

Shepherd's Bulletin



Minnesota Lamb & Wool Producers Association

Vote YES for the Lamb Checkoff

Winter 2009

The lamb checkoff is working. Research shows that every dollar spent on lamb promotion yields and additional \$44.45 in lamb sales revenue. In other words, the American Lamb Board (ALB) is doing their job, which is to expand the demand for lamb.

In order for this lamb promotion to continue, sheep producers need to pass the lamb referendum this year. The voting period for the lamb referendum will run from **Feb. 2, 2009 until Feb. 27, 2009.**

Voting on the lamb referendum is underway at county Farm Service Agencies (FSA) around the country. There are several convenient ways to get your ballot voted and

delivered to the offices during the month of February.

"In fact, sheep producers don't have to make a trip to the FSA office if they prefer to print a ballot off the Internet and send it in by mail or fax," commended Peter Orwick, executive director for the American Sheep Industry Association.

Producers, feeders, first handlers and exporters have the option of going to the local FSA office to obtain a ballot or they can go to the Internet to print a ballot. Ballots may be returned in person, by fax or by mail to the county FSA office. Completed and signed ballots, along with supporting documentation



demonstrating eligibility, must be submitted on or before Feb. 27, 2009. Those engaged in the production, feeding or slaughter of lambs in 2008 are eligible to vote in this referendum.

To print the ballot online, go to www.ams.usda.gov/lsmarketingprograms, click on the Lamb Referendum Information link, then click on the link "LS-86-1 - Lamb Referendum Ballot."

"ASI, the National Lamb Feeders Association and

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MLWP Officers & Directors

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rafterp@runestone.net
- *1st VP—Don Adelman* 952-466-2451
- *2nd VP—Sherry Stirling*
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- *Past Presidents -*
Jeremy Geske 952-758-7938
Bob Padula 320-269-7973
- *NE Dir. - Warner Johnson*
651-257-0827
- *NW Dir - Karen Stormo*
218-776-2223
- *SE Dir. - Steve Scheffert*
507-835-3951
- *SW Dir. - Doug Mathias*
507-376-9665
- *WC Dir. - Mike Haubrich*
320-826-2526
- *Metro Dir. & Membership Chair - Patty Anderson*
952-447-4184

View From the Hayloft - *Dan Persons, President*

The barn below is full of close up ewes as is the lambing barn and a quarter of our family barn. With 300+ ewes due in the next two weeks we should have a wild ride. As my friend Leroy used to say before we embarked on a big

project"Let 'er Buck". I am grateful that our cold weather has given way to much milder temps and that the daily snow storms have subsided.

The Coyote hunters have been out in full force lately. They continue to be

successful and report to me that they have yet to get them all. I have had one hanging around the place this past week but after being chased by more than one bullet he keeps his distance and is never seen moving

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www.mlwp.org

President's Message - cont.

slower than a dead run. Our guard dog, Ace, has been doing a good job of defining where that coyote is allowed to be and where he is not.

This month is Vote Yes month for our industry. You have the opportunity to vote to let the very successful lamb check-off continue for our industry. The American Lamb Board has done an exemplary job of getting the story of Fresh American Lamb into households and the culinary industry. They have proven that they can have a positive impact on the consumption of lamb and that our dollars invested are put in places of the greatest impact. Whether you are a commercial producer raising commodity lamb or a private marketer selling to local clientele you have benefitted from the increased exposure of the public to our lamb products. I encourage all of you to go to your local FSA office and cast a

YES vote for the continuation of the lamb check-off.

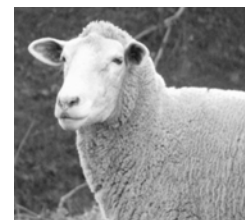
The MLWPA has expanded the opportunity for the youth of our state to develop a flock of their own. The MLWPA is offering up to five \$100 scholarships to our future shepherds. The board felt it was important to have these scholarships available to any youth throughout the state including those that may also get a grant from one of the Satellites that offer them through their own organizations. See the application guidelines in this newsletter. Applications are due June 1st.

With the new administration getting seated in Washington the organizations that would like animal agriculture to disappear have been lining up to spread their toxic agenda. It is imperative that we be on guard and be prepared to tell our story to the men and women who represent us on both a state and national level. The

animal rights issues will continue to be on the forefront. I ask that if you hear of State legislation Federal issues that you feel would be harmful to our industry that you contact myself or any member of the board so we can spread the word and contact those that could be influential in the decision.

There appears to be yet another attempt to allow schools across the state to start classes prior to Labor Day weekend. This battle has been fought before and needs to be put to rest again. The early start dates would likely have a very negative impact on the 4H and FFA exhibits at the State Fair as well the financial impact to the State Fair and all of its vendors through reduced attendance. Please contact your legislatures and ask that schools not be allowed to start prior to the day after Labor Day.

I hope you all have a successful lambing season and a profitable year. Keep your pencils sharp and your minds open.



Vote Yes —Cont.

state sheep producer organizations across the country are actively supporting a yes vote to approve the referendum," concluded Orwick.

If you have questions about the lamb checkoff, contact MLWP President Dan Persons or Past President Bob Padula (their phone and e-mail are on the front page).

