma® is a nutritional supplement that contains 2.2% fungus (30,000 units/gram). It will be available over-the-counter to end users (producers).

It is recommended that BioWorma® be consumed daily by livestock. The product can be drenched, top-dressed, or incorporated into a feed or mineral product. The label recommends BioWorma® “for use during periods when conditions are conducive to larval development and transmission onto pasture at temperatures above 40° F.” The most worm-susceptible animals are periparturient females and young lambs and kids.

It is important to emphasize that BioWorma® has NO effect in the animal. Clinically parasitized animals will still require treatment with effective dewormers. BioWorma® is a feed-through product, intended to reduce pasture contamination. The fungal spores pass through the animals’ digestive systems unaffected. The action is in the manure. After the fungus kill the worm larvae, they die.

BioWorma® is not known to have any detrimental effects on the environment or non-targeted species (earthworms, insects, bacteria, or other fungus).

BioWorma® has limitations. It cannot get wet or it loses its activity. It cannot be put into a pellet. It is not organic, though organic certification may be possible in the future. Its shelf life is about two years. BioWorma® is only effective against roundworm (nematode) larvae. It has no effect on the life cycles of coccidia, tapeworms, or flukes.

BioWorma® is currently being sold in Australia and New Zealand. It was approved last spring in the United States; however, state-by-state approvals are necessary before the product can be marketed. As of December 2018, BioWorma® had been approved in 45 states, including Maryland, Virginia, and Delaware.

The first container load of BioWorma® products left Australia (bound for the United States) in mid-December. It is not known when products

will be available to veterinarians and producers or how long it will take for BioWorma® to be incorporated into commercial feed and mineral products. Stay tuned!

While the cost of BioWorma® and its companion product are not yet known, it is expected that the product will be costly. Consequently, it will be important to use it strategically and according to the recommendations of the manufacturer and American Consortium for Small Ruminant Parasite Control (ACSRPC).

BioWorma© is not a “silver bullet.” It is simply another tool that producers can use to help control worm parasites in their flocks and herds. All producers will need to do a cost-benefit analysis before deciding if and when to use the product(s).

For more information about BioWorma®, go to www.bioworma.com or visit www.wormx.info.

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The University of Maryland’s Western Maryland Research & Education Center (WMREC) conducted a study of ram, wether, and short-scrotum lambs.

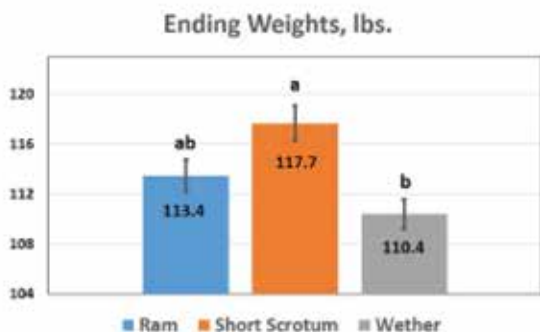
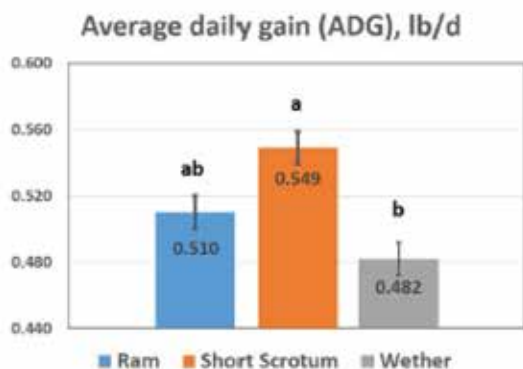
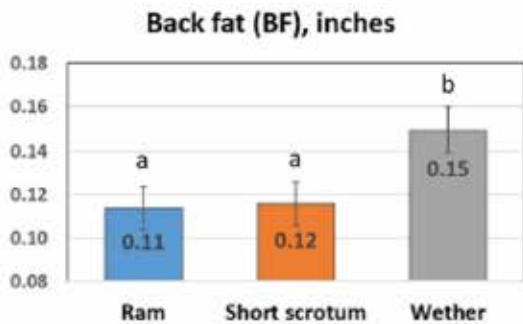
Short-scrotum lambs show superior performance

Sixty male lambs (East Friesian x Lacaune) from a commercial sheep dairy were used to compare growth, carcass,

and fertility traits of ram, wether, and short-scrotum “ram” lambs. By day 10 of age, every third male lambs was either left a ram (n=19), castrated (n=24), or made a short-scrotum (n=17).

What is a short scrotum?

