

Malik is 2024 Shepherd of the Year

Twilight silhouettes. [Image by Martha Polkey]

Naveed Malik is the 2024 Maryland Sheep Breeders Association (MSBA) Shepherd of the Year.

Naveed began his journey into farming as many do—with chickens. The flock of chickens went from a few to more than 60 quickly.

Next up was the garden. If you have a garden, you start worrying about pollination—so bees were added to the farm.

As the farm grew, so did the desire to produce more food and, to meet the goal of more sustainable clothing, sheep seemed the perfect fit.

Naveed, his wife Raheena, and their two children have fully embraced the farming life. Along with this came the desire to educate others, and Naveed could be found attending classes and trainings and visiting farms and festivals.

Now you can find him giving back to the community by manning a space in the breed display at the Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival. He'll also be seen vending at the Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival, the Shepherds Farm Market, the Frederick Fiber Festival and the Maryland Alpaca and Fleece Festival.

Naveed is also a member of the MSBA board of directors, where his positive energy, creative solutions, and willingness to step up when helping hands are needed left us no doubt that he should be recognized with this award.



MSBA Vice President Emily Chamelin and President Steve Breeding with Shepherd of the Year Malik at the Annual Meeting in October, at the Frederick County Fairgrounds.

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More 51st Maryland Festival Fleece Show results

Whoops! Due to an editing error, the summer edition of Maryland Sheep News omitted these winners of the Fleece Show from last May's Festival. Congratulations to them!

Division III - Breed-specific: Border Leicester

1st — Marcia Haggie

2nd — Taylor & Lynnesta Howman & Casto

At right, one of Marcia's rams in the 2019 Festival Breed Display. [Image from Facebook]



One-Skillet Baked Gnocchi with American Lamb & Feta

Recipe by "Platings & Pairings," from the AmericanLamb.com website.

1 T olive oil
 1/2 medium onion, diced
 2 cloves garlic, minced
 1 lb ground American lamb
 1 T Italian seasoning
 1/2 t salt, plus more to taste
 Pinch black pepper

1 15-oz can tomato sauce
 1 15-oz can diced tomatoes (undrained)
 2 T harissa paste
 1 lb uncooked potato gnocchi
 6 oz feta cheese, crumbled
 Fresh parsley, to garnish

1. Preheat your oven to 400°F.
2. Heat oil in a large, oven-safe skillet over medium-high heat. Add onions and a pinch of salt and cook until softened, 4-5 minutes.
3. Add garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds.
4. Add American lamb, Italian seasoning, salt and pepper. Cook over medium-high heat, stirring often to break up lamb, until browned and crumbly.
5. Add the tomato sauce, diced tomatoes, harissa and gnocchi to the skillet and stir to combine. Top with feta cheese.
6. Place in the oven and bake for 25-30 minutes, until bubbly and cheese has melted. Let sit for 5 minutes before serving.
7. Sprinkle with fresh parsley and enjoy!



American Lamb Board Launches cooking club

The American Lamb Board has launched a new website to "invite fans of lamb to monthly cooking classes, delicious recipes, and a community forum to chat about all things American Lamb." Here are two of the [many recipes](#) you can enjoy and share with your lamb customers.

American Lamb Meatball and Orzo Soup

Recipe by "Homemade," from the AmericanLamb.com website.

For the meatballs:

1 lb ground lamb
 1/4 c breadcrumbs
 1 egg, beaten
 2 garlic cloves, minced
 1 t ground cumin
 1 t dried oregano
 1/2 t smoked paprika
 Zest of 1 lemon
 1/2 t salt
 1/4 t black pepper

For the soup:

1 T olive oil
 1 small onion, diced

2 garlic cloves, minced
 1 carrot, diced
 1 celery stalk, diced
 6 c chicken or vegetable broth
 1/2 c dry orzo pasta
 4 c fresh spinach, roughly chopped
 Juice of 1 lemon

For the creamy tahini-miso base:

3 T tahini
 1 T white miso paste
 1/4 c water

To serve:

Lemon wedges
 Fresh dill, chopped



1. Make the meatballs: In a large bowl, mix together all meatball ingredients until just combined. Roll into small, bite-sized meatballs (about 1 inch). Heat a large pot or Dutch oven over medium heat with a drizzle of olive oil. Sear the meatballs in batches until browned on all sides (they don't need to be fully cooked). Remove and set aside.
2. Sauté the aromatics: In the same pot, add the onion, garlic, carrot, and celery. Sauté for 3-4 minutes until softened and fragrant.
3. Simmer the soup: Add the broth and bring to a gentle boil. Stir in the orzo and return the meatballs to the pot. Simmer for 10-12 minutes, until the orzo is tender and the meatballs are cooked through.
4. Prepare the creamy base: In a small bowl, whisk together tahini, miso paste, and water until smooth.
5. Finish the soup: Reduce the heat to low. Stir the tahini-miso mixture into the soup, followed by the chopped spinach and lemon juice. Simmer for 2-3 minutes until the spinach is wilted and the broth is creamy.
6. Serve: Ladle the soup into bowls and garnish with fresh dill or parsley. Serve with lemon wedges on the side for extra brightness.

The **Opening Session** of the American Sheep Industry Association, on Thursday afternoon, January 16, in Scottsdale, Arizona, leans strongly into new technology and meshing clean energy with sheep production.

Titled “**Energizing the Sheep Industry with Solar**,” the discussion will be moderated by New York farmer Lexie Hain, co-founder of the American Solar Grazing Association and currently Director of Agrivoltaics and Land Management at Lightsource bp, a company focused on “implementing solar with agriculture, conservation and biodiversity.”

Panelists at the session are:

Daniel Dotterer lives on his family farm, outside of State College, Pennsylvania. His family has been farming in Pennsylvania continuously since 1722. He is the 12th generation of Dotterers now to farm here in Pennsylvania, but after college he took a sharp detour west to work in the entertainment business, acting, participating in and writing for game shows. (Ask him about balancing a wheelbarrow on his chin on the Jay Leno show.)



