



# The Producer

*Maine Sheep Breeders Quarterly Newsletter*

SPRING 2013

## Message from the MSBA President

It is hard to believe with the wind howling outside and the snow drifting against the barn door, but spring is just around the corner. Nancy is busy signing up vendors for the Fiber Frolic. Managing the Frolic keeps us pretty busy here at NEWAIM Farm this time of year. The applications are pouring in and it looks like it should be another great year.

I am sure that many of you are busy lambing. It is always an exciting time. Waiting to see the results of the breeding decisions you made last fall. No matter how many times I have witnessed a birth, I still find it to be a very special miracle. We as farmers get to enjoy these special moments that many others never get to see. We understand where our food and fiber comes from and what it takes to produce a quality product. The general public is very uninformed about what it takes to raise animals in a healthy and respectful manner. Please try to spread the word whenever the opportunity presents itself.

Parasites also look forward to spring lambing as an opportunity to spread their genetics. Please be sure to monitor parasite loads and the general condition of your flock during this stressful time.

I hope you all have a successful season!

*Al Maloney, MSBA President*



## Corrections from the December 2012 issue

p. 1: Anne Lichtenwalner's research focuses on Caseous Lymphadenitis (CL), not Ovine Progressive Pneumonia (OPP).

p. 3: Please note the corrected email addresses for Al Maloney, Jim Grant, Lisa Webster, Philip Webster on p. 8 in this issue.



Dear Sheep Breeders,

I am excited to present to you two great articles by Maine sheep breeders Marty Elkin of A Wrinkle in Thyme Farm, and Jeff Burchstead of Buckwheat Blossom Farm. Marty's article is an outline of what she presented at the Sheep and Goat School in October 2012. We also have reports from the national ASI convention by Brant Miller and Richard Brzozowski. I would like to highlight from the calendar (p. 7) the farm tour at Phil and Lisa Webster's Northstar Farms in Windham. If you are interested in learning how to shear, all three shearing schools still have openings.

I encourage you to contact me with your ideas and articles for publication in this newsletter, pictures of your farm or animals you like to share with other sheep breeders, as well as your feedback, comments, and suggestions. Happy reading.

*Dorothee Grimm, editor*

## Shearing Day

By Jeff Burchstead

I love shearing sheep. I get a tremendous amount of satisfaction from efficiently making my way around a sheep and cleanly removing a fleece to the appreciation of the shepherd(ess). To accomplish this task to the enjoyment of the shearer and shepherd(ess), however, takes a good deal of preparation by both parties.

As the shearer, I bear much of the responsibility for how the actual shearing goes. For the successful removal of a fleece I need to have the right skills, the right equipment and the right attitude. The skills are largely obtained by having shorn thousands of sheep of many different breeds, shapes and sizes in many different situations. After 11 years of experience, I am comfortable with my skill, but always trying to improve by learning on the job, including feedback from my customers, reading, watching videos and through the advanced training workshops I attend when I get the chance.

Paired with these skills, the right equipment makes a big difference in shearing efficiency. For me this means a flexible shaft shearing machine, quality combs and cutters and a sharpening set up to keep them sharp. I also have a set of blades to shear by hand for those customers who want that. A much more rudimentary, but also important piece of equipment, is the 5 gallon bucket of bleach solution with which I keep everything sanitized between jobs to minimize the potential transfer of disease.

Paying attention to disease control is part of an attitude that I believe is crucial to good shearing. The attitude is one of respect for sheep and the time and hard work of the shepherd(ess). Hopefully, by removing the fleece at the right time for shepherd's management priorities and financial benefit, shearing is a positive thing in the big picture. But for the sheep, shearing day is a stressful experience. Respecting the sheep means recognizing this and doing what's possible to minimize stress on the animals. Careful and efficient shearing goes a long way in this regard by keeping the amount of time the sheep spends being manipulated in unnatural positions short and reducing the wounds inflicted on them. A calm demeanor and gentle handling are the two other components I feel are important to minimizing stress on the animal. I'm always trying to do things with sheep in the way that requires the least amount of effort. You shouldn't struggle with sheep. Ideally, a shearer enjoys his/her work and has an appreciation for the product of his/her work: an unharmed sheep and the wool that comes off of it.