A short-scrotum lamb is a cryptorchid. It is made by pushing the testicles up inside the body cavity and banding the empty scrotum. It is an easier and more humane procedure than castration (by banding). Because they still have testicles (thus, a source of testosterone), short-scrotum “rams” should demonstrate the superior growth that is common to intact males. But because short-scrotum rams lack the thermoregulation required for spermatogenesis, they should not be able to get females pregnant, thus enabling them to be co-mingled with females while grazing.



After weaning and transport from the farm to the research center, the sixty lambs were maintained as a single group on pasture. For 100 days, they grazed mostly annual forage. In addition to grazing, they were supplemented with a concentrate ration (whole barley + soybean meal + minerals) at 2-3 percent of their body weight.

The lambs were weighed bi-weekly and assessed for health. No dewormers or other treatments were administered to the lambs during the duration of the project. At day 102, the lambs were scanned to determine carcass characteristics. At day 105, they were evaluated for fertility traits. They were harvested at day 110. After overnight chilling, their carcasses were measured.

Short-scrotum ram performance

Compared to the wether lambs, the short-scrotum ram lambs had heavier final body weights and higher average daily weights and higher average daily gain (ADG). There was a

tendency for sex to influence rib eye area (REA), as determined by ultrasound. Wether lambs tended to have smaller rib eyes and compared to ram and short-scrotum lambs. However, when REA was adjusted to a common weight (100 lb), there was no difference between the sexes. Sex did not influence other ultrasonic measurements: back fat and loin depth.

Actual carcass measurements showed wethers to be fatter, having greater back fat, thus yield grade. Ram lambs produced the leanest carcasses. The short-scrotum lambs were intermediate. There was a tendency for sex to influence hot carcass weight, with short-scrotum lambs tending to be heavier.

Sex did not affect dressing percentage, body wall thickness, rib eye area (actual or adjusted to a common weight), percent kidney and heart fat, leg conformation score, or percent boneless closely trimmed retail cuts. There was strong correlation between ultrasonic and actual carcass measurements, except for REA in short-scrotum lambs.

Compared to wether lambs, short-scrotum lambs showed superior growth and produced leaner carcasses.

Short scrotum lamb sterility

Libido (mating desire) was measured by giving each lamb five minutes to interact with two ewes that were in heat (estrus). Mating behaviors (sniffs, kicks, flehman's response, false mounts, and services) were recorded. Semen was collected from six random ram and short-scrotum lambs. Ejaculates were measured and evaluated for semen quality.

Libido was similar in ram and short-scrotum rams, but ram lambs had more services. However, time to service was not different between ram and short-scrotum lambs. As expected, the wethers lacked libido. Ejaculate volumes were similar between ram and short-scrotum-lambs, but the ejaculates from the short-scrotum lambs were essentially devoid of sperm. The ram lambs had good semen quality.

At slaughter, testicles (pairs) were collected from five random ram and short-scrotum ram lambs. The testicles were dissected. The short-scrotum rams had significantly smaller testes than the ram lambs. The weight of epididymides was also smaller in the short-scrotum rams. Histological examination of the tissues revealed no mature sperm in the testes or epididymides of the short-scrotum lambs.

While the short-scrotum rams demonstrated similar mating behavior as the entire ram lambs, they were deemed to be sterile (infertile).

Susan Schoenian

is a University of Maryland Extension Sheep & Goat Specialist at the Western Maryland Research and Education Center. This article was initially published in the Fall 2018 issue of Wild & Woolly, a publication of the University of Maryland Cooperative Extension.

Management Calendar

Feb. 8-9
Maryland Sheep Shearing School.
Fairplay, Md.

Feb 12-13
MidAtlantic Women in Agriculture Conference. Dover Downs Hotel and Casino in Dover, Delaware. <http://extension.umd.edu/womeninag/annual-conference>

March 2
Bottle Feeding Lambs and Kids: 4-H Workshop. Wicomico County Extension Office, Salisbury, Md. <https://bottlebaby.eventbrite.com>, 410-632-1972

March 11
Novel Fescue Renovation Workshop. Southern Piedmont Agricultural & Extension Center, Blackstone, VA. www.vaforages.org/events/

March 13
Maryland Women in Ag Webinar: Protecting Yourself and Others on the Farm (pesticides and the Worker Protection Standard. 12 p.m. <https://2019.wednesdaywebinars.eventbrite.com>

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County meat men ponder the future

Kate Masters

*is a reporter at the
Frederick News-Post,
in which this article first
appeared. It is reprinted
with permission.*

Marketing Calendar

Apr. 22

Lamb sale. Farmers
Livestock Exchange,
Winchester, VA.
farmerslivestockva.
com

April 28
Greek Easter

May 6
Ramadan begins

May 27
Lamb sale. Farmers
Livestock Exchange,
Winchester, VA.
farmerslivestockva.
com

June 3
Lamb sale. Farmers
Livestock Exchange,
Winchester, VA.
farmerslivestockva.
com

June 4-6
Eid-al-Fitar

Shuff's Meat Market in Thurmont is an old building lined with white concrete bricks, decorated with Coca-Cola signs and filled with a neat row of chilled meat cases. Owners Robin Shuff and Brian Bowman are usually behind the counter. The morning I arrive, Bowman's standing behind one of the cases in a bloodstained white apron, joking with a customer.