Dotterer wearing augmented reality glasses on his family farm. [Image courtesy Positively Pennsylvania.com]

Ryan Indart is a third-generation California sheep, cherry, orange, almond, and wheat farmer who also owns a company that specializes in sheep grazing for fire fuel loads reduction in large utility scale solar sites throughout the Western United States.

Reid Redden, former sheep and goat specialist and center director for Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension in San Angelo, co-founded Permier Solar Sheep and serves as vice president of agrivoltaics.

Loran Shallenberger leads the Regenerative Energy® platform at Nashville-based Silicon Ranch, which combines renewable energy production with sustainable land management, “integrating agrivoltaic practices to restore ecosystems, support biodiversity, and strengthen rural economies.” The company has developed projects in Tennessee, Georgia, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Colorado.

David Wen, with international renewable energy company AES Corporation, is leading efforts to expand the AES portfolio to incorporate new technologies for vegetation management including grazing. AES’s portfolio currently



includes more than 10,000 acres of operational projects under sheep grazing.

Presentations scheduled for the **Wool Council** meeting on January 17 will include segments on international promotion of American wool, marketing American wool brands to consumers, and a report on the New York Fashion Innovation Center and Hudson Valley Textile Project.

The **Animal Health Committee** will present U.S. Department of Agriculture updates on: the APHIS National Animal Health Monitoring System, the National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program, and the scrapie eradication program.

Animal health research topics will include avian influenza in livestock, scrapie research on differentiating chronic wasting disease prions from scrapie prions, and an alarming threat of a new world screwworm.

Post-convention, ASI presentations from meetings and information sessions. The 2025 presentations will be posted at [this link](#). We’ll look forward to **Maryland’s ASI representative Patty Sanville’s** report in the next issue of *Maryland Sheep News*.

The **Make It With Wool National Competition** takes place January 16-18. Last year’s final fashion show is available on YouTube at [this link](#); we’ll look forward to another recording after this month’s event. See page 13 for the winners of Maryland’s state contest. We wish them well in Scottsdale!

Solar, textiles, disease threats are focus in ASI convention lineup

Deadline for drought disaster aid application approaching

Farmers have until January 31 to apply for compensation from the [Livestock Forage Disaster Program](#) (LFP) for grazing losses as a result of drought. LFP is administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

An eligible livestock producer who, as a grazed forage crop producer, owns or leases grazing land or pastureland physically located in a county rated by the U.S. Drought Monitor as having a D2 (severe drought), D3 (extreme drought), or D3 (extreme drought).

For more information about FSA assistance programs, visit [farmers.gov](#) or contact your local FSA office. To find your local FSA office, visit [farmers.gov/service-center-locator](#).

**National news
and views ▶**

Opportunities and Challenges for U.S.- Grown and -Sewn Wool

Martha Polkey

Maryland Sheep News editor

Three farm-to-closet wool garment company owners sat down with a Montana State University (MSU) sheep and wool specialist in September to discuss on the challenges and opportunities facing U.S. companies trying to compete in a global market to revive the U.S.-grown and -sewn wool and natural fiber clothing supply chain.

Held in conjunction with the Montana Ram & Ewe Sale in Miles City, the panel discussion featured Ben Hostetler (Mountain Meadow Wool, Wyoming), Evan Helle (Duckworth Wool, Montana) and Wade Kopren (Fishhook Sock Company, South Dakota). Brent Roeder, MSU Extension Sheep and Wool Specialist, moderated.

[Mountain Meadow Wool](#), which opened its doors in 2007, is a full-service custom processing wool mill in Buffalo, Wyoming. A family operation, it is owned by Karen Hostetler and her son, Ben, whose engineering background was instrumental in the innovative and environmentally friendly scouring process the mill uses.

[Duckworth Wool](#) clothing is made from Merino fleeces grown on the (fourth-generation) Helle family ranch in Dillon, Montana, and on other select ranches in the Rocky Mountains. They engage mills in the Midwest and East in their Sheep to Shelf™ U.S.-made fabrication process.

[Fishhook Sock Company](#), based in South Dakota, is co-owned by Wade Kopren, wife Jenny and Wade's parents. After 25 years shearing and running shearing crews in six states, in 2019 Wade plunged into the value-added market, making socks from his family's Targhee and Rambouillet flocks.

Before introducing the panelists, Roeder reminded the audience of just how much non-natural fiber comes into the United States each year.

"We're currently importing about 8 and a half billion pounds of synthetic fabric per year into the United States—so 25.5 pounds of synthetic fabric per person," Roeder said. "A lot of that synthetic fabric is going to be around for 400 years, getting into our water system" (as microplastics). He anticipates that appreciation for natural fibers such as wool, and the slow fashion movement, will rise as the impacts of synthetic fibers and climate change increase.

Skilled workforce deficit

Asked what their SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) for their businesses and the industry would include, the

panelists agreed that a significant challenge is the closure of more and more mills—and the loss of the knowledge and skills of the workers who staffed them.

"I think one of the biggest weaknesses we currently face is lack of skill set, and especially with more and more large-scale facilities shutting down, there's going to be a massive knowledge and skill gap growing in the United States, and you don't have a really way to build that skill back up very easily," said Mountain Meadow Wool's Hostetler.

Helle, from Duckworth, also noted that many of the remaining mills, which often have older equipment, are losing the institutional knowledge that makes them run. "You'll go in there and there'll be a 70- or 80-year-old guy that's been there his whole life, and he knows everything inside and out about that factory. But we're losing those guys, and finding young people to fill those roles is definitely a really big challenge."

Hostetler noted that the University of Wyoming was the last U.S. four-year college that offered wool science and technology education facilities (shutting down in the early 2000s), further exacerbating skilled workforce training deficits. Without a new generation possessing the technical training to staff textile production facilities, expansion of on-shoring of natural textile production will be difficult.

But they noted strengths and opportunities as well.

Face-to-face with consumers

"I think one of the biggest strengths that U.S. manufacturers have is how close they are to the end consumer," Helle said. "The U.S. consumer is the coveted consumer across the world: we have the biggest consumer base; we have the most money [to spend]." Being "neighbors with the end consumer," he said, allows Duckworth better assess what customers want and what they respond to.