The shepherd(es), by designing the shearing layout for his/her farm, plays an important role in minimizing stress, maximizing the quality of the fleece and making a positive experience for the shearer. As a shearer with a commercial farm himself and with a healthy respect for other shepherds and their limited time and financial resources, I understand that not all of them will have perfect setups. I have spent much time in my shearing career chasing sheep in open fields and helping people create makeshift setups. But, I have sheared on islands where dogs brought the sheep to a pen near me and I have also sheared at the end of handling chutes where the next sheep was a couple of steps from the shearing floor through an easily operated gate. Most of the shearing setups I have encountered have been somewhere between these extremes. Many of them have been very good without much sophistication.

All good shearing setups require the least amount of time and effort from the shearer in handling the sheep. The shepherd(ess) needs the shearer to concentrate his/her energy on doing a quality job of shearing and not waste it on dragging a sheep to and away from the shearing floor. To this end, the sheep should be in an easily accessible pen adjacent to the shearing floor and able to be released at the end of shearing. If not, they should be brought to and from the shearing floor by the shepherd(ess) or someone else bribed into helping on shearing day. The person handling the sheep should know how to do it in a way that minimizes stress on the sheep. I'm always happy to show people tips on moving sheep because I want as calm an animal as I can get for shearing.

In the catch pen, the sheep should be bunched fairly tight so they do not have to be chased. An added benefit to bunching the sheep is that the collective body heat liquefies the otherwise gummy lanolin that could impede shearing on a cold day. One other very important aspect of pre-shearing management is to withhold all feed at least 12 hours prior, regardless of sheep condition, in order to clear the rumen. A full rumen makes for a very uncomfortable sheep while in the shearing positions.

Once at the shearing floor with the sheep, the shearer needs three things: enough light, an accommodation for his/her equipment, and a level surface. Natural light is best and can be brought in through open barn doors and windows near the shearing floor. Ideally, natural light surrounds the sheep and shearer as in shearing outdoors when weather permits or in a structure covered in clear or translucent plastic, such as a hoop house. If artificial light is needed there should be plenty of it, especially shining from the floor up so as to cast the least amount of shadows.



*Two sheets of plywood raised off the barn floor. Plenty of natural light.*



*Shearing on a rubber mat. Almost as good as plywood, just not as smooth.*

*Continued on p. 3*



*Shearing Day- continued from p. 2*

*Blade shearing on one sheet of plywood with a broom close at hand.*

As for accommodating shearing equipment, it varies for each shearer. Most often, a shearer needs electricity, ideally through an outlet close to the shearing floor. An extension cord is fine as long as the cord isn't so long that it allows voltage drop that could harm the machine. I, personally, also need a place 8 feet or higher above the shearing floor to hang my machine. This can be a joist or rafter or a nail in one or in a wall. The exception to these accommodations is when I shear with the blades (hand shears). Then, all I need is the shearing floor itself.

Regardless of the shearing situation, the shearing floor needs to meet a few basic criteria. First, it has to be level so that when the sheep is held in the delicately balanced shearing positions, the shearer can count on the levelness to maintain that balance. Otherwise, the sheep will be tipped in its favor and feel like it can get up. The shearing floor should also be relatively smooth to facilitate comfort of the sheep and easy movement of both the sheep and the shearers feet. It should be made of a material that minimizes the potential for breaking dropped shearing equipment. A level grassy spot can fulfill these criteria as can some barn floors, provided the boards aren't too warped. Most often, though, the best shearing floors are full sheets of plywood. OSB or chip board can work, but grab onto the wool as you try to sweep it clean. If the plywood needs to be leveled it should be as thick as possible so that when blocked up it doesn't bow. One sheet of plywood is sufficient for shearing, but two next to each other helps to catch the wool on a clean surface. A further refinement of the shearing floor is to have the sheet(s) of plywood screwed to a 2"X4" frame, preferably with the plywood sitting on the narrow dimension of the 2"X4" to give it maximum height. The shearer can use this step up to

the shearing floor to help trip the sheep onto its bottom. The elevation will also help keep the bedding that is often being dragged by the sheep off of the shearing floor and out of the wool.