Producers support the checkoff

"This is the only industry-wide sheep promotion entity we have. Efforts of the American Lamb Board

benefit all producers, regardless of how you market your lambs." *Dan Persons, MLWP President*

"As a producer, the lamb checkoff program is the most effective way to promote my product. It amplifies my voice, allowing me to join with fellow producers to increase demand by promoting the value of American-raised lamb. " *Blake Meshke, MN Farm Bureau Sheep & Goat Committee chair*

"We need to encourage all producers to vote yes. The lamb checkoff benefits us all. As a seedstock producer, higher demand for lamb means greater demand for

the rams I sell." *Jeremy Geske, MLWP Past President*

"We producer a superior product that is delicious, safe, wholesome and nutritious. It's a given we should promote it! After all, if we don't who will?" *Bill Sparrow, Jr., ASI Executive Board*

"By voting yes, we enable the American Lamb Board to continue to gain market share within the industry. Without their efforts, we are totally at the mercy of foreign imports." *Lee Bloodworth, Texas sheep producer*

Learn more at: lambcheckoff.com

VOTE YES this February.

MLWP Announces Starter Flock Program

Minnesota Lamb and Wool Producers Association

Starter Flock Grant Application

The MLWPA will grant up to five \$100 grants to individuals who wish to get started in the sheep industry. The applicants will compete for these grants and awards will be determined by the Board of Directors of the MLWPA. The purpose of the grants is to help the individuals in the purchasing of breeding sheep only.

Requirements of the Applicants:

1. Must be a Junior Member of MLWPA either through individual membership or through a family membership.
2. Must be under the age of 21 at the time of the application deadline.
3. Must buy breeding sheep from any reputable breeder.
4. Must submit application to the President of MLWPA by no later than June 1ST.
5. Only one grant will be awarded to any individual in their life-time; however individuals may apply multiple years if not awarded a grant.
6. The Application will be in the form of a one page written essay including the following information:
 - a. Name, address, phone number, birth date.
 - b. Brief description of future plans for production.
 - c. Brief description of past and current involvement in the sheep industry.
 - d. Brief description of plans for care of the animals including feed and facility arrangements.
7. The grant will be paid to the individual following the submittal of a one page report on the sheep purchased and how the project is progressing including a photo of the applicant with the sheep purchased. This report is must be submitted prior to the annual conference of the MLWPA.

Other Starter Flock Programs

SE MN Sheep Producers Starter Flock program

For details contact Todd & Robin Schmidt at: trebfarm@clear.lakes.com or 507-377-1045.

MN Suffolk Association \$100 scholarships

\$100 towards a purchase at the state Suffolk sale or Rochester Bred Ewe sale. Application deadline is June 30. Contact Tom Curley at

Thomas.Curley@ndsu.edu or 507-930-5203.

MN Hampshire \$100 Young Shepherds Scholarships

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Spring Sheep Workshop

Attention 4-H and FFA youth, and adult sheep enthusiasts

Don't miss the 2009 MLWPA Spring Sheep Workshop



Saturday, March 21—Tentative Agenda

The program will begin at the John & Bernie Dvorak Farm, 4325 Farwell Ave, Webster, MN 55088. (Call 952-652-2402 if you need directions).

- 8:30—9:00 a.m. Registration
- 9:00—10:30 a.m. Sheep foot and Leg Care, *Dr. Cindy Wolf, DVM, U of M*
Learn to splint broken legs, treat foot rot and more
- 10:45—11:30 a.m. Sheep selection and showmanship, *Rice County 4-H Sheep PDC, MLWPJA, others*
Improve skills in showmanship and picking your show lamb

The program moves to Holy Cross School (1/2 mile from the Dvorak farm) 6100 37th Str. W., Webster, MN 55088 for lunch (Noon to 1:00 p.m.)

- 1:15—2:00 p.m. Sheep Reproduction, *Dr. Jon Wheaton, U of M*
- 2:15—3:00 p.m. Financial Advice for your Sheep Farm, *Art Madsen, Wells Fargo*
Tips for improving the economics of your sheep operation
- 3:00 p.m. MLWP Jr. Assoc. mtg
Open to youth 21 & under



Walk-ins welcome, but pre-registration by March 13 is preferred.

Cost: \$5/youth (21 & under) \$10/adult Make checks payable to MLWPA

Send your name(s) and registration fee to John Dvorak at 4325 Farwell Ave, Webster, MN 55088.

Thanks to the Dvoraks, Rice County 4-H Sheep PDC, and MLWP Jr. Assoc for partnering on this workshop!

U.S. Shearers to Attempt World Record

Two American shearers will attempt to break the world record in marathon endurance sheep shearing on April 5 at Espacada Industries Inc. Feedlot in Demmitt, Texas. The two attempting this feat are Doug Rathke of Minnesota and Gavin McKerrow of Wisconsin. The current world record is 24 hours held by a New Zealand shearer.

"We are shooting to make it 30 hours," said Rathke, who is participating in this endeavor to bring more interest to sheep shearing as a means of employment. "It is troubling to me that I am continuously hearing about shearing records being broken in other countries and nothing is being attempted here. We hope to get more young people interested in shearing

and attempt records for themselves."

Rathke and McKerrow are looking for volunteers from the sheep industry to help officially document this event, to put up sheep and to run the clock.

For more information or for those interested in volunteering, contact Rathke at 320-587-6094 or lambshop@hutchtel.net.

The following flocks have completed 3-Yr "Test-negative" status in the OPP Pilot Project:

Mike Curley, Windom, MN (Suffolk) 507-822-1672, Ray & Margo Hanson, Twin Valley, MN (Border Leicester) 218-584-5545, John & Judy Lewman, Minnetrista, MN (Border Leicester) 952-472-4524, Tom & Judy McDowell, Minnetrista, MN (Icelandic) 952-472-0883, Bets Reedy, Houston, MN (Clun Forest) 608-489-2329.