"I'm telling you, honey, keep doing what you're doing," he calls out. "You look fantastic."

It's a small operation with impressive breadth to the back. There's the chilly processing room filled with stainless steel counters, where four of his employees are busy quartering hogs. The sound of saw cutting through bone, a low, dull roar, intermittently fills the space. There's a packaging room with brand new vacuum sealers — Bowman says they cost around \$40,000 — and a kitchen where they're cooking up huge vats of scrapple and puddin'. The smell of rendering fat fills the air. There's a walk-in freezer and the smoke room, where Shuff's makes its ham, jerky and pig's ears. There's a spice room filled with cardboard boxes and the smell of black pepper. And there's the hog room, where pigs are brought in to be stunned and slaughtered.

It's a bare cement room with a large metal drain in the center. Behind it are pens where the animals—pigs, cows and sheep—are kept before slaughter. Right next door is another kill floor where Bowman and his staff keep a 25-caliber captive-bolt stunner gun, a widely used method of humanely incapacitating cows and lambs before they're killed. The gun fires a blue-tipped cartridge against the animal's head, effectively knocking it unconscious before it's cut.

"It happens extremely fast," Bowman said. "Our job is not to mistreat these animals. We kill them extremely fast."

That's the raw side of butchering, the side that most of these processors bear on their own. That degree of separation is what allows customers to enjoy a beautiful ribeye steak, streaked with striations of fat, without thinking of the death that made it possible. That allows the average American to independently eat more than 200

pounds of meat this year, according to projections from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

I'll admit, there's a lurch in my stomach when Bowman shows me the electric stun gun, a \$3,000 piece of equipment with metal spurs that send more than an amp of electrical current through a hog's brain before slaughter. But really, who else is going to do that work? If you eat meat—and most of us do—that's the reality. A reality most of us are able to overlook thanks to people like Bowman.

Keeping small butchers alive

While thousands of people are thinking about beef and barbecue for the summer holidays, family butchers in Frederick County are plugging away and thinking of the future. It's not always a clear vision. Over the past decade, processors across District 80—a designation by the federal Food Safety and Inspection Service that includes Maryland, Virginia and Washington D.C.—have been shutting their doors for good. There's Dorsey's Meats, in Woodsboro, which closed in 2012. Gladhill Meat Market in Damascus folded in 2009. And this year, in Manchester—a small community in Carroll County—M& M Meats closed after more than 50 years in business.

"Our time had come," said George Maurer, 65, who took over the business from his father in 1987. "I'm getting older, and you can't keep cutting meat on the kill floor forever. We made a decision, and I feel good about making that decision."

Butchering has been going on for thousands of years, but age is still catching up to most of the small-time processors. Shuff's was started in 1956 by Robin's father, Harry William Shuff Sr. Wagner's Meats, in Mount Airy, was founded in 1953 by the grandfather of current owner Mickey Wagner. Shriver Meats, in Emmitsburg, dates back to 1964, and Hemp's Meats in Jefferson has been continuously operating since 1849.

"We were butchers and cattle dealers," said Bill Hemp, who took over the business with his brother, Gary, in the early 1980s. "I mean, we're going back to the pre-Civil War days. The family was operating here 60, 70 years before vehicles."

Age makes the shops interesting to most people, Hemp said, but it doesn't change the fact that there's a distinct lack of interest these days in full-time processing—the slaughtering, the butchering, the headache that comes with operating a small, federally regulated business. Nationwide, there are only 9,080 butchers and meat-cutters—workers who cut and prepare meat for retail consumption—who also handle

slaughtering and processing, according to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Hemp works at the store six days a week, clocking at least 60 hours, and just took his first three-day vacation in more than a year. Butchering is hard manual labor, and it can be gory. Bowman spent years at Shuff's running guts, or emptying manure from the viscera of animals before they're broken down.

"Some of this stuff is morbid," Hemp said. "If you went to college and you could get a six-figure job somewhere, the hell you want to do all this for? And take on a big debt? And work your whole life?"

He shifted in his seat.

"One of these days, I'm going to have to dial it back," he added. "You never know what your health circumstances will be. And I should take care of myself a little better. But, eventually, somebody younger—either family or not family is going to have to take over responsibility. My wife's been retired for 10 years. And so, she's ready to go more. I'm sort of cheating her a little bit."