The emphasis on keeping the wool clean is one that I greatly appreciate in a shearing setup. Some of my best shearing jobs are for those shepherds who value their wool to a high degree and do everything they can to keep it clean. This effort resonates with my own attitude of respect for the sheep and its amazing productive ability. I'm fortunate in my job to see all the different types of wool, with their different lusters, lengths, colors and crimps. It never ceases to amaze me and therefore I always feel it a shame to shear in a setup that allows this amazing fiber to get soiled by the hay chaff or shavings it falls into or mixed into all the bits and fribs of wool not cleared from the floor. I'm always trying to sweep away what I can between sheep to prevent contamination. A broom and someone to operate it, though, will go a long way to keeping the wool clean in good and poor setups.

Getting the fleece to the point where it is in good shape and ready to be sheared off at the right time, however, is no easy feat and is something for which the shepherd(ess) should be lauded. A sheep is a very hardy and naturally thrifty animal, but the burdens of producing wool and making and feeding lambs are great. These require the shepherd(ess) to be very fastidious in feeding the flock good quality feed and enough of it, but not too much. Good feeding practices will go a long way to supporting the health and production of a sheep, but there is also parasite control (including lice) and keeping the sheep out of the burrs.

In addition to these basic management concerns, the timing of shearing can greatly benefit the sheep and the fleece. Ideally, sheep are in good condition when shorn, are at least 2, but preferably 4 to 6 weeks before they lamb and haven't felted their fleeces due to rubbing for lice or waiting too long to shear. Well conditioned sheep, especially those that are close to lambing, have some roundness to them. A round, tight surface is much easier to shear than the concave, bony shapes of a loose skinned poorly conditioned sheep.

It is often hard, however, to assess the condition of the sheep until the wool is off. This is one reason it is important to get the fleece off before lambing in time for the shepherd(ess) to do something about it if need be. Another reason is to make way for the shepherd to see the birthing process and the lambs to find the teats. It also gets the wool off before the stress of lambing potentially creates a break in it.

Worse than a break in the wool, however, is a felted fleece. This fleece is essentially worthless. To prevent felting, the shepherd has to control lice and shear longwool breeds and breeds like Icelandics twice a year.

Having said all this, I am not judgmental about the management abilities of any shepherd(ess). I very much understand the challenge of balancing the needs of the sheep with other aspects of a farm, and of a family and of life in general. Right now I am looking out my window at our flock of Coopworths with beautiful and valuable handspinning fleeces all tufty and some a little felted from chewing and rubbing at the lice we should have controlled after the shearing that was supposed to happen several weeks ago to prepare for the lambing that is just about done now! The cobbler's kids have no shoes I guess.

Lest this be a case of do as I say not as I do, I should add that, most years, we do a good job with our flock and our fleeces. And the point of this article is to leave the reader feeling like you can do the same with your flock with a little advice from someone who cares if you do and understands if you don't. As long as you are doing your best to make my and your job go as smoothly as possible and the shearing goes well, we should both be content for the day.

Please contact me if you have any questions or comments regarding this article or my shearing business.

Jeff Burchstead  
207-882-8082

buckwheatblossomfarm@gmail.com

(please see ad on p. 8 of this issue)

## A Wrinkle in Thyme Farm Fiber CSA: It's all about Community

By Marty Elkin

Now in our 6<sup>th</sup> year with our Fiber CSA we realize it is all about the people. We appreciate each individual involved, each in their own way... with different needs and different skills to offer. We have found ways to be flexible and to adapt to those who express the desire to support the sustainability of A Wrinkle in Thyme Farm.