The following flocks selected the 5-Yr test option and have had no positives to date:

Tim Reese, Minnetrista (Clun Forest, Finn, Border Leicester), Scott Wollin, Karlstad (Polypay, Dorset, Hamp, Boer)

De-wormer resistance - Sheep & Goat Health Report

Preliminary data from the University of Minnesota suggests that producers in the Midwest should be aware of the resistance status of parasites in their flock, according to a paper presented by Kate O'Connor, a third year student at the U of M College of Vet Med, at a recent US Animal Health Association annual meeting.

O'Connor pointed out that although anthelmintic resistance is a known problem in the south, there has been little study of the prevalence of resistant parasites in the rest of the country. Therefore, a better understanding of the drug resistance profiles of gastrointestinal parasites such as *Haemonchus contortus* in small ruminants in Minnesota will allow producers and veterinarians to make more informed decisions about

their deworming protocols and management practices.

Some animals in the Midwest have been transported from the southeast and are a source of potentially resistant parasites. But an even bigger risk factor that increases the chances of developing anthelmintic resistance is underdosing (either from faulty equipment or underestimating the weight of the animals being treated). Dose guns should be checked to be sure they are delivering the correct amount of the drug. Also, it is important to administer the drug properly so the entire amount enters the rumen.

O'Connor reminds everyone that anthelmintic resistance exists in the population of worms on any farm. Each farm is different, and the parasite control program may need to be

modified to fit the needs of each location.

Moving sheep that have just been dewormed to a "clean" pasture means that all of the eggs shed onto the new pasture will be from resistant worms. In most cases, it is not advisable to move sheep to a clean pasture just after de-worming.

"In any given herd or flock, 70-80% of the animals will have little or no worm burden, while the rest will harbor the majority of the adult worms and shed the largest number of parasite eggs," said O'Connor. Producers should consider using fecal egg counts to identify and treat only those heavily parasitized animals. For more information on anthelmintic resistance, go to: www.scsrpc.org.

More than you ever wanted to know about wolves in Minnesota (USDA WS—2008)

Background

The USDA-Wildlife Services (WS) gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) depredation management program based in Grand Rapids, Minnesota uses a variety of methods to manage wolf damage. Wolves in Minnesota regularly kill and/or wound livestock (cattle, sheep, poultry and occasionally horses) and pets (primarily dogs). While the magnitude of damage is relatively small (1-2% of farms in wolf range), the losses to individual producers can be significant.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) estimated that there were 2,921 wolves in Minnesota over the winter of 2007-2008. Considering a 90% confidence interval, the actual population size could range from 2,192 to 3,525 wolves (Erb 2008).

2008 Legal Changes

On September 29, 2008 a federal judge rescinded the March 2007 decision which delisted wolves in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan and three adjacent states. This decision immediately allowed the gray wolf in Minnesota protection under the Endangered Species Act as a “Threatened” species. This decision meant that wolves in Minnesota could only be killed by the public to protect human life and that only authorized Federal and state agency personnel will be allowed to take wolves that cause damage to domestic animals. Under state management, the DNR wolf management plan contains provisions, per Minnesota Statute 97B.645, which allow livestock and pet owners to shoot wolves in certain situations to protect their domestic animals. From March 2007 – September 2008, when wolves in Minnesota were under state management, 10 wolves were legally killed and reported under these provisions.

Editor’s note: Since then they have been on again, off again, and the legal battle is likely not over yet.

2008 Summary

2008 verified wolf conflicts in Minnesota were down compared to 2007 and down 11% over the 5 year average (see Figures 2-4). A total of 75 complaints of wolf depredation were verified at 68 sites and 143 wolves lethally removed in response to the depredations. Seventy-one complaints involving livestock/poultry were verified. Four complaints involved verified depredations on domestic dogs (see Figures 2-4). In 2008, WS provided technical assistance via personal consultations, telephone, site visits, and instructional sessions at producers groups to 917 people regarding ways to reduce or deter wolf damage. Flashing highway lights were loaned to two individuals to deter wolves from their property, and pyrotechnics were loaned to one individual to frighten wolves from their property.

Wolves—Cont (from USDA Wildlife Services)

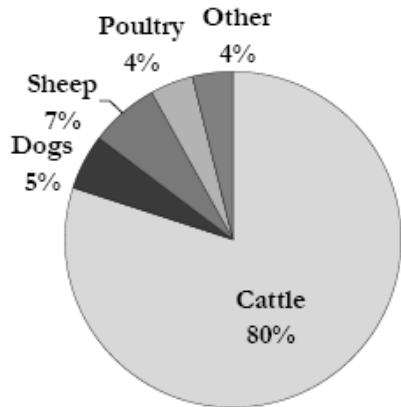


Figure 7. 2008 verified wolf complaints by type

FY	Appropriation	Number of Wolf Claims	Wolf Claims
2004	\$ 47,000.00	44	\$ 41,552
2005	\$ 47,000.00	48	\$ 58,500
2006	\$ 47,000.00	72	\$ 72,895
2007	\$ 86,254.00	70	\$ 75,494
2008	\$100,000.00	96	\$ 93,398
2009	\$100,000.00	56	\$ 45,078*

For more information contact:
 USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services
 34912 U.S. Hwy. 2 Grand Rapids, MN 55744
 (218) 327-3350
 e-mail: john.p.hart@aphis.usda.gov

Government makes decision on gray wolves

The Bush administration says it is removing gray wolves in the western Great Lakes and northern Rocky Mountains from the federal endangered species list.