Succession can be tricky. Hemp is 64. Bowman is 55. Wagner, the youngest of the Frederick County group, is 49. With the exception of the Shivers, who plan to pass down the business to their grandchildren, none of the Frederick County butchers have a guaranteed way to keep their shops in the family.

Wagner's 25-year-old son, Josh, has been working at the store for the last three months.

"Hopefully he'll take interest and really want to take it over," Wagner said.

As for the others...well, it's less clear. Hemp isn't sure who will take over. Bowman has a daughter and a 2-year-old granddaughter, but he's not sure whether either will be interested in the business when he and Robin retire.

"I'm just hoping for 10 more years," Bowman said. "Ten more. That could possibly change, but as of right now, currently sitting here with you, I think that the likelihood of the business and I continuing after Robin and I is not good."

There's also—for Bowman, at least—the issue of the USDA. At the time we spoke, Bowman wasn't happy. Not happy at all. A couple of weeks earlier, a group of Food Safety and Inspection Service supervisors had come to the store for a two-year humane slaughter assessment, part of a federal effort to ensure that animals in butcher shops are treated ethically. The day of their visit, a few of his staff members had trouble with what

Bowman described as a "very nervous" black Angus steer.

In its agitation, the animal took a total of three shots from the bolt gun before it was knocked unconscious, a violation of federal regulations that stipulate immediate unconsciousness with the use of a stunning instrument.

The incident marred Shuff's long record of ethical kills. The store wasn't shut down, but the agency has the power to make that call, Bowman said. Still, clearing the incident takes weeks of corrective actions and follow-up visits from inspectors. Shuff's was given "a Notice of Intended Enforcement," according to a statement from the FSIS, and "the agency will continue to monitor the establishment to ensure that its processes are in compliance with humane handling regulations."

That needles Bowman, a hot-tempered man with 40 years of experience in the butchering industry.

"We're not abusive," he said. "That's not our intended purpose. And I won't allow it. My wife won't allow it. But we get the job done. What's frustrating to me is you know that you get up every day and do 150 percent of your best, and to some people in this world, it's not good enough. Eventually, mom-and-pop stores aren't going to be able to comply with everything."

Even for stores without a recent citation, USDA regulations were a sensitive topic. Hemp understands the regulations; he really does, he said.

Testing the products is important.

Overseeing humane handling is an important part of regulating potential bad actors. But for small family operations, it can all seem onerous. Shuff's, Wagner's, and Shriver's are all required to have USDA inspectors onsite Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Hemp's is regulated on Monday when the store performs its slaughtering. Business is limited outside those hours, and the stores are responsible for their inspectors' overtime pay, and for independent laboratory testing to bolster federal product testing by the USDA.

"It seems like they're getting pickier and pickier about regulations," Wagner said. "Which is a good thing. But some stuff is just...whew. We've been doing it for 64 years and really haven't had



Mark Greenwood, a butcher at Hemp's Meats in Jefferson, hauls a slab of beef to a table saw to be cut.

Marketing ► any problems at all. But it just seems sometimes like it's not good enough."

"The federal regulations were always a challenge," Maurer added. "We were a very, very small plant, and we didn't have the resources that the larger plants do. We felt that with our age and what was being expected to keep up, we had enough. The time had come."

What about farmers?

In agricultural communities, the closure of small processors can have a deleterious effect on farmers. Frederick County is lucky to have four. Other areas are struggling. Last year, Wagner received a bid notice for a small processing plant on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, an area where farmers are often forced to drive miles to find a USDA-certified plant. His store picked up dozens of farmers after the closure of M& M in Manchester. The same is true for Shuff's, Hemp's and Shriver's, where farmers travel from as far as Virginia, West Virginia or even North Carolina for processing services.

"I have to schedule six months to a year in advance to make sure I get a space with Shriver's," said Nick Maravell, who raises Angus cattle and poultry on his farm in Adamstown. "People easily travel two hours or more to get there. There's a big demand."

The lack of federally certified slaughterhouses is such an issue that some aggravated farmers are petitioning for the Processing Revival and Intrastate Meat Exemption Act, a bill first introduced in Congress three years ago. If it's passed, it would allow farmers to sell meat processed by custom slaughterhouses—which don't receive daily USDA inspection—within state lines. As of right now, though, farmers are reliant on USDA-regulated operations if they want to sell their meat commercially.

"We're more fortunate in this area, but it's always a lot of planning," said Travis Kreitzer, whose family owns Good Hope Farmstead in Woodsboro. Processing has required even more forethought for them since the closure of M& M, where the farm sent lambs for processing. The family is still in the process of locating another local butcher shop.