### In the beginning

We began our CSA in 2008 by offering 10 CSA shares. Fiber availability is limited by the number of sheep we have and we want to be sure that everyone gets a full share of fiber from our own animals. In fact, the vast majority of the wool in our store is from our own animals. Each spring every lamb is named, cuddled, and nurtured to be a friendly part of the farm. We keep track of the fiber so when it is yarn we can attach a picture of the sheep that grew the wool. Although as farmers we are not able to keep all the ram lambs, we do our best to find them a good home and to create a happy, healthy life for them while they are here. Bubba, the draft horse, Meg the Border Collie and Mrs. Whatsit the cat get lots of attention from visitors too.

As the flock has grown the CSA has grown, now over 30 members. Some members purchase more than one CSA in a year, and others may take more than a year to choose their entire share. About half of the CSA members are local and repeat share holders who actively share in gatherings and seasonal work of the farm. Jackie, now in her third year says, "I love feeling like I own a piece of the farm. And it feels like I am getting the yarn free when I can shop with my Fiber CSA."

### Education

Each CSA includes a free 2 hour class taught by Marty at the farm. This can be a knitting, beginner spinning, hand dyeing with plants and weeds, precision dyeing with acid dyes, wet felting, basic needle-felting, needle felted landscapes or an animal portrait.



### Weekly Knitting

Some CSA members join the knitting group on a weekly basis. Often they renew their shares as soon as they are used up. Priscilla remembers the first time she came to knit when we gathered in the house to visit and enjoy a cup of tea. She says she immediately felt welcomed by the small group of women who regularly came to knit. This group which now meets in the Tesseract Fiber Building has grown 10 or more and has the same friendly feeling. Kristen TenDyke, knitting designer for the book "Finish Free Knits" recently published by Interweave Press, is a regular participant. She, Joan, Rebecca, and Cheryl all like to design their own patterns and offer show and tell about their knitted creations. We all are learning together.

### Our Fiber CSA involves both receiving and giving

There are many ways our CSA members choose to be involved with the farm. We enjoy the work we do every day and with good help it can really be fun. We sometimes talk about the magic of it as at the end of the day as we look at all that has been accomplished and we are all feeling tired but refreshed and relaxed... restored.

Members help at the farm with events and seasonal activities, such as maple sugaring, shearing day, Maine Maple Sunday, and the annual Natural Fiber Showcase.

When you visit the farm you may meet one of the many committed people in our fiber CSA who come to help. Anne Gass, well known in the sheep world having raised sheep for over 20 years, has been our mentor with all things sheep including nutrition, breeding for quality fleece, lambing, health issues, and processing fiber. When we decided to do a dye workshop she spent many hours sharing her knowledge and experience, helping to refine the process of precision dyeing and assisting with the classes as well. On shearing day, about every 8 months, Anne stands at the skirting table teaching helpers how to skirt and evaluate fleeces for hand spinning.

Cheryl and her husband Jim own a neighboring sheep farm insist that the exchange of time and energy is mutually beneficial. We share concerns about sheep nutrition, lambing, and collaborate with the work of haying. Cheryl has a lovely sense with color and often helps in the dye kitchen. She is a patient and skilled knitter always willing to help with knitters' challenges.

Kate, graduate of Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture, offered her talents in designing the Tesseract Fiber Building and Education Center from the ground up where our farm store is located, classes are held, and wool is washed with solar thermal hot water. She continues to offer support with computer skills by maintaining [FiberThyme@Etsy.com](mailto:FiberThyme@Etsy.com), our online store, and her skills as a photographer to provide attractive images for our web site and products.



*Continued on p. 5*

*A Wrinkle in Thyme Farm Fiber CSA - continued from p. 4*

Denise would like to have her own flock of sheep, but this is not possible. So she adopted Anita a lamb in the spring of 2011. Each year she invests again and in return gets Anita's fleece (or another she chooses, the opportunity to work with the sheep for two or more "work days" each month and does whatever needs to be done from cleaning up manure to packing up for a fair.