But Deputy Interior Secretary Lynn Scarlett said Wednesday wolves in Wyoming will remain under federal

jurisdiction because that state has not done enough to assure their survival.

The government has tried previously to remove wolves in both regions from the endangered list and return management authority to the states.

But the efforts have been overruled by courts.

Last September, a federal judge sided with animal-rights groups that accused the government of misapplying the law when it lifted protections for about 4,000 wolves in Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin in 2007.

Wolves and COOL On Hold

Last week, President Barack Obama's administration ordered all federal agencies to freeze new or pending regulations of the Bush administration until the new camp could approve them. No proposed or final regulations were to be sent to the Federal Register for publication until they had been reviewed and approved by new agency heads appointed by the president.

Country-of-origin labeling (COOL) was slated to take effect March 16 but according to the memorandum issued by the new administration, federal agencies have been directed to consider extending for 60 days the effective date of regulations that have been published but have not yet taken effect.

In mid-January, the Department of Interior announced that they would be

removing gray wolves in the western Great Lakes and in the

northern Rocky Mountains from the federal endangered species list. The regulation had not yet been sent to the Federal Register, so it will now undergo a review by the new administration before further action is taken.



Legislative Update

Green Acres

On January 27, the House Agriculture, Rural Economies and Veteran Affairs Finance Division passed two bills dealing with Green Acres. The first bill passed by the House committee was HF 10 authored by Rep. Al Doty (DFL-Royalton). HF 10 would repeal the changes made to Green Acres last year. HF 10 was referred to the Tax Committee. The second bill passed by the committee was HF 217 authored by Rep. Tim Faust (DFL-Mora). Under HF 217, all land enrolled in Green Acres in 2008 and previous years will be subject to the Green Acres provisions in place prior to the changes that were made in 2008 as long as the land produced \$1,000 of agriculture products in the previous year, and the property is classified as an agriculture homestead. HF 217 creates "Green Acres 2" for land newly enrolled in Green Acres in 2009 and beyond. HF 217 was referred to the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee.

The Senate Ag committee passed SF 386, authored by Sen. Rod Skoe, DFL-Clearbrook after amending the bill. SF 386 as introduced was a Green Acres fix it bill. The Senate Ag committee action changed the bill to make it a repeal of the changes made to Green Acres last session. The bill will next be heard in the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Policy committee.

State Budget

On January 27, Governor Pawlenty unveiled his plan to fix the state's projected \$4.8 billion biennial budget deficit using budget cuts, accounting shifts, federal stimulus dollars and nearly \$1 billion in tobacco appropriation bonds. The Governor's budget proposal would shrink state government spending by 2.2 percent, or \$750 million, over current spending levels. The Legislature will use the Governor's proposed budget as a starting point for budget discussions. The next state budget forecast will be released at the end of February. The legislators will use the numbers contained in that



forecast as they develop their budget proposals.

Finance committees in both the House and Senate are conducting hearings on the Governor's budget proposals.

The Governor's proposed budget for the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) contains an overall 13 percent decrease from current biennium spending. The proposed budget contains reductions or elimination of MDA's aquaculture program, plant pest survey work and other biocontrol efforts. There are no proposed cuts to the Ethanol Producer Payment program or Dairy and Food Inspection Services.

The Governor's proposed budget creates a new 21st Century Agriculture Reinvestment program, Ag21, which will provide grants and loans to fund emerging needs in agriculture.

Legislative Update - cont.

Ag21 would provide on-going funding for supporting next generation renewable energy development and livestock investment grants. Eligible expenditures will include, but are not limited to, grants to livestock producers under the livestock investment grant program and bio-energy funds awarded by the NextGen Energy Board.

Included in the Governor's budget was continued funding for the Livestock Investment Grant Program. In 2008, at least one MLWP member received a livestock investment grant. MLWP members who want to invest in their sheep business are encouraged to apply to MDA for a LIG if the program is offered in 2009.

Low Carbon Fuel Standard (LCFS)

On January 22, the Senate Energy Committee heard the LCFS bill, SF 13, authored by Sen. Sheran (DFL-Mankato). The bill was not voted on and another hearing was held on Feb. 3 and was laid on the table. If adopted,

SF 13 will establish a low carbon fuel standard, which reduces the carbon intensity of transportation fuels, in Minnesota beginning in 2011.

CERCLA – EPCRA Reporting

On December 22, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) published in final rule issued to exempt farms of all sizes from having to report releases of air emissions from animal waste on farms under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA, also known as Superfund). Under this rule, which went into effect on January 20, 2009, no farm would be required to notify the National Response Center, if the farm exceeded EPA reportable quantities of air emissions.

While all farms are exempt from federal CERCLA reporting under this rule, the rule did not exempt concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) from reporting such emissions to local and state governments under the Emergency Planning and

Community Right-to-Know-Act (EPCRA). Any farm not defined as a CAFO is exempt from reporting under EPCRA. The rule requires CAFOs to report ammonia and hydrogen sulfide emissions to state and local emergency response officials if the operation emits 100 lbs. or more of either substance during a 24-hour period.

EPA is adopting the emissions right-to-know reporting threshold from the regulatory threshold it uses for water permits. National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System rules define CAFOs by number of animals, based on animal type. For example, the rule sets the threshold of at 700 mature dairy cows, 1,000 head of cattle other than mature dairy cows or veal calves, 2,500 swine weighing 55 pounds or more, 10,000 swine weighing less than 55 pounds or 55,000 turkeys. For chickens and ducks, the threshold depends on the manure handling system.