"When these animals are born, I have to figure out how long it will be before they reach an ideal age and weight, and then reach out the butcher to see when they can fit us in," Kreitzer added. Farmers without local options can end up traveling for hundreds of miles to an out-of-state processor or raise their animals longer, through the winter, when their diets are supplemented by hay. That ends up increasing production costs,

which are later passed down to customers when they buy local meat.

Even when you take farmers out of the picture, there's communal value in buying meat from local butchers. Thousands of people make a ritual of eating Hemp's at The Great Frederick Fair. Generations of families have ordered their meat from Wagner's for the holiday.

"The customers would suffer if we closed," Wagner said. "Finding good food. Wholesome food. It all boils down to the fact that we have good, clean meat. And that's important."

From a purely practical standpoint, it's easier to get what you want from a local butcher than the supermarket, where most of the butchering and processing has been moved to centralized plants in the Midwest.

One afternoon, I called Shuff's to order some prime rib for the weekend.

Robin answered the phone and quickly narrowed down my order. Roast or steaks? Steaks. How many? Two. How thick? One inch. Bone in or bone out? Bone in.

When I came to pick them up, Bowman recommended grilling them over hickory charcoal. I bought a bag and cooked both to rare with some asparagus and roasted potatoes. Easy. Breezy. Perfect.



Have two very sharp knives, a saw, and a can-do attitude? Try breaking down your own lamb, in record time.

In a 15-minute video British butcher Scott Rea demonstrates classic lamb butchery: a simple lamb breakdown, cut in real time: two legs, two shoulders, four steaks and 26 lamb chops. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T45aVFGMrMg&feature=youtu.be>.

Doing it yourself: Breaking down a Lamb

Among the many videos on Rea's YouTube channel is a longer video with a more detailed explanation of the steps of separating the lamb into primal and then secondary cuts.



Management ▶

And here's another video for you visual learners out there: Dr. Reid Redden, sheep and goat specialist at Texas A&M University's Agrilife Extension, provides a concise hands-on demonstration of body scoring in sheep in a new YouTube video.

A body scoring tutorial

Redden also relates body condition to ewe health, productivity, and profitability from a study conducted at the center.

Underconditioned ewes (scoring at 2.5 on a 1 to 5 scale, with 1 being very thin and 5 being obese) had lower lambing rates, and those lambs were smaller, did not thrive or survive to weaning, and had considerably lower weaning weights (with much lower profit per ewe). The underconditioned ewes also harbored three times as many parasite larvae as the well-conditioned ewes (scoring at 3.5).

The 7½-minute video can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gCu04ueCKOo&feature=youtu.be>.



The Virginia Forage and Grassland Council, Virginia Cooperative Extension, and the Alliance for Grassland Renewal are sponsoring a day-long Novel Fescue Renovation Workshop March 11 in Blackstone, Virginia.

Replacing toxic fescue

Toxic tall fescue reduces livestock weight gains and lowers reproductive performance. This workshop will give

producers the tools and information needed to remove the toxic tall fescue and replace it with novel tall fescue varieties. Speakers include local producers, company representatives, and researchers from across the country.

Topics covered include: symptoms and causes of fescue toxicosis, economics, establishment and first-year management, seed and endophyte testing, long-term pasture management, commercial products, and incentives. A producer panel rounds out the presentation.

The cost of the workshop, which includes lunch, refreshments, and proceedings, is \$70 per person/\$100 couple (if received before March 1). To register go to www.vaforges.org/events/.

The workshop and plot tours take place at the Southern Piedmont Agricultural Research & Extension Center, 2375 Darvills Road, Blackstone, VA 23824.

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The annual MidAtlantic Women in Agriculture Conference takes place February 12-13 at the Dover Downs Hotel and Casino in Dover, Delaware. The conference's goals are to educate, engage and empower women.

The Conference consists of preconference sessions in addition to the main day-long conference.

The preconference topics from which participants can choose are "The Family Farm Legacy: Keeping the "Family" in your Farm," and "Connecting Through Effective Agriculture Communication: Building Trust, Respecting Voices, Engaging New Audiences." Those take place from 1 to 5 p.m. February 12.

The main conference is from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. February 13. Breakout sessions include: cover cropping systems, designer ditches, what's new in farm taxes, social media regulations, what to grow in an urban garden, and operating a successful agritourism destination.

To register/for information go to <http://extension.umd.edu/womeninag/annual-conference>.



The Frederick County Sheep Breeders Association is sponsoring a full-day class on dyeing wool yarn on April 14. Several local fiber artists will teach two sections of the 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. class: acid dyes and natural dyes.

Each participant will leave with a minimum of three acid-dyed 40-yard skeins, three natural-dyed 40-yard skeins, and a pattern to use them in.

The class is limited to 20 participants. The fee, which includes all materials and lunch, is \$80 for FCSBA members and \$100 for nonmembers. A \$20 deposit will hold your spot.

