

Nearly 500 Sheep Flock To Maryland Festival

BY SHARON SHUSTER
Maryland Correspondent
WEST FRIENDSHIP, Md. — People and sheep alike, flocked to the Thirteenth Annual Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival, on May 3 and 4, at the Howard County fairgrounds. Even a horse dentist from Kentucky elected to miss the Derby to attend the sheep show and sale.

No need to count sheep at night; 455 of the best of the flock were entered for the two-day show, representing 12 states and Canada. Jeff Ruppert of Cedar Cliffs Farm in Union Bridge, Md., showed the supreme champion ram, a white Corriedale, and Billie Andrews, of Vesper Valley, Spring Grove, Pa., showed the supreme champion ewe, also a Corriedale. The Shepherd's Award went to Randolph Irwin, with Richard and Mary Johnson close runners-up.

Purebred Winners

Four varieties of purebred sheep were judged in the main ring. The Border Leicester competition saw Randy Irwin of Triple L Farm in Freeland, Md., and John Woodward of Hemlock Hill Farm in Sabillasville, Md., vying for first and second place in most of the classes. Irwin captured the titles for champion ram and ewe, with Woodward holding the reserve champions. In the end, Woodward was the one who garnered the most exhibitor points to become the premier exhibitor in the Border Leicester competition.

Jean Woodward made it a husband and wife sweep with her title as premier exhibitor in the Romney showing. Like her husband, she also held reserve champion ram and ewe. The Woodwards won 12 blue ribbons in various class competitions. Lucy H. Conant, Overdale Farm in

Chester, Mass., showed the champion ram, and Sally and Bob Young, Plum Runs Farm in Canonsburg, Pa., showed the champion Romney ewe, a yearling.

Ruppert won the champion and reserve champion ram titles in the Corriedale and the Natural Colored, medium wool competitions. The champion Corriedale ewe, a yearling, was shown by Andrews. Harlow Walker, Valley Lamb & Wool of Middletown, Md., was awarded reserve champion for his spring ewe lamb. Premier exhibitor for the Corriedale show was Ruppert. Florence Hall, publicity chairperson said, "That was a Ruppert Day."

In Sunday's Columbia show, Richard and Mary Johnson of Hyline Farm in Lakewood, N.J., were premier exhibitors with champion ram and reserve champion ram and ewe. Bob and Suzy Leib of Shepherd's Crook in Mechanicsburg, Pa., showed the champion ewe.

Top Sellers

Twenty-six sheep were sold at an average of \$181.53, with a gross of \$4,720. The high selling sheep was Ruppert's yearling Corriedale at \$450, purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Robert Hollowbush, of Fleetwood, Pa. The next highest sale was \$440 for a purebred black Border Leicester ewe with lamb at side, presented by Beverly Tiffany of Ohio, and purchased by Laurel Schuman of Dalton, Pa.

FFA and 4-H members were afforded the opportunity to purchase lambs to be fed for later showing at the fair, during the sale of feeder lambs. What the judge described as "a good set of club lambs," the 75-pound (class 3) champion and 70-pound (class 2)

reserve champion feeder lambs were entered by Diane Conaway of Pine Haven Farm in Newville, Pa. The champ was auctioned for \$235, with reserve champion not far behind at \$210. Hall reported that a new record was set with the average sale of feeder lambs at \$1.11, with 45 head sold.

Not content to just collect her winnings and head for home, Conaway, a fourth grade teacher, said she, along with interested parents of club members, are planning a Spring Preview to "give kids practice before the fair." She explained that this unique opportunity evolved as a means to "give them a gauge to see how their lamb is doing. They (FFA and 4-H members) don't have to go cold turkey to the fair." Prizes and expenses for the event are funded by the group of parents and interested parties. The second annual Spring Preview is scheduled for May 31 in Cumberland County, Pa., at the Shippensburg fairgrounds.

Champion Fleece

Freshly shorn sheep shivered in the cold, blustery wind on Saturday, while bundles of their warm, wooly fleece were displayed for competition and sale. Fleece chairperson, Joan Hagerty, displayed more than 350 fleeces. The grand champion fleece was 11 pounds of white Corriedale, submitted by Nancy Low of Woolly Hill Farm in Lincoln, Vt. Deborah Ralston, from Granville, Pa., entered the reserve champion fleece, 10 pounds of Lincoln.