**Support from away**

Not all CSA members can come to the farm; they offer their support from a distance. Some are one time memberships that we never meet. One member who likes to felt lives in New York City, and visited the farm while on vacation in Maine. Once or twice a year she orders hand dyed felting wool or maple syrup and gifts for friends. Others have ordered a CSA Share through Fiber-Thyme@Etsy.com and pay the shipping for their fiber. One Michigan spinner was given a CSA share as a gift and chose a fleece from a picture of the sheep. We sent him a sample of the fiber for color and feel. After he received the roving CSA share he sent a gracious letter of thanks.

**Growing our CSA**

Sally, one of the founding members of our Fiber CSA believes that she and "many of our CSA members want to support our efforts to be a sustainable small diversified farm in rural Maine. We want our CSA to continue to grow to include those from away who enjoy the high quality products produced by our flock of sheep though not able to come to the farm. We want to include those from nearby town who participate in gatherings and farm events and local folks who are closely involved on a weekly basis and who come to work. We want to stay small enough to provide wool from our flock of about 30 sheep and to care for our animals responsibly, to enjoy working our land and nurturing the grass and the soil and keep warm, strong relationships with all our membership through our newsletters, our farm journal, and gatherings.

**Excerpt from our Welcome Letter:**

Your CSA Fiber share is available to you as you choose. We encourage you to visit the farm to see and feel the choices available if you can. When you visit you may even choose the animal in the field that you want your fiber to come from. If you can not visit we will work with you by sending pictures of the sheep and samples of the fiber according to how you would like to use it to spin, crochet, knit, or weave. Members choose the kind of share they want i.e. a spinners share, a felters or weavers share, or a yarn share (see descriptions below). Quantity of fiber included is based on current retail prices in the store. You can even include a bottle of maple syrup or a pound of Maple Sausage in your share.

Your CSA membership support is particularly helpful with fiber processing costs.

Our new building, the Tesseract Fiber Building and Learning Center has a solar thermal system so the sun heats the water with which we wash all the wool our sheep grow. Some fiber is then taken to New Aim Fiber Processing Mill in Waldoboro, Maine to be spun into yarn. Some goes to Winterbrook Farm in Oxford to be made into roving to spin or dyed for needle

felting. Some wool is carded here into blended batts with our small Patrick Green carder for spinning or for felting

**A Yarn Share:** Skeins of 100% farm yarn are 150 or 200 yards each. Our yarn makes up nicely for felting in the washing machine. You may also choose from our patterns including Mary Ann's Angora Lined Hat, Cheryl's Felted Slippers, Double Cuff Mittens, or Felted Pocket Bag and more.

Yarn choices include natural 100% wool farm yarn, (a share is enough for a sweater), Hand Dyed 100% wool - (a share is enough for a vest, we have lots of colors of 2-3 skeins per color to mix and match), Angora yarn: (bunny) 20% and 80% Finn sheep or our softest wool - so warm - one skeins will make an angora lined hat and two skeins make an ultra-soft scarf.

**Felters Share:** One share includes your choice needle felting tools and Thyme Tile needle felting pattern kits. For images and information about the kits go to [FiberThyme@etsy.com](mailto:FiberThyme@etsy.com) Hand dyed felting roving may be packaged for you including a variety of natural white, gray or brown and hand dyed colors.

**A Spinners Share:** You may choose a raw fleece or two to four pounds of roving or blended batts to spin. You may choose hand dyed blended batts with a touch of silk, alpaca, or mohair. You may request a colorway using Cushing's dyes. Hand dyeing is in process ongoing. You can even come and help in the dye kitchen.

**A Weavers Share:** A combination of natural colored, ivory, or dyed yarn in skeins or on cones. Usually must order ahead.

Marty Elkin

*A Wrinkle in Thyme Farm, Summer*

For more information about Fiber CSA in Maine go to

<http://www.mofga.org/Publications/MaineOrganicFarmerGardener/Summer2009/FiberCSA/tabid/1197/Default.aspx>



## ASI 2013 Annual Convention Report - San Antonio, TX

By Brant Miller

I was able to participate in the 2013 ASI annual convention in San Antonio, TX. I've been attending this event for over 15 years serving as Director for Maine, Region 1 Executive Board member (2005 – 2008), committee/council member, and returned this year as the voting Maine Director. These years have been a great experience and I feel I have made some contribution to the sheep industry. The last few years have been particularly good for Maine since Richard Brzozowski has become deeply involved as well. And last year Lisa Webster became involved and served as Maine's Director. Maine is definitely well known and respected within ASI.