This is a hands-on, mostly outdoor activity (please dress accordingly).

Contact Patricia Sanville, 240-357-1437, for more information and to reserve your place.

A yummy cochineal dyepot.

Women in Ag conference
Feb. 12-13

Dye Day on the Farm
in April



Maryland News ▶ **The Maryland Wool Pool** may have ended, but it is far from forgotten, thanks to a new publication authored/edited by David Greene, former pool coordinator, shearer, and long-time Maryland Sheep Breeders Association member and officer.

A history of the Maryland Wool Pool

Greene began raising sheep about the time the Wool Pool began, and has been friends with each of the six other pool managers. And so it was natural that the MSBA board asked him to write this history.

The History of the Maryland Wool Pool documents not only the 60-year history of the pool itself, but of preliminary sheep and wool marketing organizations dating back to 1918 (when the first meeting of the Maryland Sheep Growers Association was held in Baltimore).

He meticulously documents the origins, operations, and evolution of the pool, and in the process provides the larger history of



Loading burlap "sausage bags" of wool onto a freight car. [Image reproduced from the book]

wool marketing in the Mid-Atlantic region as transportation, technology, and wool handling changed. Meeting minutes, vintage images, and original documents relating to Maryland wool marketing are included.

Greene and wife Nancy have covered the cost of writing, designing and printing this book as a memorial to all the leaders who started the Maryland Wool Pool and kept it going. To find out how to obtain a copy contact Kris Thorne at msbmembershipchair@gmail.com.



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Greenes featured

in Environmental Trust publication

David and Nancy Greene are featured in the spring-summer 2018 issue of *Land Marks*, the publication of the Maryland Environmental Trust (MET), which celebrated its 51st year in 2018.

David serves on the MET board and has placed a conservation easement on his 100-acre farm (owned by his family for 233 years).

They describe how farmers' markets have expanded markets and profitability for their operation. "Farmers' markets and the Buy Local movement work together to help small specialty farmers flourish," states David.

Nancy and David at the farm. [Image by Toby Lloyd, reproduced with permission from MET]



The 2018 Maryland Sheep & Wool Festival Fleece Show & Sale ran like a well-oiled machine. Spirits ran high and positive throughout preparation, set-up, and execution. We are enormously grateful for the community of volunteers who work on all the moving parts to make this happen.



Highlights included:

- Return of excellent judges Judith McKenzie and Harriet Boon, along with our breed-specific judges from the Sheep Show ring Mike Salisbury and Craig Leonard.



- Natural Colored Wool Growers Association (NCWGA), as the Festival's Featured "Breed," offered awards for the best natural colored fleeces in each class of handspinning fleeces (Fine, Medium, Long/Coarse, and Primitive/Double Coated).



- There were 15 entries for the first running of the Maryland Shepherds Cup Award competition. Fifteen Maryland shepherds each entered their 5 best handspinning fleeces. Our first winner of this perpetual award was Pam Helton of Frederick with her entry of 5 beautiful Gotland fleeces. Our congratulations to Pam for this win from among very good company.



The numbers reflect the continuing vitality of the fleece marketplace that the Fleece Show & Sale offers:

Consigned to the sale were 922 fleeces (totaling 4,981 lbs) from 161 producers from 15 states; 704 fleeces (3,607 lbs) were sold to 339 buyers from 28 states plus Canada.

Overall, asking prices ranged from \$3 to \$110 per pound, with an average of \$16.32/lb. The price range for fleeces that sold was also from \$3/lb to \$110/lb, but the average selling price was \$16.34.

Coated fleeces made up 41 percent of those entered, and sold, on average, for 74 percent more (per pound) than uncoated fleeces (\$22.54/lb versus \$12.96/lb).

The silent auction was again a great success. Starting prices are the asking prices set by the producers when they enter their fleeces. This year the auction resulted in price increases that ranged from 125 percent (Division III Champion fleece, a 9.25 lb. Merino, sold for \$290 after an asking price of \$231) to 200 percent (Reserve



Grand Champion Fleece, a 10-lb natural colored Corriedale cross with an asking price of \$250, was bid up and sold for \$500).

With total sales of \$56,078, the sale put \$49,213 into the pockets of producers, representing an increase of \$2,357 over the previous year. A total of 113 MSBA members made up 73 percent of the participating producers, and took home 70 percent of the earnings (a total of \$39,157). The Fleece Show & Sale continues to provide an important service to MSBA members through the Festival. Commission collected on the fleece sales provides critical support for other important Festival activities that are not revenue-generating, but enable us to embrace and fulfill MSBA mission elements through the Festival. We are most grateful to everyone who participates in making the Fleece Show & Sale such a success.