The number of mini-mills in the United States is another bright spot, according to Hostetler. "There's like 130 or so in the United States right now," he said, adding that the products those "cottage" mills get into consumers' hands, through farmers' markets and other local outlets, connect Americans to the local fiber producers who educate them about the value of home-grown wool. "They have the ability to reach a lot of consumers." They are out there every day working in the industry," he said, building loyalty and appreciation for American wool.

That role in boosting domestic demand for wool is the essential precursor to any possibility of



increasing the health of remaining U.S. mills that process natural fibers.

Social media

Asked about the role social media plays in their businesses, the panelists noted the challenge of understanding the different audiences that patronize the many different platforms, the constantly changing algorithms, and the need to engage companies expert in marketing online to test ad effectiveness.

The importance of social media to their businesses was without question.

“I guess the one takeaway from social media is that it’s an expectation that you have a good social media presence, because that’s the face of your brand,” Helle said. “There’s no other location where people are really getting that brand voice.”

The panelists agreed that their companies’ stories, based on Western sheep ranching traditions, were marketing assets.

Challenges for traditional mills

Asked by Roeder how they would characterize the landscape ahead for expansion of wool milling capacity in the nation, they agreed that it will likely not be in the rejuvenation of large mills, which in the 1950s, ’60s, and ’70s, typically received large orders for department stores to market.

“You’d have those big factories cranking out a ton of the same product because that’s what the orders were,” Hostetler said. “That kind of that kind of industry has gone overseas. Those large factories, he said, were “set up to run high volume, low margin—and that’s no longer a viable business option.”

His perception of the larger mills’ difficulties was “I think they weren’t able to adapt to the change in consumer demand, or the demand was changing too fast for these larger manufacturers to adapt to.”

Some of the mills that remain are becoming more nimble, and Helle, Hostetler and Fishhook’s Kopren affirmed that they all work to nudge the mills toward smaller orders.

“What Duckworth had to do is go into these big mills that are designed for big volume, and try to negotiate smaller orders to get started and build them up,” Helle said.

“I think that’s why the smaller mills are having a lot of success, because entrepreneurs have a low barrier of entry to be able to start making a product.”

Adaptation

Roeder asked panelists what possibilities they see for mutually beneficial relationships between their businesses and the remaining larger mills willing to do business in the United States.

Hostetler said solving the problem of the 12- to 18-month lead time that those mills generally require to get a product made is key—and a difficult one, given the complex scheduling that those large operations must juggle.

“If you look at, say, Chargeurs, they need to plan out 12 to 18 months and they’ve got to have that person employed today and then employ them tomorrow and employ them in January,” he said. “Once you’ve decided: ‘I want to make a product, and okay I’ve got the wool. I want to start the process’. I then am waiting 12 to 18 months for the product I can sell.”

“I’m just racking my brain trying to figure out what those big factories can do,” Helle said. “It’s definitely a very difficult business to be in. You’ve got a bunch of machines and a bunch of people; you’ve got to keep them busy.”

“Those factories are slowly trying to convert their business model—their machines and training—into running smaller batches, more unique batches, more custom products to serve more customers.”

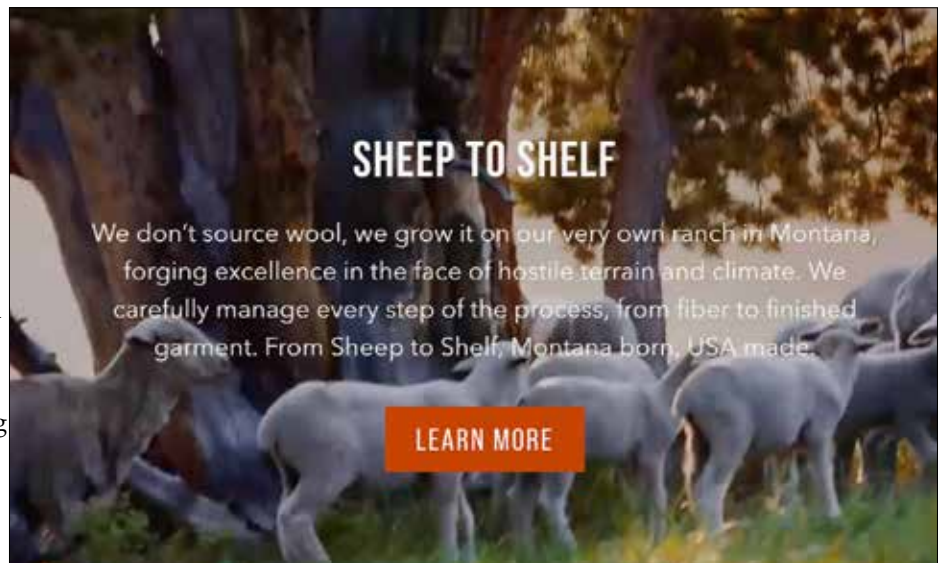
And Helle has found that nimbleness among some of them, placing repeated orders with the ones that have been the most receptive. “They’ll just turn it around quick, or they’ll have a lot of different options that we can [consider to] change the product and develop really quickly.”

Shift in wool clothing preferences

Roeder asked the panelists their impressions of trends in the industry, and how their businesses have benefitted from or responded to them.

◀ National news and views

Duckworth emphasizes domestic production and western ranching traditions on its website.



National news and views ►

All three panelists, as fabricators of fine-wool products, noted the decline in domestic manufacturing of the traditional heavier woolen garments (tweed blazers, sweaters, and other weightier garments). “Wool nowadays is really moving into sport, athletics and outdoors,” Helle said.

“The younger generations now are very health-focused. They’re very concerned about their reproductive health—there’s a lot of talk about PFAS [per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances in many synthetic textiles, which persist in the environment and have adverse health effects], and all the chemicals that come with these plastic-made garments. So right now, there is a lot of demand for naturally made products,” he said.

Kopren noted the special challenges of producing hard-wearing wool socks. “It’s actually hard to make wool products without incorporating some of those synthetics.” But, he said, ongoing research is aimed at supplanting those synthetic fibers with natural strong ones, such as hemp. (A representative from [Bear Fiber](#) in North Carolina, which currently offers a fabric combining hemp and cotton, was unable to attend the Montana event.)