There has been significant confusion reported about any new or previously existing reporting

USGS SAMPLING BODES WELL FOR AGRICULTURE

Despite the widespread pesticide use by U.S. farmers over decades, groundwater has apparently not retained high concentrations of pesticide contamination, according to a new study by the U.S. Geological Survey.

USGS compared water samples taken from 362 wells from 1993 to 1995 with samples drawn from those same wells from 2001 to 2003. The samples were analyzed for more than

80 pesticide compounds.

Of the 80, six were detected in water from at least 10 wells during both of those sample periods. Concentrations of those compounds generally were less than 0.12 parts per billion -- 10 times lower than applicable U.S. EPA drinking-water standards, the report says.

"The results of this study are encouraging for the future state of the nation's ground-water quality with

respect to pesticides," Laura Bexfield, who analyzed the data, said in a statement. "Despite sustained use of many popular pesticides and the introduction of new ones, results as a whole did not indicate increasing detection rates or concentrations in shallow or drinking-water resources over the 10 years studied."

Link to the study:

http://jeq.scijournal.org/cgi/content/full/37/5_Supplement/S-226

Slumping meat stocks forcing PETA to buy more shares

As shares of publicly traded meat companies slide with the rest of the market, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals has had to buy more shares to ensure its ability to continue its shareholder resolution campaign.

PETA has long purchased tiny holdings in major meat processors in order to gain access to shareholder meetings and offer shareholder

resolutions to generate publicity and further the organization's goals.

In order to submit a resolution, PETA must have owned at least \$2,000 worth of stock in the company for one year prior to the submission date. If the value dips below that figure at any point during the year, PETA is prohibited from submitting a resolution per federal regulations.

"To remain eligible to submit the

resolutions in a depressed market, PETA has had to revamp its stock-purchasing strategy by buying additional shares," the group said in a news release.

Among the companies PETA has recently increased its stake in are: Pilgrim's Pride, Tyson Foods, Sonic Corporation, O'Charley's Inc., Domino's Pizza, Inc., California Pizza Kitchen and Ingles Markets.

Governor Pawlenty Reappoints Geske to Minnesota Board of Veterinary Medicine

Governor Pawlenty reappointed Jeremy Geske to the Minnesota Board of Veterinary Medicine. Geske, of New Prague, is a local issues specialist for the Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation, where he assists farmers with county and township government issues. Geske is also a Suffolk sheep seedstock producer.

Geske earned his Master of Science degree in Animal Science and

Industry from Kansas State University, and his Bachelors of Science degree from North Dakota State University. He is reappointed as a public member to a four year term that expires in January of 2013.

The Board of Veterinary Medicine is responsible for licensing and disciplining veterinarians. The Board is made up of seven members appointed by the Governor.



American Lamb Board News

American Lamb Board Promotes Budget-Friendly Lamb Cuts

Now more than ever, shoppers are stretching their dollars at the grocery store by choosing value cuts of meat. ALB recently distributed a release to newspapers across the country loaded with tips to plan budget-friendly meals with American Lamb value cuts such as the leg, loin chops, shoulder chops, shanks and ribs. The release suggested buying a whole leg of lamb for plenty of leftovers throughout the week and included leftover recipes for an American Lamb Mediterranean Pita Pocket and an American Lamb and Arugula Salad.

ALB Continues to Promote the Nutrition Benefits of Lamb to Dietitians

October 26-28, registered dietitians from across the country were once again given the opportunity to learn about lean lamb and experience its flavor at the American Dietetic Association's annual Food and Nutrition Conference and Exposition. The Conference was held in Chicago and over 10,000 registered dietitians were in attendance. The American Lamb Board participated at the trade show portion of the conference, distributing recipe cards, and nutrition information and samples of a delicious Autumnal Lamb Stew, which generated a lot of excitement and buzz, sending repeat visitors back for more every day. The sizable opportunity with both dietitians visiting and consumers who continue to seek out foods that are nutritious, flavorful, and versatile and that add much-needed variety to the diet.

American Lamb in the Media

The November issue of Food and Wine Magazine featured a beautiful photo and recipe for Merguez-Spiced Lamb Shanks with Chickpeas in a feature on butchers' favorite cuts of meat. The feature includes a chart on unfamiliar cuts that mentions if you are familiar with lamb shanks try lamb ribs, a popular restaurant cut.

- The Wall Street Journal's Weekend Journal on October 31 featured a front page article on pairing wine with lamb. "The Lamb-Chop Challenge." Ten wine stores from six different cities were asked to choose a wine that would go well with lamb chops. From Syrah to Cabernet to Rioja, the wine shops all chose wines that would accentuate the great flavor of lamb.
- The October issue of Food Management included image and recipe for Balsamic and Rosemary Scented American Lamb Kabobs in "Comfort Light" feature
- The October issue of Restaurant Business includes information about Basque immigration and shepherding in the United States as well as an interview and image from Ozozko in article titled "Basque Cooking with and Independent Spirit"

Letter to the Editor—Doug Peterson, President, MN Farmers Union

The Minnesota Farmers Union recently held their annual State Convention where Minnesota-grown, locally raised lamb was served. It was a great way to showcase the availability of lamb, and the farmers who raise them, including the Lamb Shoppe in Hutchinson, who provided

the delicious food for us.

Together, we can work to promote the importance of supporting Minnesota farmers, and our local economy. The Minnesota Lamb & Wool Production Association, and the Minnesota Farmers Union should continue to work together to educate

the general public about the choices they have when choosing their meat, and the importance of making those choices local. I look forward to working with you in the future and advocating for our common interests.