2018 Fleece Show and Sale report

Lee Langstaff
MSBA President

Fleece Show and Sale Special Award Winners

Grand Champion Fleece: Geof Ruppert (Merino)

Reserve Grand Champion Fleece: Peggy Howell (Corriedale-cross)

Division I - Natural Colored Champion: Peggy Howell (Corriedale-cross)

Division II – White Champion: Geof Ruppert (Merino)

Division III – Breed Specific Champion: Terry Mendenhall (Merino)

Pat Brown Memorial Award for Best Maryland Fleece: Peggy Howell (Corriedale-cross)

Tyson Creamer Memorial Award for Best 4H Fleece: Abigail Willis (Corriedale)

Best Uncoated Fleece: Stormy Stark (Wensleydale-cross)

Maryland Shepherds Cup for best set of 5 handspinning fleeces from a Maryland shepherd: Pamela Helton (5 Gotland fleeces)

NCWGA Champion Fleece (Overall & Longwool): Cynthia Langstaff (Romeldale-cross)

NCWGA Reserve Champion Fleece (Overall & Medium): Lee Langstaff (Corriedale-cross)

NCWGA Fine Wool: Don & Megan Burgess (Merino)

Complete judging results can also be found on the Festival website: www.sheepandwool.org.

Festival News ▶

One of the less well known components of the Maryland Sheep & Wool Festival may be the Youth Conservationist Program (YCP). This program, started around 1996 by Richard and Donna Larson of Old Gjerpen Farm, supports aspiring shepherds aged 9—18 in raising heritage breeds of wool sheep.

Youth Conservationist Program promotes heritage breeds

Carolann McConaughy

co-owns Stillpoint Farm and Milkhouse Brewery in Mount Airy, Maryland.

Why heritage breeds? Heritage breeds have been developed by careful selection over hundreds of generations to be uniquely tailored to fit a specific purpose and thrive in a specific environment. Preserving this diverse genetic heritage is key to preserving the unique traits of many of these breeds. These animals are particularly well adapted to sustainable agriculture practices. Typically the breeds were selected for their ability to thrive and provide a good return on limited resources. Conserving these breeds protects the genetic diversity they represent and preserves the ability to the ability to adapt to future needs with animal husbandry systems that work harmoniously with the environment.

As of 2018, The Livestock Conservancy includes 22 breeds of sheep on its Conservation Priority List, of which 11 are unique to North America. Five of these are considered in the critical category, 10 threatened, 4 on the watch list, and 3 recovering.

The YCP seeks to encourage our young shepherds to become part of the effort to preserve these breeds and the genetic diversity they represent. Interested youth apply by writing an essay that states why they want to help conserve a heritage breed. They must also obtain a recommendation from someone who can attest that they will be good caretakers (vet, 4-H leader, etc.), and have parental permission. The child and their parent sign an agreement delineating the many requirements that they are to fulfill: showing, promoting their breed, using the fiber, and breeding the ewe to a registered ram of her breed.

It is estimated that more than 200 sheep have been donated to youth through this program over the years. In 2018 the largest group ever, 18 recipients, were presented with sheep. Many, many of the youth or their families have donated back to the YCP. Every year there is at least one past recipient that is donating back. Maryland breeders are also seeing the benefits of the YCP. This year several MSBA members donated ewes: Gotlands from Dr. Polly Matzinger’s Ambling Brook Farm, a Lincoln from Barbara Mullen’s Little Creek farm, and a Leicester Longwool from Carol McConaughy’s Stillpoint Farm. Colonial Williamsburg and Mount Vernon also participate in the program. Many folks stopped by this year to say the YCP program “works”—young people



Caroline Clark of Thurmont, Md., receiving her new registered Leicester Longwool ewe from Carol McConaughy at the 2018 Festival.

are promoting the sheep industry and continuing to do so into adulthood. As a previous donor related, the YCP was like “tossing a pebble in a lake, the ripples are ever widening.”

Interested in finding out more about heritage breeds and how you might fit in? Check out: *An Introduction to Heritage Breeds by the Livestock Conservancy* with Dr. Phillip Sponenberg, D.V.M., Jeanette Beranger, and Allison Martin.

For more information on the YCP contact Elaine Ashcraft @ tankewe_cr58@yahoo.com.



Maryland Sheep News is published four times a year by the Maryland Sheep Breeders Association, Inc., and is sent to MSBA members. See back page for membership application. **Contact the editor for permission to reprint articles.**

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Third	7.5 x 3	\$45, \$150/year
Quarter	3.3 x 4.25	\$30, \$100/year
Biz card	3.3 x 2	\$15, \$50/year
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sheep@budiansky.com

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1126 Slingluff Road
New Windsor, MD 21776

Maryland Sheep Breeders Association, Inc.