“In the United States there’s a lot of investment—it’s not there yet, but I think that [hemp] is another fiber you can see coming online very soon, that could potentially blend well with wool.”

Mountain Meadow Wool’s website promotes its Western full service operation. It outsources to Eastern mills such as Chargeurs for scouring and other services to expedite customer orders.



CURRENT OPERATIONS

Today Mountain Meadow Wool Mill is the largest full service mill in the West (raw wool enters one side of the facility and finished yarn, apparel, and other products exit the other side). We offer custom processing, custom blending and spinning, as well as 23 different types of yarns that can be hand-dyed in custom colors. We are 100% natural, using bio-degradable soaps and non-petroleum spinning oil and we also recycle 50% of the water we use through the scouring process. Mountain Meadow currently processes over 60,000 lbs of wool a year. We are selling in 42 states and 3 countries overseas and are always looking for more opportunities to expand.

(In the Mid-Atlantic, flax production [for linen] is another potential strong fiber that could supplant synthetic ones for hard-use textiles. The Pennsylvania Flax Project currently is seeking farmers committing to expanding acreage to flax. It has acquired harvesting equipment from Europe and planning for construction of processing facilities is underway.)

The future

Asked by Roeder what the panelists see in the future for their operations or the industry in general, Mountain Meadow’s

Hostetler predicted market growth—but with a caveat.

“Our goal in 15-20 years is to be about four or five times bigger and try to go from really small scale to kind of in the midscale range,” he said. But growth hinges on being able to secure and perpetuate the employee skill set into the future. “Evan [Helle] mentioned that 70-year-old working in the factory, probably the expert of that machine, and they’ve been doing it for 30 or 40 years.” He said his mill’s growth will require developing those experts, who in turn are training newer employees. “We need someone with 10 years of experience able to train somebody underneath until they’ve got 10 years of experience, with their assistant learning the trade.”

Helle sees future potential in new 3-D knitting technologies coming online, offered by several companies.

“You can essentially pick your pick your styles, make your catalog, and if a customer buys off your website, that order will go straight there. They’ll put the yarn on the machine, 3-D knit it, and it will come out basically finished,” he said. “There’s very little finish work. They’ll package it and ship it directly to the customer for you.”

“That’s real; that’s happening today.”

While the range of garments the machines can produce are at present limited to items like T-shirts and hoodies, Helle said, the technology will only get better.

The game-changing nature of this technology is how it speeds up the production process, Helle noted. Instead of having yarn made into fabric, dyed, cut and sewn as different steps (and often in different factories hundreds of miles apart), “you’re essentially taking dyed yarn, putting it on a machine and a garment comes out.”

“So I think there’s some opportunity there, especially if that technology gets a little more refined and you can make styles that are that are less fashion-oriented and more function-oriented.”

Best and worst decisions

Roeder asked the panelists about their best and worst business decisions. For Hostetler, the best one was to diversify Mountain Meadow Wool to offer a range of custom services, adding knitting, dyeing, and other services to the original scouring and spinning operation. “It allows us to keep people employed throughout the whole year,” he said, with staff able to shift around to different operations according to demand.

For Duckworth, the best decision was (during the



Men's Polaris Henley



Women's Polaris Hooded Henley

Two Duckworth garments.

Covid pandemic) shifting to online marketing only. "Before that it felt like we were a square peg in a round hole," Helle said. After the switch, "everything started to flow really well. We got quicker turnover of product, we got better margins, we got directly to the consumer —what they were asking for."

Hostetler said the company's worst decision, in retrospect, was to buy large amounts of fleece twice to help out growers during Covid,

which took about two years to get scoured at Chargeurs in South Carolina (itself of course dealing with Covid impacts)—and both of which arrived back at in Wyoming within 4 months, resulting in a mountain of product. "The cost of inventory is substantial," he said.

Helle said his company's worst decision was more of a lack of a decision—failing to invest in garment fitting professionals at the start for their clothing lines. "People are a lot of different shapes."

For Kopren, it was starting out with too small an inventory—which sold out rapidly, leading to an almost 2-year delay before he could get new product to sell. His best decision was to listen to customers calling for a no-show sock, which is

now Fishhook's second-best selling product.

Challenges going forward, all panelists agreed, included contamination of fleeces—from poor management, on the shearing floor, or sometimes even from insufficient cleaning of mill equipment between batches.

Hostetler repeated that his business's challenge would likely continue to be developing and preserving skills and expertise of his mill workers. For Kopren, capital is frequently a looming issue, with banks leary about loaning to novel farm-based wool businesses like his.

Helle's headache is dealing with mill machinery (and speeds) designed for cotton-polyester blends and a range of synthetic fabrics instead of wool.

"They rip it through those machines at high speeds, and it doesn't bother that fabric," he said, but "When you put wool in a machine that rips it through, it can wreck the wool really quickly," causing pilling or felting.

"Our biggest challenge is taking some of those same machines and slowing the process down, making sure that it's gentle on the wool because it's a natural fiber."

Before you start

Do the panelists have advice for other potential wool entrepreneurs out there? Roeder asked.

Hostetler likened his enterprise as akin to the challenges of having children: constant work, sleepless nights, every day a new problem—but rewarding nevertheless. Mountain Meadow Wool, he said, "might not be the new Patagonia of the world, but it's pretty fun and rewarding to see something made with what you've raised yourself or you know someone else who raised it. To see it become a product you can sell to the consumer is pretty fun and rewarding, despite all the challenges."

Kopren emphasized the importance of establishing good relationships with suppliers and processors, even before diving in.

Helle's advice was to don the green eyeshade. "You've got to really plan out every single aspect. Do the math forward, do the math backwards, change the variables and do it again."

"You really need to wrap your mind around what you're getting into, then if you still want to do it, jump in head first and commit."

Image of the Uniqlo's 3-D knitting machine.



The recording of the panel discussion is available on YouTube at [this link](#); note that the audio quality is less than optimal.



Marketing

New wool testing lab opens in New York Fashion Innovation Center

Starting in early 2025, the New York Fashion Innovation Center, based at the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute of Technology in Troy, will offer comprehensive wool fiber testing services. The center's laboratory is the new home of an OFDA 2000 machine that the American Sheep Industry Association installed at the facility in August.

