



Photographs - Lois Szymanski
Two black llamas from Loudin Llamas Ltd., in Leesburg, Virginia greet the crowds.

Maryland Lamb And Wool Festival Attracts Crowds

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Maryland Correspondent
HOWARD CO., Md. — The twenty-first annual Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival was held at the Howard County Fairgrounds on Friday, May 6, through Sunday, May 8. Sponsored by the Maryland Sheep Breeders Association, the festival featured more than 1,000 sheep from across the United States and Canada. Thirty different breeds could be seen in the sheep breeds display barn, and later on, side by side in the parade of breeds. Some of the sheep were entered in competi-

tion, but all were animals bred especially for wool production. Sheep breeders and producers use the festival as an opportunity to make private treaty sales of the finest breeding stock and young animals. The fleece show and sale offered hundreds of high quality fleeces for competition and sale.

The Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival is known as the largest event of its kind east of the Mississippi and it lived up to its reputation by attracting about 40,000 visitors.

Kathy Davidson of Potosi Sheep and Berry Farm in Glen

Rock, Pennsylvania said she had been coming to the festival for about eight years, two years as a vendor. "I come to sell wool and it is always a success," she said. "It is the greatest show going!"

Sheep were not the only reason to attend. Other wool producing animals found at the festival included llamas, angora rabbits, and mohair and angora goats. In one barn a tiny donkey stood watch over a small flock of sheep. "They're guard donkeys," said Ellie McGaugh of Randy Irwin's Triple E Farms, "and they traditionally protect the sheep from dogs and coyotes and watch over the flock."

More than 200 craft and supply booths sold their wares to the public. The interested buyer could purchase anything from spinning wheels, carders, and weaving looms to sheep collectables. Wool related products included raw wool, dyed wools and fleeces as well as intricate finished garments. There were also a row of food booths with almost anything imaginable to eat, including lamb kabobs, lamb barbeque, and lamb potpies.

While Robert Mitchell, bagpiper strolled the grounds dressed in kilts playing lilting magical sounds, others in traditional Gaelic garb strummed harps and sang. Free seminars covered topics such as felting, rug weaving, Navaho rugs, and knitting repair. A favorite among the crowds was "Drop in and Spin" where a visitor could learn to spin. According to festival chairperson Gwen Handler, the "Sheep to Shawl" contest is also a crowd favorite. This contest brought together teams of four to race against each other and the clock. Beginning with a sheep, the team had to shear, spin and weave wool from their animal, finishing with a garment that was inspected by the judges. All this was accomplished in a three-hour time limit.

In the bottom field, demonstrations of working sheep dogs showed the innate ability of the border collie breed as they herded sheep, guided only by the whistle of the shepherd, singling out specific lambs on command. While the Maryland Grand Lamb Cook-Off was taking place in the kitchen area, herdsman sweated bullets in the shearing competition going on in the barn area.



Ellie McGaugh poses with her guard donkey.



Children at the Sheep and Wool Festival check out a pair of angora goats.

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