Officers & Directors

Executive Committee

President Lee Langstaff 24020 Old Hundred Rd. Dickerson, MD 20842 301-908-9332 lmlangstaff@gmail.com	Vice President Jeffrey White 3610 Baker Road Westminster, MD 21157 410-746-5768 chestnutcreekfarm@gmail.com	Secretary Emily Chamelin Hickman 3230 Eckard Road Westminster, MD 21157 443-244-2702 aeriendairy@yahoo.com	Treasurer Colleen Histon 1126 Slingluff Road New Windsor, MD 21776 240-388-6633 shepherdsmanorcreamery@verizon.net
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Ex Officio

American Sheep Industry Association Liaison	Emily Chamelin Hickman	3230 Eckard Road Westminster, MD 21157	443-244-2702	aeriendairy@yahoo.com
Membership	Kris Thorne	1130 Martin Drive Westminster, MD 21157	410-848-6971	msbamembershipchair@gmail.com
Sheep & Wool Festival	Gwen Handler	935 Bloom Road Westminster, MD 21157	410-857-4387	gwenhandler@gmail.com
Make It With Wool	Judy Williamson	6924 Girl Scout Road Boonsboro, MD 21713	301-432-0281	judy10503@aol.com
Maryland Shearing School	Aaron Geiman	429 Hook Road Westminster, MD 21157	443-340-2322	adgeiman75@gmail.com

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	Laurie Hynson	744 Berrymans Lane Reisterstown, MD 21136	410-833-7302	chickenmama61@yahoo.com
	Andrew Keller	28301 Clarksburg Road Damascus, MD 20872	301-676-6287	vistaviewfarms@gmail.com
	Carol McConaughy	8253 Dollyhyde Road Mt. Airy, MD 21771	301-829-6950	stillpointfarmsheep@gmail.com
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	Rosalind Hain	201 Monroe Avenue Frederick, MD 21703	301-788-8271	rlh2@hotmail.com
	Stephanie Scuderi	21808 Woodfield Road Gaithersburg, MD 20882	301-219-9629	stephanie@foxbhollowfarm.org
2021 Directors	Ken Farrell	12119 Renner Road Keymar, MD 21757	301-304-0272	ktf10626@msn.com
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	Lynn Roberts	19636 Graystone Road White Hall, MD 21161	410-299-0486	luckylandfarm@gmail.com

Maryland Sheep News Editor	Martha Polkey	14605 Chapel Lane Leesburg, VA 20176	703-727-5604	sheep@budiansky.com
Website Coordinator	Kris Thorne	1130 Martin Drive Westminster, MD 21157	410-848-6971	msbamembershipchair@gmail.com

Maryland Sheep Breeders Association
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like us!



The Maryland Sheep Breeders Association Board of Directors meets every other month. Meetings are open to members. For minutes of meetings and meeting dates and times, contact the MSBA Secretary, Emily Chamelin Hickman, aeriedairy@yahoo.com.

Membership application
 MARYLAND SHEEP BREEDERS ASSOCIATION

Name: _____

Farm Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Please include me in the MSBA Breeders Directory.

Web URL: _____

Breed(s): _____ No. Ewes: _____

Send form and \$25 check made payable to MSBA to Kris Thorne, Membership Chair, 1130 Martin Drive, Westminster, MD 21157. She will contact you for additional information for the breeders directory and online profile.

Join *the*

MARYLAND SHEEP BREEDERS ASSOCIATION

...and become part of an active organization that sponsors the Maryland Sheep & Wool Festival (the premier event of its kind in the nation), Sheep Shearing School, various youth activities, and a variety of educational functions.

You can join and pay online at <http://marylandsheepbreeders.org>, and fill out your member profile page. If you prefer to register by mail, fill out the form at left and mail with your \$25 check.

Here are sponsored events and activities for 2019:

- February 8-9: Beginning Shearing School
- February 23: Shepherds Seminar Day
- May 4-5: Maryland Sheep & Wool Festival
- October 25: Annual Meeting & Dinner

As a member you will:

- join an active and friendly community of shepherds.
- receive the quarterly *Maryland Sheep News* and keep up on events, get educational articles, and have a local place to advertise.
- pay a reduced commission on all fleeces sold at the Maryland Sheep & Wool Festival Fleece Show & Sale.
- receive free admission to the Maryland Sheep & Wool Festival and be mailed a free copy of the catalog.
- Be eligible for a free listing in the printed MSBA Members Directory and a free profile page on the MSBA website.

Annual membership/subscription fee: \$25. The membership year runs from October through September. Dues for membership received prior to June 1, 2019, will be accepted as paid through September 30, 2019. Dues received on or after June 1 will be accepted as paid through September 30, 2020.