This new program will give farmers easy access to detailed fiber analysis without having to ship samples across the country.

"The testing service will provide you with precise measurements of your wool's key characteristics, including fiber diameter (micron count), consistency across the fleece, and other important quality indicators," notes Clyde Carpenter, the lab's manager. "These measurements can help you make informed decisions about your flock's genetics, evaluate your wool clip's market value, and provide documentation that buyers increasingly want to see."

As wool markets continue to evolve, having accurate fiber data is becoming more important for marketing and securing the best possible prices, Carpenter says. "Whether you're breeding for fine wool production, targeting specific markets, or just want to better understand your flock's wool characteristics, our new testing program will provide the information you need."

The laboratory plans to begin accepting wool samples for testing in early 2025, with competitive pricing and quick turnaround times to serve the regional farming community.

To stay informed about this new service and receive updates about pricing and sample submission procedures, visit nyfic.org to sign up for the email list. If you have any questions in the meantime, contact the center at fic@rpi.edu.

The Fashion Innovation Center's core focus is to advance both natural textile products including bast fibers—notably hemp—and wool, as well as new-technology sustainable fibers and materials. It will promote a collaborative approach to utilizing New York State-produced sustainable textiles. The center, which is a collaboration of up- and down-state New York learning institutions, received \$10 million in state funding in 2022.

The center also has launched a grant awards program to stimulate innovation in four areas: agricultural production and processing; new materials and manufacturing; manufacturing and textile technology innovation, improvement and expansion; and fashion use of sustainable materials.

In addition to funding (of up to \$10,000), grant awardees will become part of a cohort that will receive mentoring from experts in their industries, and have access to equipment, facilities, and other resources to advance their projects.



New scouring facility in New York

Another facility that adds to the growing list of East Coast resources for wool services, Clean Fleece, is a new, mid-size scouring mill brought online by the Hudson Valley Textile Project—a nonprofit organization that is a community of farmers, dyers, millers, designers, makers, distributors and retailers who have come together to share their knowledge and resources.

"Clean Fleece fills a gap in the current local fiber processing supply chain by scouring fiber at a scale that matches the output of the growing network of sustainable natural fiber farms in the Northeastern United States," states the [website](#).

This newly opened scouring mill, north of Albany in Mechanicville, features a KiwiScour—a semi-automated scouring line that washes approximately 60 pounds of greasy wool per hour. The minimum scouring order is 50 pounds.



The Virginia Forage and Grassland Council's 2025 Basic Grazing School will take place May 13 and 14 near Madison, Virginia.

Virginia Grazing school set for May Designed with beginning and experienced producers in mind, this 2-day, intensive course will teach everything a grazer needs to know to better manage grazing:

- Basic pasture and forage management
- Soil fertility & nutrient management
- Fundamentals of grazing management
- Designing a rotational grazing system
- Installing and using electric fencing
- Strategies to extend the grazing season
- Matching forage quality & animal needs
- Economics of grazing
- Herd/flock health
- Animal handling

You will have hands-on opportunities in the field



to work with temporary fencing, identify forage and weed species, evaluate pasture, and learn the critical points of designing an animal handling facility.

Finally, put it all together for your farm: the last day of the school features a workshop where you can sit down with the instructors to begin developing a custom grazing plan. The school is limited to 24 participants.

The fee for the 2-day school is \$150, and includes two lunches, one dinner, course materials plus a 1-year VFGC membership. [Follow this link](#) to download a brochure and register for the event.



Plan for frost seeding legumes

It's time now to plan for next spring's pasture vitality: using sun, rain, soil, and seed to nourish your ewes and finish your lambs, economically.

- Test to determine lime and fertilizer needs. Soil test boxes and instructions are available from your Cooperative Extension office.
- Lime now if you haven't already.
- Order seed. Determine the best species for your soils, topography, and grazing practices, and purchase quality seed.

Frost seeding rates

Species	Rate (lb/acre)
Red clover alone	8-10
Ladino or white clover alone	1-3
Red + ladino/white clover	4-6 and 1-2
Annual lespedeza alone	15-20
Lespedeza + ladino/white clover	8-10 and 1-2



A new broadleaf herbicide that spares white clover was approved by the Environmental Protection Agency late in 2024.

NovaGraz™ from Corteva contains florpyrauxifen (aka Rinskor active) plus 2,4-D and was recently labeled for use in grass pastures and hayfields as well as Conservation Reserve Program acres. It is safe on many types of forage grasses and preserves white clover. It will severely injure or kill other legumes, however, such as red and crimson clover, alfalfa, and birdsfoot trefoil.

It will control or suppress many broadleaf weeds such as ironweed, cocklebur, wild carrot, buttercup, biennial thistles, ragweeds, plantain, poison hemlock, dandelion, maretail, and others. Unfortunately, it is weak on horsenettle, milkweed, hemp dogbane, Canada thistle, and smooth bedstraw.

It has no to minimal (3 days) grazing restrictions after application for any class of livestock, including lactating animals; you must wait 14 days after application to harvest hay and wait 30 days to move manure to sensitive areas unless it is being applied to areas used for pasture, corn, or wheat. These restrictions are unlike Milestone or GrazonNext products. NovaGraz received federal registration and should be available in our region pending state approvals for the 2025 season. (This product was previously referred to as ProClova.)

A herbicide safe for white clover

Source: Pennsylvania Cooperative Extension.

Targeted grazing workshops set for 2025

The American Lamb Board will offer targeted grazing workshops in six states including Maryland in 2025.

The rapid development of utility-scale solar farms across the country has stimulated a significant need for sheep grazing as a means of vegetation management. There are also increasing opportunities for sheep grazing contracts in wildfire-prone areas and vineyards. Sheep grazing helps to eliminate dried plants that might otherwise become wildfire fuel, and grazing in vineyards and other regions helps clear weeds while reducing or eliminating herbicide use.

ALB's Targeted Grazing Workshops provide sheep producers a unique chance to learn about these paid grazing contracts, which offer significant potential for expanding the American sheep flock, enhancing the availability and price competitiveness of American lamb.