While thousands of people dressed warmly in woolen sweaters paraded by the wool-related wares of more than 150 craftspeople, the Moon Spinners wove their first-place shawl in 2½ hours. Nancy Roche, a spinner for the group, from College Park, Md., said, "I was surprised we won. I thought the others were beautiful." This was the fourth year for the Moon Spinners in the Sheep-to-Shawl contest. She described the second place Clover Hill Spinners as "stiff competition." Roche said she attributed the win to "a lot of spinning experience." The group consists of two more spinners, Nancy Norris of Riverdale, Md., and Jane Hyland of Kensington, Md., and their weaver, Julie Bealieu. Dave Greene was shearer for the Moon Spinners. The fleece of "Treasure", a ewe owned by Debby and Bill Glass of Airville, Pa., was used for the contest.

The shawl featured "a simple twill structure with good drape." Roche said that was complemented with the ikat technique of dying; much like tie-dyeing. Natural Brasilwood and logwood dyes were used to achieve the purple colors. Roche, a scientist, said the craft of spinning "dovetails my interest in science and art."

Sheila Rovelstad, coordinator of the contest, said, "after it (the shawl) was washed, it was just perfect. Their work was excellent all the way through." The Moon Spinners scored 98 of a possible 100 points. The shawl sold for \$120.

Lamb and Wool Queen

Amid the whir of spinning wheels and the clatter of looms, Leslie Clary, 16, was crowned the new Lamb and Wool Queen. In response to her fishbowl question, "What can you do to promote the sheep industry in Maryland?" Clary said she would "go to different shows and promote the importance of wearing wool and eating lamb."

She tends a flock of 18 natural-colored sheep and is a member of the West Friendship 4-H. An avid spinner, she served as chairperson for the junior spinning contest at the festival. Princesses selected were Sarah Ruppert, 15, of Frederick County, Md., and Kim Cala, 17, of Baltimore County, Md.



Last weekend belonged to the sheep at Maryland's Howard County Fairgrounds as thousands of sheep fanciers turned out to take in shows, sales, wool crafts, lamb cuisine and much more.



Diane Conaway, Newville, sold her champion feeder lamb for \$235.

Lamb Cook-Off

Four judges armed with six-packs of Perrier, judged the culinary talents of 10 entrants in the Grand Lamb Cook-Off. They selected Helen Nimmo's Hot Lamb Delights as the winning recipe. Nimmo, from York, Pa., also captured first place in last year's competition. Esther Blum's Breast of Lamb with cornbread stuffing came in second.

Just outside the cook-off pavilion, the air was filled with the smokey aroma of pit cooked lamb. Leah Meile of Bob's Mobile Beef, said the secret to cooking delicious, tender lamb is, "to cook it slow. You can't rush it." She recommended at least three hours on the open grill, and basting with a mixture of curry powder, vinegar, water and garlic.

Weston Farm Lamb continuously served an endless line of people waiting for lamb in pita, lamb kabobs and butterfly leg of lamb sandwiches. At Weston's the chefs said the secret was in the marinade — yogurt and garlic.

Working Dogs

If you followed your nose upwind, the ever-popular sheepdog demonstration was in progress. Twelve-year-old Meg and eight-year-old Kate skillfully penned and herded the flock at the simple Scottish commands given by Dave Kennard of New Hampshire. Kennard trains working dogs, pointing out the distinction

from trial dogs. He said farm dogs have more ability to "psych out" the sheep, using strong eye contact called "wearing." Kennard said the dogs instinctively know the best way to herd sheep. It was a cool day, but after each task, Meg and Kate returned to their water pan, not to drink, but to plop down in it.

Ernest Hall, sheep shows coordinator for the festival, said the event has grown over the years. Thirteen years ago, he and his wife, Florence, were instrumental in establishing the wool festival. Hall said craftspeople were invited to join the affair, and the event gradually expanded to include sheep.

Hall said he hopes to see the festival grow to include more purebred shows, with "Lincolns possibly next year." More competitions will mean "either adding another day, or judging two at a time."

Glenn Eidman of Strong City, Kansas, served as judge for the sheep shows, for a second year. Internationally acclaimed, the judge is "among the best in the United States," Hall said.

Hall said the festival came about as the result of "the work of a lot of dedicated people." Mrs. Hall added, "in cow country, it's important that everyone knows that there are a lot of good sheep here, too."

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Clover Hill Spinners (pictured) were edged out by Moon Spinners for first-place honors in the shawl contest.



Newly crowned Lamb and Wool Queen, Leslie Clary, (second from left) is surrounded by her court of princesses.