



The Producer

Maine Sheep Breeders Quarterly Newsletter

A Quarterly Newsletter

Spring 2012

Getting Ready for the Shearer

- A Checklist for Maine Sheep & Wool Producers -

Written by Richard Brzozowski, University of Maine Cooperative Extension richard.brzozowski@maine.edu

Remember: Proper care of sheep throughout the year can impact your bottom line in fleece value on market day. Consider bedding materials, drainage for dry loafing areas, feeding methods and overall flock health.

30-60 days before shearing

- Select a suitable shearing date
 - Consider a “best time” for your ewes for their stage of production cycle
Shearing ewes 30 days before lambing is preferred by many shearers.
 - Consider “best time” and day for you and your shearer
 - Arrange for a backup shear date if deemed necessary (a rain, snow or sick date)
 - Make sure you know what the shearer expects you to do – this can affect your labor needs when the day comes. *Confirm with shearer his/her requirements, regarding help, whether he/she plans to vaccinate or trim hooves, if he/she will use your hoof trimmers, or his/her own, etc.*
- Check your wool bag supply (adequate number; type; and condition of bags). *Wool buyers and processors will specify the type of wool bags (burlap or special plastic) they require or prefer. Your price per pound received could be discounted if your wool is placed in the wrong type of bag.*
 - Obtain wool bags as needed
 - If you bag fleeces separately for special sales or competition, arrange for proper bags, sheets, or boxes.
 - Check over your handling equipment and order replacement pieces.

7-30 Days Before Shearing

- Prepare the shearing area
 - Clear shearing area of debris
 - Build/Assemble shearing floor
 - *Most shearers prefer a wood floor that is raised from existing floor*
 - *A shearing floor can be constructed of 2 sheets of plywood (4' X 8') and 2" X 4" or 2" X 6" stock as framing. These can be built separately for portability and ease of storage. Avoid shearing in wet areas. Do not shear directly on concrete floors.*
 - *The “ideal” shearing floor should be level*
 - *If shearing is planned for a carpeted surface – make sure it is well tacked down to avoid gathering of material.*
 - Make ready, repair or build the holding area(s) for sheep to be shorn (continued on page 4)



The 2012 Wool Pool will be returning to the Fiber Frolic the first weekend in June 2012. **This will be a graded pool** If you are interested in learning more about the Fiber Frolic please visit their website or contact

Al Maloney 207 832-5162 newaim@midcoast.com

The 12th Maine Fiber Frolic June 2 and 3, 2012 from 9am-4pm at the Windsor Fairgrounds, in Windsor, Maine.

Articles, advertising and comments of the "Producer" may be sent to Lisa Webster, secretary of MSBA at msba@me.com

As a paid member of MSBA you received our newsletter four times per year. You are entitled to participate in the annual cooperative Wool Pool sale of fleece. 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.

MSBA board of directors meets 6-8 times per year and encourage membership involvement at the board of directors meetings as well as on committees and volunteering for one of our many events and educational programs. Everyone has something to contribute: We encourage you to reach out to Lisa Webster or Richard Brzozowski and volunteer a few hours for the good of all.

Remember MSBA members are "sheep people, by sheep people for all sheep people".

Maine Sheep Breeders Association 2012 Membership Dues payable by Jan 31, 2012

Name _____ Farm Name _____

Mailing Address _____ City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____ Website _____

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
525 Cobb Bridge Rd
New Gloucester, ME 04260



If you are interested in bidding on the 2012 Maine Wool Pool please contact Diane Schivera by email dianes@mofga.org or by telephone 207-565-4142 to discuss.

LLamas

Llamas are naturally aggressive towards coyotes and dogs. Their responses to predators include becoming alert; alarm calling; walking or running toward the predator; chasing; kicking or pawing the predator; or positioning themselves between the sheep and the predator. They have been known to herd the sheep together into one area to keep the safe.

Llamas will usually bond with sheep in a few days. A single llama usually works best. An intake male llama may injure ewes as the smell of a ewe in heat is similar to a female llama in heat.