"These grazing opportunities offer current

and emerging sheep producers the chance to increase their profitability and grow flock numbers," said ALB Chair Jeff Ebert. "The workshops help producers learn how to take advantage of these opportunities in their area."

Most three-day events consist of two interactive classroom days, followed by a field day, and cover a range of topics, including vegetation management for solar arrays, vineyards and fire suppression.

The workshops planned for 2025 include:

- April in California
- May in Texas
- June in Illinois
- August in Maryland
- September in Colorado
- October in Kentucky

As details for the workshops are set, they'll be on the Lamb Board's website at [Targeted Grazing Workshops](#).



Lambs in a vineyard. [Image from ALB]



Make calculations to lower winter feed costs

Shepherds dealing with high-priced or scarce quality hay as a result of last year's drought have good resources available to help cut costs.

"All producers should know how to compare feed costs and balance least-cost rations for their livestock," advises the Maryland Small Ruminant Page's "[Comparing Feed Costs](#)" page. To the comparison of price per pound, shepherds should consider relative price per unit of dry matter, total digestible nutrients (TDN, energy), protein, and other nutrients.

"Livestock do not require certain feedstuffs; they require nutrients (protein, energy, minerals, and vitamins) in specified amounts."

The site also offers [feed price calculators](#) (downloadable Excel spreadsheets), into which you can plug your hay and grain costs.

A hay test can reveal crucial information. (Looks

can be deceiving.) An increased amount of waste also will come with poorer quality hay. Some feed mills will chop that stemmier, less palatable hay, mix it with corn, and bag it, to give you a complete feed for your flock.

Grain can replace a portion of the hay requirement: 1 pound of corn can replace 2 pounds of hay, keeping in mind that sheep do need a minimum of 2 pounds of roughage per day to maintain rumen health, however. Substituting a significant portion of corn for hay will require balancing the diet with supplemental protein, such as via soybean meal.

Producers should also be aware that a grass hay/corn diet might be deficient in calcium—an essential to prevent hypocalcemia (milk fever) in late gestation ewes. If you are not feeding a legume hay to the expectant ewes, consider adding a balanced nutritional pellet to the ration.

Sample rows from the feed cost calculator. Plug in current costs and the spreadsheet will adjust the other variables.

Energy Feeds	Price	Unit	Per lb	AS FED				DRY MATTER			
				% CP	% TDN	% Ca	% P	% DM	\$/lb DM	\$/lb CP	\$/lb TDN
Barley grain	\$ 3.00	bu	\$ 0.063	0.120	0.84	0.0006	0.0038	0.89	\$ 0.070	\$ 0.585	\$ 0.084
Buckwheat grain	\$ 8.00	bu	\$ 0.154	0.120	0.77	0.0011	0.0036	0.88	\$ 0.175	\$ 1.457	\$ 0.227
Commercial feed	\$ 30.00	cwt	\$ 0.300	0.140	0.72	0.0180	0.0003	0.88	\$ 0.341	\$ 2.435	\$ 0.473
Corn grain	\$ 4.00	bu	\$ 0.071	0.090	0.88	0.0002	0.0030	0.88	\$ 0.081	\$ 0.902	\$ 0.092
Ear Corn	\$ 200.00	ton	\$ 0.100	0.090	0.82	0.0006	0.0028	0.87	\$ 0.115	\$ 1.277	\$ 0.140
Milo (sorghum)	\$ 7.00	bu	\$ 0.125	0.110	0.82	0.0004	0.0032	0.89	\$ 0.140	\$ 1.277	\$ 0.171
Molasses cane	\$ 200.00	ton	\$ 0.100	0.050	0.76	0.0110	0.0008	0.76	\$ 0.132	\$ 2.632	\$ 0.173
Nutritional tub	\$ 1.00	lb	\$ 1.000	0.160	0.60	0.0200	0.0100	0.90	\$ 1.111	\$ 6.944	\$ 1.852
Oat grain	\$ 4.00	bu	\$ 0.125	0.130	0.76	0.0005	0.0041	0.89	\$ 0.140	\$ 1.080	\$ 0.185
Rye grain	\$ 8.00	bu	\$ 0.143	0.120	0.82	0.0007	0.0039	0.89	\$ 0.161	\$ 1.338	\$ 0.196
Spelt grain	\$ 8.00	bu	\$ 0.200	0.130	0.75	0.0004	0.0040	0.88	\$ 0.227	\$ 1.748	\$ 0.303
Triticale grain	\$ 5.00	bu	\$ 0.104	0.140	0.85	0.0007	0.0039	0.89	\$ 0.117	\$ 0.836	\$ 0.138
Wheat grain	\$ 5.00	bu	\$ 0.083	0.140	0.88	0.0004	0.0043	0.89	\$ 0.094	\$ 0.669	\$ 0.106
Other energy feed			\$ 0.130	0.140	0.80	0.0000	0.0000	0.89	\$ 0.146	\$ 1.043	\$ 0.183

Some winter educational offerings

Below is a list of some upcoming educational opportunities scheduled for this month. For full event details, agendas, and registration information, click on the links below.

JANUARY 13 MONDAY The Wild Side of Farming: Managing Habitats for Farm-Friendly Wildlife

January 13, 3 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Webinar

Topics: National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) Agriculture Specialist Danielle Crocker is the presenter for this free Food Animal Concerns Trust (FACT) webinar. Explore practical strategies and incentives for enhancing biodiversity while maintaining productive agricultural lands. This session is perfect for farmers and land managers looking to balance conservation with agriculture and improve ecosystem health while supporting local wildlife. [Register here.](#)

Delmarva Forage Conference

January 14, 9 a.m. to noon

Delaware State Fairgrounds; Harrington, DE

Topics: Macro and micronutrient cycling in hay and pasture production, trace minerals in forages to meet livestock needs, forage crop budgets, use of annual forages in a grazing system. [Follow this link.](#)

JANUARY

14

TUESDAY

JANUARY 17-18 FRI-SAT Future Harvest 2025 Conference: Farming into the Future

January 17-18, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Silver Spring Civic Building, Silver Spring, MD