I have served on the Targeted Grazing Committee since its inception some years ago. The committee published a handbook and developed curriculum for a number of training sessions. This year, the committee went into a hiatus for a while. There are no current resources at the time. Hopefully it will be regenerated at some future time.

I also serve on the Legislative Action Council. The session this year covered a broad range of subjects including review of the new 113<sup>th</sup> Congress and its effect on our industry. Immigration policy is one area that our industry is watching very closely. Wildlife Services funding is also of concern. It looks stable right now, but is constantly being threatened. The Farm Bill seems at a standstill but that could change. The Senate could pass something, but the House is questionable. Representatives tend to narrow their focus since they represent more isolated districts and consequently don't often look at the bigger picture. Senators, on the other hand, represent their entire state, so seem to have a broader view. The spring Legislative trip to Washington DC has been scheduled for May 6 – 8, 2013. Any producer is welcome and it is a great opportunity to visit with Maine's congressional delegation and their staff.

I attended eXtension roundtable discussion. See Richard's report (below) about this. It is a very interesting project that has the potential of becoming a major resource for sheep producers.

In addition to me and Richard, we were honored to have another Mainer in attendance for most of the convention. Wally Sinclair was in attendance to receive the Shepherd's Award for Media. Wally publishes *Mainely Agriculture* and often publishes articles about sheep production. Congratulations to Wally.

Bad news in the industry continues to come in the form of severe drought in many parts of the country. The good news is that sheep inventory has only dropped a little. Usually, drought causes many ewes to be shipped for slaughter, however, this time ewes tended to be shipped to other states and remained in production.

Next year the ASI Convention is in Charleston, SC. It would be great to take a van load of Maine producers to that convention. Most have not had the opportunity to attend a convention, so this might be the chance.

*Brant Miller, MSBA Vice President*



## ASI 2013 Annual Convention Report - San Antonio, TX

By Richard Brzozowski

I participated in the 2013 annual convention of the American Sheep Industry (ASI) in January. I travelled with Brant Miller of Bowdoinham, who served as Maine's Director (voting delegate).

My reason for attending the convention was three-fold. I serve on two national committees – the Production, Education & Research Council; and the Educators Committee for the TwoPlus Program. I attended several sessions and presentations while at the convention. I took part in the PER Council meeting and heard presentations on by researchers and geneticists. The sheep foot health research project coordinated by the University of Maine Cooperative Extension was mentioned by a lead geneticist in the genetic stakeholders' session. At another session, I reported on Maine's Emerging Maine Sheep Entrepreneurs Program that just got underway and includes 20 farms across Maine. In 2012, MSBA received \$1,000 from ASI to start a mentorship program. MSBA was encouraged by the TwoPlus committee of ASI to submit another proposal to educationally equip and assist new sheep producers again this year.

While at the convention, I was interviewed by a farm radio station based in Ohio.

While at the convention, I was also involved in an eXtension roundtable discussion. eXtension is the on-line presence of Extension systems across the country whereby specific issues or topics are addressed and by which the public can benefit. Each issue or topic is supported by a Community of Practice (CoP). A CoP is comprised of anyone (within Extension or outside of Extension) who has an interest in the topic or issue. The system has been around for a while, but the sheep Community of Practice is brand new. The eXtension sheep website was unveiled at this convention. FMI see [www.extension.org](http://www.extension.org) and [www.extension.org/sheep/](http://www.extension.org/sheep/)

I participated in the state executives' breakfast and gave a short report of the MSBA and Maine's growing sheep industry to over 50 other representatives. The next ASI Convention is scheduled for next January in Charleston, SC.

I met several sheep producers, researchers and leaders from around the country at this event in San Antonio. I appreciated the opportunity to participate.