Donkeys

Donkeys are increasing in popularity as protectors of sheep and goats in the United States. Donkeys have an inherent dislike for dogs and other canids. They will bray, bare their teeth, run and chase, and attempt to bite and kick the intruder.

Only a gelded jack or jenny (female) should be used as a livestock guardian since intact males can be aggressive towards livestock. A single donkey will usually bond easily with the sheep.

Alpacas do not make suitable guardians. Like sheep, they need protection from predators.



Advertise here for only \$100 per year, reaching producers across the state

Ad rates: Business Card size, print ready \$100 for 4 issues, \$35 for a single issue. Interested in sponsoring a full issue? Please contact msba@me.com to discuss availability and costs

We are in need of a volunteer to producer our quarterly newsletter. If you are interested in helping with this very important project please contact me, thank you in advance for you help - Lisa Webster



MSBA website www.mainesheepbreeders.com

Getting ready for the Shearer, a checklist for Maine Sheep Breeders (continued from page 1)

- Consider chutes, pen size, gates, ease of catching and movement of sheep to and from the shearing floor
 - The catch pen area should have slatted floors and be at the same level as the shearing floor
 - Make sure there is adequate ventilation in the upper areas of the shearing floor. *Draftiness by the sheep and shearer (floor level) is not recommended. Drafts are uncomfortable for sheep and shearers.*
 - If you are providing the electricity – make sure the outlets work and that you have necessary extension cords as needed
- Check supply of suture materials, antiseptic, hoof shears, hoof medication, etc. Order materials as needed.

12-48 Hours Before Shearing

- Keep sheep dry and out of the weather at least two days before shearing
- Separate flock into groups as needed (consider age, fleece color, cleanliness)
- Withhold feed (hay & grain) from sheep at least 12 hours before shearing
- Stage wool bags, wool rack, broom and other supplies
- Get wool skirting table ready
- Check in with shearer by phone or email 24 hours before shearing

Shearing Day

- Arrange for adequate lighting in the shearing area
- Arrange to shear white-wool sheep first and colored sheep last (black/natural color) – shear cleanest sheep first in each group and any sheep with observable abscesses should be shorn last of all
- Set up shearing floor or clear area for shearing level surface head room
- Provide cool drinking water and light snack to shearer(s)
- Skirt fleeces (removing belly wool, tags, soiled wool and debris). Provide clearly marked receptacles for skirtings, white-faced white wool, black-faced white wool, and natural colored wool.
- Weigh/record fleeces
- Separate/sort fleeces for consistency (fine and medium). Place caps and belly wool in containers separate from fleeces.
- Pack wool in wool bags
- Identify wool lots as needed
- Pay shearer for the job well-done

Following Shearing Day

- Store wool in a dry place
- Observe sheep for comfort and make sure they are eating as normal
- Mark your calendar for wool pool or wool sale day
- Be ready to provide shelter in case of unexpected cold front.

2012 Wool Pool will be held at the Windsor Fairgrounds, in Windsor, Maine during the 12th annual Fiber Frolic on June 2 from 8-noon.

This will be a graded pool. Our Grader will be Jeff Jordan from NH.

Want to learn to shear? [2012 beginner sheep shearing registration form](#) and return it as soon as possible with your payment to: UMaine Extension, 75 Clearwater Drive, Falmouth, ME 04105.

Message from the President



Dear Friends,

Spring has arrived in Maine very early this year. I hope everyone has had great success with their lambing so far this spring. I would like to share some of my tips for a success lambing season at our farm. Always have your lambing supplies in a convenient place in your lambing barn. If possible a small heated supply room is most convenient. I have a small refrigerator in my warm room to keep my medicines a consistent temp. This is also where I keep frozen colostrum. I stock up on colostrum from every ewe which can spare it. We general take 4-12oz from my ewes after she lambs. Have on hand quart and gallon size freezer bags (the ones with the zipper closure) Place the colostrum in a quart bag and write on it the amount in oz, the date frozen and the ewe you took the colostrum from. Flatten the bag to remove the air and then put this bag inside a second bag, the gallon size bag. Double bagging will save you when you unthaw in the crockpot in the event a hole develops in the quart bag. We keep our crockpot going on simmer all through the lambing season. It is a safe and convenient way to unthaw your colostrum. I vent the bags during the thawing process by slightly opening the zipper and tucking the open corner under the crockpot cover. this way the bag will not get submerses during the unthawing process. this is most most important preventive measure during lambing season. You are always prepared for that third lamb or the surprise bag issues. Please do not hesitate to call me with questions. PHIL