Topics: Crop production, environment, community & wellbeing, livestock, farming into the future, regenerative agriculture, business of farming, soil health, grassfed meat & dairy, interactive farmer panels, farm tour field trip, trade show & networking, happy hour, farm bingo, seed & tool swap, farmers' market. [Follow this link.](#)

Southern Maryland Forage Conference

January 21, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Calvert County Fairgrounds, Prince Frederick, MD

Topics: Reestablishing forages after drought, integrating annual forages as a drought management strategy, mineral nutrition and practical feeding considerations, selecting the right mineral to meet livestock needs, diving deeper into nutrient management for forages. [Follow this link.](#)

JANUARY

21

TUESDAY

JANUARY 22 TUESDAY Western Maryland/Tri-State Forage Conference

January 22, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Grantsville Fire Hall; Grantsville, MD

Topics: Reestablishing forages after drought, integrating annual forages as a drought management strategy, mineral nutrition and practical feeding considerations, selecting the right mineral to meet livestock needs, diving deeper into nutrient management for forages. [Follow this link.](#)

Central Maryland Forage Conference

January 23, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Mt. Airy Fire Activities Center; Mt. Airy, MD

Topics: Reestablishing forages after drought, integrating annual forages as a drought management strategy, mineral nutrition and practical feeding considerations, selecting the right mineral to meet livestock needs, diving deeper into nutrient management for forages. [Follow this link.](#)

JANUARY

23

THURSDAY

JANUARY 24-26 FRI-SUN Maryland Sheep & Wool Festival Winterfest 2025

January 24, 25, 26, individual class times

Online

Topics: Topics: 18 fiber arts classes, plus: Free lecture – *Fleece Forward: Signs of a Wool Revival with Clara Parkes* (January 25, 1 to 2 p.m.), *Secure Sheep and Wool Supply Plan* (January 24, 6:30 to 9 p.m.), *An Introduction to the Biology of Sheep Color* (January 25, 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.), *A Deeper Look at the Genetics of Sheep Color* (January 26, 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.), *Sheep in Coats: Coating Sheep for Great Fleeces* (January 26, 1:30 to 3 p.m.). [Follow this link.](#)



Polypay ewes graze wildflowers and big bluestem in last summer's drought. [Image by Leo Tammi]



Board welcomes new secretary, directors

M^SB^A welcomed new and returning officers at the annual meeting in October, as well as four new board members. **Steve Breeding** and **Emily Chamelin** will continue as president and vice president, and **Colleen Histon** as treasurer. Thanks to retiring secretary **Carolann McConaughy** and retiring directors **Chris Dehne, Penny Sica, and Kate Warner.**



Patricia Sanville is the new secretary, returning to the board. She also serves as Maryland’s ASI representative. She maintains a small flock of wool sheep in Frederick. She was appointed by the USDA to the National Sheep Industry Improvement Center’s Board of Directors earlier this year. She is involved with 4-H, FFA, and The Great Frederick Fair, where she serves as the Ag Education Chairman. She promotes the sheep industry and all areas of production at various fairs and festivals across the nation.

Meet the four new directors on the board, who will serve through 2027.

Michael Berlinger grew up running around the sand dunes, wetlands, and farm lands of the South Jersey shore: listening for the early spring peepers in February, watching all the migratory birds pass through just in time for the annual horseshoe crab spawning, and tasting tomatoes and silver queen corn picked fresh. He went off to college to study natural resource management and conservation ecology, but another childhood legacy—enjoying his grandmother’s Sunday community meals and summer jobs in restaurant kitchens—led him to change course; he attended New England Culinary Institute in Vermont.



He quickly learned the correlation between flavor and producer management strategy: the best ingredients invariably came from farmers who cared most for their soil, water, air, and animal well-being. In 2021 he decided to try to become one of them. With his wife and young daughter, he operates a farm small farm focusing on regenerative practices: intensive pasture rotations, no-till gardening, and no chemical applications of pesticides/fertilizers. They raise Icelandic

sheep, chickens, ducks, bees, and Kune Kune X IPP pigs.

Mary Ellen Clark is a second-generation farmer from Frederick County. She and her husband Matthew, and children Caroline & Preston, operate Clark Family Farms, growing hay, corn, soybeans, straw, Leicester Longwool and commercial sheep. Her dedication to youth agriculture education and community service is reflected in her positions as a 4-H club leader for the Rocky Ridge 4-H, as well as the Rocky Ridge Youth Association. She has been involved in the Maryland Sheep & Wool Festival, Maryland State and Great Frederick Fairs; displaying sheep, agriculture commodities produced on the farm, and supporting educational events. She is an advocate for animal agriculture and ensuring that the next generation is well prepared to carry on.



Megan Harrigan is a first-generation farmer who runs Fulton Farm to Table with her partner Alex Fulton. They raise pork, lamb, poultry and rabbits in Sykesville, marketing their products at three farmers’ markets during the week. They raise mostly Romney and natural-colored crosses and also dabble in dairy sheep (originally from Shepherd’s Manor Creamery). Their sheep, chickens, Thanksgiving turkeys and rabbits are rotationally grazed on pasture, and pigs are rotationally raised in woodland lots. At farmers’ markets they cannot keep lamb in stock. It is a great problem to have. Megan says, “I love educating my customers on buying American Lamb.”



Aaron Keller grew up raising and showing sheep. He currently raises Dorper, Hampshire, and Southdown, mainly focusing on meat production. He farms more than 200 acres in small grains and hay in Keymar. His farming operation is poised to grow significantly in the coming years, where his focus is on growing his sheep operation to include a quarterly lambing operation of more than 200 head.

Seventeen sewers took part in the 2024 Maryland Make It With Wool competition on October 12 at Wards Chapel United Methodist Church in Randallstown (Baltimore County). There were nine first-time participants, and nine were under 12 years old and under.

2024 Maryland Make It With Wool welcomes new participants, salutes contest winners

Congratulations to the four winners of the competition (from left to right in the image): Junior Winner Alexandra Frank (Baltimore County), Senior Winner Caroline Clark (Frederick County), Adult Winner Amanda Clougherty (Talbot County), and Preteen Winner Regan Wells (Frederick County).