Groups Urge Agriculture Secretary Nominee to Halt Mass Killing of Wildlife - *Lethal control cruel & unnecessary*

115 conservation, animal protection, ranching, and faith-based organizations submitted a letter to Tom Vilsack, the Agriculture Secretary nominee, urging him to end the federal government's systematic killing of wildlife, including wolves, coyotes, bears, cougars, and prairie dogs. Members of the coalition – comprised of Big Wildlife, Center for Biological Diversity, Creation Care Study Program, Christians for Environmental Stewardship, Humane Society of the United States, Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, Sierra Club, and Ranchers for Rural Responsibility, among many others – said that each year the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services kills millions of wild animals, primarily on behalf of agribusiness. Coalition members said halting the agency's "lethal control" programs should be one of the nominee's first steps once he is confirmed as Secretary of Agriculture.

USDA Wildlife Services employs a variety of cruel, haphazard and indiscriminate methods to kill wildlife. Animals are shot from airplanes and helicopters, poisoned, gassed, bludgeoned after capture in steel leghold traps, strangled in wire snares, and pursued with hounds and then shot. Other animals, even dogs and cats, are unintentionally injured or killed by agency actions. In 2007 alone, Wildlife Services killed 2.4 million animals, including 121,565 carnivores. The agency reported it spent more than \$100 million in 2007 to kill wildlife, most of which was funded by taxpayers. Among those animals killed in 2007: 90,262 coyotes, 2,277 gray foxes, 2,412 red foxes, 2,090 bobcats, 1,133 cats, 552 dogs, 577 badgers, and 340 gray wolves.

"Wildlife Services has much blood on its hands. The agency is committing crimes against animals that make Michael Vick's Bad Newz Kennels look like doggy day care," said Brian Vincent, communications

director for Big Wildlife. "Most Americans have no idea their tax dollars are used to brutalize countless bears, cougars, wolves, and coyotes."

USDA Wildlife Services kills carnivores and smaller animals such as prairie dogs to appease the livestock industry and kills a myriad of other animals such as blackbirds on behalf of other agribusiness enterprises. This winter, Wildlife Services killed all 27 wolves of a pack near Kalispell, Mont. In 2008, the agency wiped out seven wolf packs in the Big Sky state. In Oregon, Wildlife Services is coordinating with state officials to kill nearly 2,000 cougars. In New Mexico and Arizona over the past 10 years, Wildlife Services has killed and removed far more than the 50 or so remaining endangered Mexican gray wolves. The agency has perpetuated hostility towards many carnivore species, especially coyotes, by characterizing them as vermin or nuisance animals. Each year, the agency kills thousands of coyotes.

"'Wildlife Services' is a perfect name for an agency that serves wildlife with cyanide baits, lead bullets, and steel leghold traps," said Michael Robinson, Center for Biological Diversity. Robinson is the author of a history of the agency titled "Predatory Bureaucracy: The Extermination of Wolves and the Transformation of the West". Wildlife Services was founded in 1885 under a different name, and began its wildlife extermination program in 1915. In 1928, responding to criticism from wildlife biologists, the agency pledged not to exterminate any species and stopped using the word "exterminate," substituting it with "control." However, in 1945 the agency killed the last gray wolf in the western US in Colorado. In the 1960s, after Wildlife Services officials told Congress the agency would not exterminate wildlife, it wiped out red

wolves from the southeastern US, California condors in their namesake state, and blackfooted ferrets on the Great Plains, as well as the Mexican gray wolf in the Republic of Mexico. The last survivors of each of these species were captured, bred in captivity and reintroduced to save the species from extinction.

Members of the conservation and animal-protection group coalition that sent the letter to Vilsack said that Wildlife Services' killing program ignores the importance of carnivores. As "keystone species," carnivores play a pivotal role in sustaining ecological integrity and preserving species' diversity. Large carnivores regulate deer and elk numbers, as well as smaller mammal populations. Wolf reintroduction in Yellowstone National Park has benefited bears, foxes, beavers and songbirds, among other animals. Ongoing Wildlife Services persecution of wolves continues to harm these and other wildlife species in the vast swaths of the West.

Many non-lethal solutions are less expensive and more effective at reducing conflicts than killing, coalition members said. Ranchers who use guard dogs, llamas, burros, or who mix cattle and sheep report fewer or no predation problems. Nighttime penning, penning during lambing and calving season, and removing livestock carcasses from pastures also reduce conflicts. Strobes and sirens are effective for preventing predation. Monies spent on killing wildlife would be better used to educate and aid ranchers, farmers, and others to upgrade their fencing or assist them with utilizing non-lethal techniques. Eliminating subsidized domestic-animal grazing on public lands would sharply reduce encounters with carnivores, they said.

Editor's note: This is what we are up against!

Direct from the Farm to Consumer Marketing Opportunity

If you are one of the many farms looking to market directly to consumers, consider the Minnesota Grown Promotion program. For just \$60, your farm can be promoted throughout Minnesota via over 180,000 print catalogs and on the world-wide web via an on-line directory and Google & Yahoo “sponsored search” target ads. The \$60 covers your MN Grown license and your directory listing. Plus you have access to free point of sale materials, such as posters, price cards, and stickers. These materials have been updated to comply with Country

of Origin Labeling (COOL) requirements for perishable commodities.