*Richard Brzozowski, MSBA Treasurer*



## MSBA Calendar of Events and Board of Directors (BOD) Meetings 2013

**February 27, 10am-4pm:** Shearing Day at A Wrinkle in Thyme Farm with sheep shearer Jeff Burchstead. Everyone is invited- no experience required. Help in the barn or at the skirting table. Anne Gass be at the skirting table to share information about quality fleeces for hand spinning. Bring a friend and a dish to share. Many Fleeces will be available for purchase. After the work is done we will spin or knit. To RSVP and FMI, contact Marty and Mary Ann [info@awrinkleinthymefarm.com](mailto:info@awrinkleinthymefarm.com)

**March 13:** Maine Ag Day at the Legislature, Augusta.

**March 22-23: Inaugural New England Meat Conference**, Grappone Center, Concord, NH. Producers, processors, distributors, chefs, technical assistance providers, government representatives and other industry stakeholders network and learn from counterparts in other states and other regional food systems. Trade show with national suppliers of new technologies that may be adopted by local producers and processors. FMI, please contact Diane Schivera [dianes@mofga.org](mailto:dianes@mofga.org)



**March 23, 8am-3:30pm:** MGFN & MBPA 9th Annual Grazing Conference, KVCC, Fairfield. Keynote speaker: Ray Archuleta. For more information (FMI) and to register, go to <http://umaine.edu/livestock/mgfn/conference/>

**March 30, 11am:** Farm tour at Philip and Lisa Webster's North Star Farm in Windham, followed by a potluck lunch and Q&A. FMI, please contact Lisa Webster [northstarfarms@me.com](mailto:northstarfarms@me.com)



**April 5-6:** Blade Shearing School with Kevin Ford, New Gloucester. FMI or to register, please contact UMaine Extension at 207-781-6099 or go to <http://umaine.edu/cumberland/programs/agriculture/sheep-shearing-school/>

**April 16:** BOD meeting at the Great Wall Buffet, Augusta. We meet at 6pm to eat; the business meeting starts at 6:30pm. Open to all MSBA members.

**April 20:** Beginner Shearing School, Wolfe's Neck Farm, Freeport. FMI or to register, please contact UMaine Extension at 207-781-6099 or go to <http://umaine.edu/cumberland/programs/agriculture/sheep-shearing-school/>

**May 4:** Beginner Shearing School, Littleton. FMI or to register, please contact UMaine Extension at 207-781-6099 or go to <http://umaine.edu/cumberland/programs/agriculture/sheep-shearing-school/>

**May 6-8:** Legislative spring trip to Washington, DC. FMI, please contact Brant Miller [bsmiller99@gmail.com](mailto:bsmiller99@gmail.com)

**May 11-12:** New Hampshire Sheep and Wool Festival, Deerfield, NH. More information at <http://www.nhswga.com/index.php/sheep-and-wool-festival>



**May 17-19:** Northeast Livestock Expo (NELE), Windsor Fairgrounds. More information at [www.northeastlivestockexpo.com](http://www.northeastlivestockexpo.com)

**June 1:** The Producer summer 2013 issue to be sent out. Please submit all articles to the editor by May 15.

**June 2-3:** Maine Fiber Frolic at the Windsor Fairgrounds. More information at [www.fiberfrolic.com](http://www.fiberfrolic.com) Saturday, June 2, 8am-12pm: MSBA Wool Pool. More information will be posted on the MSBA website once available.



Please check the MSBA website frequently for updates to the calendar [www.mainesheepbreeders.com](http://www.mainesheepbreeders.com)

**MSBA Board of Directors**

**President:** Al Maloney, NEWAIM Farm, Waldoboro, ME; [newaim@midcoast.com](mailto:newaim@midcoast.com)

**Vice President:** Brant Miller, Bowdoinham, ME; [bsmiller99@gmail.com](mailto:bsmiller99@gmail.com)

**Treasurer:** Richard Brzozowski, Buckminster Farm, New Gloucester, ME; [richard.brzozowski@maine.edu](mailto:richard.brzozowski@maine.edu)