Alexandra and Caroline will travel to Scottsdale, Arizona, this month to compete in the national contest, January 16-18, which takes place during the American Sheep Industry Annual Convention (January 15-18). Amanda's garment, video and photos are submitted for national adult judging.

This year's contestants received wool fabric and a gift bag of sewing notions.

Next year's contest will be on Saturday, October 11. Winter is a great time to begin to think about next sewing projects. For more information and an entry form, email mdmiww@aol.com.

MIWW contestants will look forward to seeing you at the 2025 Maryland Sheep & Wool Festival, where they will exhibit their garments and invite you to purchase Wool Wax Crème, which helps support Maryland Make It With Wool.



Shown from left to right: Alexandra Frank in pink herringbone paper-waist pants with a cream and silver sparkle cropped jacket. Caroline Clark in a three-piece suit: fitted lightweight wool blouse, tailored pants, and blazer style jacket. Amanda Clougherty wears a Pendleton gray and pink plaid pencil dress with magenta lace wool wrap. Reagan Wells models a black cape and plaid "overall" style jumper.



The Fifth Annual Shepherds Farm Market is set for Saturday, April 5, 2024, at the Frederick Fairgrounds. Supported by the Frederick County Sheep Breeders and the Maryland Sheep Breeders Associations, it is an annual opportunity for marketing and selling farm products during a 5-hour, (9 a.m. to 2 p.m.) event.

Fifth Farm Market event set for April 5 in Frederick

Producers are invited to market their fiber in all of its forms (raw fleeces, yarn, fiber art and anything in between), meats, cheeses, soaps, and any products generated on your own farm.

We have expanded to accept other products that you have produced on your farm, such as started garden plants and started dye plants. There also will be sheep and goat themed products, décor items, and some items for those hard working farm dogs!

The market will be inside this year, with a few outside spaces for those who prefer them (in which case you should bring a tent if you have one; contact us if you do not). Tables and chairs are available.

The vendor's fee this year is again just \$30 (an amazingly cheap price that is less than the sale of one fleece, or one leg of lamb). If you are not a member of MSBA or FCSB it will be necessary to become a member of one of these organizations in order to participate.

Each shepherd will have a 10 by 10-foot tent area (you can rent additional spaces). Bring your own hand sanitizer if you will be asking people to sanitize their hands before handling your products.

Advertising this event will ensure our success, and so we ask you to spread the word using your social media outlets and to distribute flyers in your area, adding to our advertising efforts.

Since this will be the first opportunity in the spring for people to buy the kinds of products we create, we expect there to be a decent customer response, so come take advantage of this great opportunity to showcase your farm and what you create on it.

Contact event organizers for an application form. Payment can be made via PayPal (with a \$3 fee per \$30 to cover the fee) or check. Event organizers are Patricia Sanville (240-357-1437, patriciasanville@gmail.com) and Penny Sica (pennysica@gmail.com).



Save the Date!

Zimmerman receives 2024 MSBA Scholarship

The MSBA scholarship of \$1,000 for 2024 was awarded to Rachel Zimmerman. Rachel graduated from Tuscarora High School and is planning to major in animal science—specifically, ruminant nutrition.



In addition to being the 2023 Maryland Sheep & Wool Ambassador, she has been very active in 4-H, serving as president, vice president, and secretary, as well as being a 4-H youth delegate to the Maryland Farm Bureau Next Gen Youth Conference.

Rachel breeds and shows Blue Faced Leicesters. When not working with sheep she enjoys working with her church and being very involved in her school choirs.



Maryland Sheep News is published three times a year by the Maryland Sheep Breeders Association, Inc., and is sent to MSBA members. See back page for membership application.

Ad Rates

Size	Specs (inches)	Price
Full page	7.5 x 9.5	\$95, \$320/year
Half vert.	3.3 x 9.5	\$60, \$200/year
Half horiz.	7.5 x 4.25	
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
Classified	230 characters	\$10

Acceptable formats are PDFs, Word docs or jpegs.

Issue deadlines for ads and copy:
 Winter Jan. 1; Summer May 25; Fall Sept. 12

Send copy to :
Martha Polkey, Editor
 martha.polkey@icloud.com

Send payment to:
 Treasurer, MSBA
 3038 Brightwell Drive
 Finksburg, Md. 21048

Maryland Sheep Breeders Association, Inc.

Officers & Directors

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Ex Officio

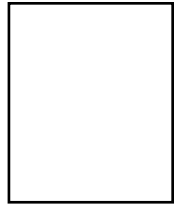
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Maryland Sheep Breeders Association:
marylandsheepbreeders.org

Maryland Sheep & Wool Festival:
sheepandwool.org

like us!



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 <https://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.

The Maryland Sheep Breeders Association Board of Directors meets every other month. Meetings are open to members. For minutes of meetings, contact the MSBA Secretary (see p. 15).

Here are sponsored events and activities for 2025

- January 24-26: Maryland Sheep & Wool Festival Winterfest
- February 14-15: Beginning Shearing School
- May 3-4: Maryland Sheep & Wool Festival
- TBD: Annual Meeting & Dinner.

As a member you will:

- Join an active and friendly community of shepherds and others
- Support the core activities of the MSBA.
- Receive the *Maryland Sheep News*, MSBA's informative newsletter, 3 times a year.
- Receive regular publications from the American Sheep Industry Association.
- Receive priority consideration for enrollment in the Maryland Shearing School (applicable only if you own sheep), and your family members will be given priority consideration for the annual MSBA scholarship.
- Receive free admission to the Maryland Sheep & Wool Festival and be mailed a free copy of the catalog.
- Pay a reduced commission on all fleeces sold at the Maryland Sheep & Wool Festival Fleece Show & Sale.
- Be able to promote your farm or business through a free profile page on the MSBA website.

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 Kate Warner, Membership Chair, 5241 South Mill Street, Lineboro, MD 21102. She will contact you for additional information for the breeders directory and online profile.

Annual membership/subscription fee: \$25. The membership year runs from October through September. Dues for membership received prior to June 1, 2025, will be accepted as paid through September 30, 2025. Dues received on or after June 1 will be accepted as paid through September 30, 2026.