Nationwide, consumers are increasingly aware of the personal, environmental, and economic benefits of buying from local producers. “Buy Local” is hot! The MN Grown program can help you connect with consumers who are looking for your products. The program is operated by the MN Department of Agriculture and funded by the licensing fees. To learn more about the program and sign up, go to www.minnesotagrown.com or call Brian Erickson at the MN Dept of

Ag – 651-201-6539. You must apply before the end of February to be listed in this year’s directory.

Last year, nearly 950 farms were licensed to use the MN Grown logo. Of that total, about 690 farms (24 sheep farms) also advertised in the Directory. The service for the Google and Yahoo “sponsored search” target ads are paid on a “per click” basis by the MN Grown Promotion Council of which MLWP is a member. From November 2007 through May 2008, there were over 3,100 clicks on “MN Lamb” or “MN Wool/Yarn” on Google or Yahoo.

2007 Census of Agriculture shows MN remains Strong

The 2007 U.S. Census of Agriculture released today shows Minnesota remains a leader in U.S. agriculture with rising farm income and increased value of agricultural products. Fifty percent of the total value of U.S. agricultural products comes from nine states, including Minnesota.

The Census of Agriculture is conducted every five years by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). Data for the 2007 calendar year was collected in 2008.

The market value of farm production was up 54 percent over the last five years from \$8.6 billion to \$13.2 billion. Crop sales accounted for 53 percent of the total market value

while livestock, livestock products and poultry accounted for 47 percent. However, those increases are tempered by a dramatic 90 percent rise in fuel and fertilizer expenses.

Minnesota Agriculture Commissioner Gene Hugoson says the census shows Minnesota continues to be a dominant force in agriculture.

“These numbers underscore the value of agriculture not only here in Minnesota but also in our ability to compete in the global agricultural marketplace,” Hugoson said.

Among the top nine states, Minnesota ranked seventh, ahead of North Carolina and Wisconsin. California is the top agricultural producer.

The census shows the number of Minnesota farms is holding steady with 80,992 farms in the state. That compares to 80,839 in 2002 when the last census was taken. The census also shows there’s been more growth in the number of smaller farm (less than 180 acres) and larger farms (1000 acres or more), while the number of farms around 500 acres declined over the last five years. The average farm size fell from 340 acres to 332 acres.

The average age of Minnesota farmers was 55.3 years, compared to 52.9 years five years ago.

Census results are available online and in various publications to be issued by NASS. For more information, visit <http://www.agcensus.usda.gov> or call (800) 727-9540.

Mark your calendars now for the 2009 MLWPA Shepherd’s Holiday, December 4-5, in Alexandria.

Ideas for speakers/topics can be submitted to any MLWP board member.

EPA Rejects Animal Rights Groups Petition on Predator Control

The efforts by animal rights groups to eliminate the use of Sodium Cyanide used in M-44s and Compound 1080 (sodium fluoroacetate) used in Livestock Protection Collars (LPC) has failed. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced in its letter to the petitioners that it does not believe cancellation is the appropriate response to their petition filed in 2007.

"The entire livestock community welcomes this decision," comments Glen Fisher, president of the American Sheep Industry Association (ASI). "M-44s are one of the top two effective management tools used in the United States against coyote predation."

Hundreds of sheep producers, agriculture and wildlife management organizations, joined ASI and the Public Lands Council in defending the continued registration of these predator

control tools.

"Producers commented on the effectiveness of, and the need for, these tools to keep lambs and calves from being attacked by predators," adds Fisher.

Petitioners claimed that M-44s and LPCs could not perform their intended functions without causing unreasonable adverse effects on the environment and posed an imminent hazard. The agency disagreed.

Regarding the claim that M-44s and LPCs pose unreasonable risks to the environment, EPA found the arguments of the petitioners unpersuasive and responded that it seemed their issues were directed against lethal predator control practices in general, rather than the registration of M-44s and 1080 specifically.

EPA and the Department of Homeland Security also disagreed with the petitioners allegations that these products presented a terrorism threat and again denied the request.

"This decision affirms the procedures and science used by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Wildlife Services to keep these products registered and in use for protection of livestock," states Peter Orwick, executive director for ASI. "Regulators saw through the sensational claims and manipulation of information used by animal rights organizations that sought to cancel the registration. This successful decision shows the support from all partners in wildlife management from landowners to local, state and federal government as well as the U.S. Congress."

COOL Labeling Concerns

Consumers throughout America must have the opportunity to identify "U.S. origin" exclusive products. This is the message expressed to newly confirmed U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Tom Vilsack by nine senators in two separate pieces of correspondence.

The concern centers around the country-of-origin labeling (COOL) rule that allows meat packers to place a multiple country label on products that are exclusively U.S. products as well as on products that are exclusively foreign. The senators are certain that the USDA regulation defeats the primary purpose of COOL - providing clear, accurate and truthful information

to the American consumer.

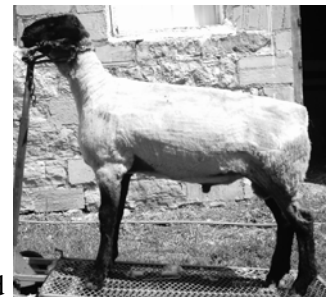
The 2008 Farm Bill set clear parameters for the use of the multiple country label on products that are not exclusively born, raised and slaughtered in the United States. USDA expanded the definition to allow packers to use the multiple country label for muscle cuts exclusively born, raised and slaughtered in the United States that are processed by a facility on the same day as foreign products and on ground meat so long as the facility processed some meat from the United States within the past 60 days.

These loopholes essentially allow processors to label every product,

including exclusively U.S. products and entirely foreign products, under the multiple country category.