**Secretary:** Nancy Webster, Belfast, ME; [woolweb@aol.com](mailto:woolweb@aol.com)

Donna Flint, Oak Ridge Farm, Sanford, ME; [donna.flint@maine.edu](mailto:donna.flint@maine.edu)

Jim Grant, Good Karma Farm and Spinning Co, Belfast, ME; [jim@karmayarn.com](mailto:jim@karmayarn.com)

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Lisa Webster, North Star Farm, Windham, ME; [northstarfarms@me.com](mailto:northstarfarms@me.com)

Philip Webster, North Star Farm, Windham, ME; [northstarfarms@me.com](mailto:northstarfarms@me.com)



### **Jeff Burchstead** *Sheep Shearer*

8 Years Experience  
All Breeds of Sheep  
Gentle Handling  
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## **2012 Sheep Numbers Reported**

On February 1, 2013, the American Sheep Industry (ASI) reported:



The sheep and lamb inventory in the United States on Jan. 1 totaled 5.34 million head, down 1 percent from 2012. Breeding sheep inventory decreased to 3.98 million head on Jan. 1, down 1 percent from 4.0 million head on Jan. 1, 2012. Ewes one year old and older, at 3.14 million head, were 1 percent below last year. Market sheep and lambs on Jan. 1, totaled 1.36 million head, down 1 percent from Jan. 1, 2012. Market lambs comprised 94 percent of the total market inventory. Twenty-three percent were lambs less than 65 pounds, 12 percent were 65 - 84 pounds, 22 percent were 85 - 105 pounds, and 37 percent were over 105 pounds. Market sheep comprised the remaining 6 percent of total market inventory.

The 2012 lambing rate was 109 lambs per 100 ewes one year old and older.

"The report is better than predicted by the economists during the 2013 American Sheep Industry Association (ASI)/National Lamb Feeders Association Convention last week," said Peter Orwick, ASI executive Director. "A decrease in numbers was expected due to the worst drought in the United States in the last 50 years."

Shorn wool production during 2012 was 28.5 million pounds, down 3 percent from 2011. Sheep and lambs shorn totaled 3.93 million head, also down 2 percent from 2011. The average price paid for wool sold in 2012 was \$1.53 per pound for a total value of 43.6 million dollars, down 11 percent from 48.9 million dollars in 2011.





## Report from the 72<sup>nd</sup> annual Maine Agricultural Trades Show, January 8-10, 2013

By Lisa Webster

Members of the Ag committee of Maine gathered for workshops, association meetings and to visit with vendors during the three day event in January. The weather was good for all three days of the show with record numbers of visitors each day. Two of the highlights of the trade show were the viewing of the Maine Organic Milk film "Betting the Farm" and the MSBA workshop on structures for sheep housing, both held on Wednesday evening.

*Lisa Webster*

*North Star Farms, Windham*

As a paid member of MSBA you receive this newsletter four times per year. Please make sure we have your correct email address/mailling address on file. You are entitled to participate in the annual cooperative Wool Pool sale of fleece (at the Maine Fiber Frolic, see calendar on p. 8). You receive marketing and political representation at state, regional and national levels. You meet a great group of people who love to share information about their animals, their farm and their products, as well as information about breeding, management, and marketing techniques. Your MSBA membership makes you a member of the American Sheep Industry Association (ASI), and you receive their monthly newsletter 'Sheepnews'.

The MSBA board of directors (BOD) meets 6-8 times per year. We encourage membership involvement at the board of directors meetings, as well as on committees, and volunteering for one of our events and educational programs. Everyone has something to contribute. Please contact Nancy Webster or Richard Brzozowski and volunteer a few hours for the good of all. Maine Sheep Breeders' Association - by sheep people for sheep people.



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### Maine Sheep Breeders Association 2013 Membership Dues payable by Jan 31, 2013

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Farm Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_ City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

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Breeds of sheep \_\_\_\_\_



MSBA membership year is Jan 1-Dec 31  
\$20.00 per year/per farm.

Make check payable to: **MSBA Treasurer**  
Mail to: Richard Brzozowski  
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New Gloucester, ME 04260



MSBA  
Maine Sheep Breeders Association  
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