Homemade Yogurt submitted by Dorothee Grimm

You don't have to have dairy sheep or dairy goats to end up with some extra milk. A ewe or goat sometimes produces more milk than her offspring can drink, or her lamb or kid might die. If she allows you to milk her, strain the milk to get rid of hay and other dirt, and refrigerate it as soon as possible. It takes very little effort to make your own yogurt, and it will be purer than most commercially available yogurts.

You need: A pot (preferably stainless steel), a whisk or slotted spoon for stirring, a thermometer (preferably not glass), a beverage cooler, containers for yogurt (Mason jars, plastic containers), containers that can hold hot water (uninsulated), hot and cold water.

Pour the milk in appropriately sized pot, and heat it to 180F with frequent stirring. Once the milk gets to 150F the temperature will go up very quickly, and you should start stirring constantly to avoid scorching and overheating. At 180F, take the pot off the heat and allow it to cool to 115-120F. You can speed the cooling process by placing the pot into a pan with cold water.

While the milk is heating, preheat cooler by adding containers with hot water (as hot as it comes out of your tap). The number of hot water containers depends on the size of your cooler and the number of yogurt containers you want to incubate. In the end, the cooler should be full, to help maintain temperature during the incubation period.

For each pint of milk add 1 tablespoon of plain yogurt with live bacteria, or appropriate amount of commercial yogurt starter. Stir well. Pour yogurt into yogurt containers. Put containers into cooler to incubate. Cover cooler with a blanket to help it hold the temperature. Incubate for 6-10 hours. The longer you incubate the yogurt, the tangier and firmer it will get, so you should experiment to reach the flavor you like best. Take out yogurt and place it into refrigerator to firm up.

You could naturally sweeten your yogurt by adding honey or maple syrup to the yogurt container prior to incubating.

Homemade yogurt will never be as firm as yogurt you buy at the store, unless you add dry milk prior to heating the milk. I encourage you to try out a plain yogurt recipe first though, because it will better showcase the flavor of your animals' milk.



MSBA
Phillip Webster, President
PO Box 1867
Windham, ME 04062

MSBA contacts

President Phillip Webster
northstarfarms@me.com

Vice President Al Maloney
newaim@midcoast.com

Treasurer Richard Brzozowski
richard.brzozowski@maine.edu

Secretary Lisa Webster
msba@me.com

**A complete list of the Directors
and their contact information is
available at the MSBA website
www.mainesheepbreeders.com**

Please renew your membership today. Our membership drive allows us to bring you this newsletter along with the annual wool pool, shearing schools and the fall annual meeting each year.

Schedule of events and BOD meetings 2012

May 15 BOD conference call at 6:30 call in number 207-581-3545

May 19-20 NELE, FAMCHA training Sat May 19 at 11am

June 2-3 Fiber Frolic, Wool Pool June 2 8am-noon

June 19 BOD conference call at 6:30, call in number 207-581-3545

July 1 Producer sent out, all articles to be submitted by June 15

Sept 1 Producer sent out, all articles to be submitted by August 15

Sept 21,22,23 Common Ground Fair

Sept 25 BOD conference calls at 6:30 call in number 207-581-3545

Note: **this is to be held on the 4th Tuesday this month only.**

Oct 16 BOD conference call at 6:30 call in number 207-581-3545

Oct 27 Annual meeting at KVCC

Nov 20 BOD meeting in Augusta at the Great Wall, dinner at 6, meeting at 6:30

Dec 1 Producer sent out, all articles to be submitted by Nov 15