"If we are just creating a system to label all products as multiple country origin, there is no value in COOL and no benefit to the consumer," stated the senators in their letters.

Supporting this request are Sens. Conrad (N.D.), Dorgan (N.D.), Enzi (Wyo.), Feingold (Wis.), Feinstein (Calif.), Johnson (S.D.), Klobuchar (Minn.), Tester (Mont.) and Wyden (Ore.).



Sheep Farms Increase Since 2002

The number of farms with sheep and lambs has increase by more than 9,000 in the last five years, according to the 2007 Census of Agriculture released this week by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service. Overall, the number of farms in the United States has grown 4 percent, and the operators of those farms have become more diverse in the past five years.

"The Census of Agriculture is a valuable tool that provides the general public with an accurate and comprehensive view of American agriculture. It's also a set of benchmarks against which this department must measure and

demonstrate its performance to agriculture and the taxpayer," said Secretary Tom Vilsack.

The 2007 Census counted 2,204,792 farms in the United States, a net increase of 75,810 farms. Nearly 300,000 new farms have begun operation since the last census in 2002. Compared to all farms nationwide, these new farms tend to have more diversified production, fewer acres, lower sales and younger operators who also work off-farm.

The latest census figures show a continuation in the trend towards more small and very large farms and fewer mid-sized operations. Between 2002

and 2007, the number of farms with sales of less than \$2,500 increased by 74,000. The number of farms with sales of more than \$500,000 grew by 46,000 during the same period.

Census results show that the majority of U.S. farms are smaller operations. More than 36 percent are classified as residential/lifestyle farms, with sales of less than \$250,000 and operators with a primary occupation other than farming. Another 21 percent are retirement farms, which have sales of less than \$250,000 and operators who reported they are retired.

The census is available at www.agcensus.usda.gov.

ASI Elects New Officers

Glen Fisher (Texas), Margaret Soulen Hinson (Idaho) and Clint Krebs (Ore.) were elected to serve as the 2009 officer team of the American Sheep Industry Association by the board of directors during the ASI/National Lamb Feeders Association Convention in San Diego, Calif., on Jan. 24, 2009.

Elected president, Fisher is the major partner and manager of Askew-Fisher Ranch, located on 18,000 acres of land in Sutton County, Texas. He runs approximately 1,800 head of

sheep and 400 cows, as well as offers a hunting enterprise on his ranch.

Commenting on his election to the office, Fisher says, "I am proud to represent the sheep industry in this capacity. It became evident during the convention that the industry has an abundance of new legislative and regulatory policy to implement plus the federal administration and the U.S. Congress have many new members to meet. This will be another busy year for ASI."

Soulen Hinson takes the office of vice president. Soulen Livestock runs approximately 10,000 head of ewes and 1,000 cows and have been in business since the early 1920s. The business operates in eight Idaho counties and is comprised of approximately 50,000 acres that is used in conjunction with various state, Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service and private land leases.

Editor's note: *Bob Benson (Ind) was elected as our regional director.*

Did you know?

By being a member of MLWPA, you can get the ASI Weekly News by email for free? Just contact ASI for information on getting your email account set up.

info@sheepusa.org

Calendar of Events

2009

Feb. 2-27	Vote yes on the lamb checkoff—county FSA office	
Mar. 1	Columbia Ewe Lamb for Youth Application Deadline	
Mar. 21	Spring Sheep Workshop Dvorak Farm	Webster, MN
Apr. 1	Targhee Starter Flock Application Deadline	
Apr. 10-12	MN Shearing School Contact Doug Rathke—320-587-6094	Hutchinson, MN
Apr. 29—May 1	ASI Legislative Trip to DC	Washington DC
May 9-10	Shepherd's Harvest Festival	Lake Elmo, MN
June 1	MLWP Youth starter flock application deadline	
June 30	MN Suffolk Scholarship application deadline	
July 12-15	NLFA Sheep Industry Leadership School	Greeley, CO
July 16-18	National Targhee Show & Sale	Miles City, MT
July 18	MN State Suffolk Show	Faribault, MN
July 19	MN State Suffolk Sale	Faribault, MN
Aug. 27—Sep. 7	MN State Fair	St. Paul, MN
Sep. 18	Newell Ram Sale	Newell, SD
Oct.	MN Hampshire Young Shepherd's Scholarship deadline	
Dec. 4-5	MLWPA Shepherd's Holiday	Alexandria, MN

If you have a calendar item or news releases that you would like included, please send information to:

Jeremy Geske
407 Horizon Dr. SE
New Prague, MN 56071
jgeske@fbmn.org

Vote Yes on the Lamb Checkoff!

Starter Flocks—cont.

\$100 towards the purchase of a Hampshire ewe at the Rochester Bred Ewe sale. Applications due in October. Contact Dale Carter at 320-239-4962.

Targhee Starter Flock Program

For children ages 9-17 as of January 1, 2009. A free flock of registered Targhee sheep awarded to a deserving youth. Applications due April 1. Flock awarded in Miles City, Montana, July 16-18 at the National Show & Sale. For more info: <http://www.ustargheesheep.org/index.html>

Columbia Ewe Lamb for Youth program

The Upper Midwest Columbia Sheep Breeders association is sponsoring a program for youth by awarding (2) \$200 stipends to be used to purchase a Columbia ewe lamb from an Upper Midwest Columbia Sheep Breeders member. Application deadline is March 1st. To receive an application for this program please write Ken Thiesen 11397 Parkview Drive Becker, MN 55308 or email khthiesen@izoom.net.

