

Sheep And Wool Day Set

WEST CHESTER (Chester Co.)—Mark your calendar for the annual Sheep and Wool Day event at Springton Manor Farm on Saturday, April 22, from 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

This free educational special event focuses on the role of sheep in the farming of sheep with demonstrations of sheep shearing and animal care as well as sheep herding by working dogs.

Sheep shearing by Pete Brumer of Lancaster and working dog demonstrations by R.C. Gilbert of Wayne will be ongoing throughout the day. In all, 23 Dorsett sheep will be sheared while visitors get an up close look at the process, as well as an opportunity to "card" or clean some of the raw wool. Border collies and Australian shepherd dogs will be used in the herding demonstrations, where

specialized trained dogs guide a small flock of sheep through a course in the farm's pasture.

Draft horse teams will be at Springton to demonstrate plowing and planting using traditional farming techniques, led by Link Longstaff of Lancaster. Corn planted during Sheep and Wool Day will be harvested at the park's fall event, Family Day in late September.



SHEEP SHEARING NOTES

The 8th session of the Lancaster County Sheep and Wool Grower's Association's Sheep Shearing School was conducted recently at the Rod Nissley flock near Campbelltown.

There were 12 enthusiastic students who completed the training shearing 68 head of white-face ewes. Since the Sheep Shearing school began, 141 shepherds have been trained in the art of sheep shearing in this Penn State Cooperative Extension program.

Since taking the shearing course there have been five individuals who have collectively sheared more than 7,500 sheep (2,500 in 1994). One of these individuals reported an income of more than \$9,000.

The sheep shearing school was started in 1987 to address the need for more skilled shearers in southeast Pennsylvania. We now have a list of shearers available to small flock owners to complete this spring time chore. If you need a shear-er, call (717) 394-6851.

Along with teaching shearing techniques at the school, students are also briefed in wool preparation. It is often suggested that wool offered for sale in the United States brings less money per pound than foreign wool, largely due to improper or insufficient preparation. In addition to the obvious practices of proper shearing, skirting, grading, and packaging, proper preparation also necessitates the inclusion of year-round management practices that minimize fleece contamination.

Fleece contamination either is acquired from the environment or occurs naturally. Natural contaminants are of less consequence than acquired contaminants such as vegetable matter.

It is inevitable that under pasture grazing conditions the fleece is very likely to pick up all sorts of vegetable material. This material can range from the many hooked burrs and seeds through the long awned grass seeds to leaves and other similar plant debris. The importance placed by the wool trade on these materials varies a great deal, but basically it depends on how difficult it is to remove the burrs and/or seeds, the potential processing ability of wool and the kind of fabric which is to be manufactured.

Ideally, it would be in the best interest of the sheep producer to eliminate from the pasture or range these grasses and weed species that cause a contamination problem. Since this practice would be impractical in many areas, a more realistic approach is to graze infested pastures before the seeds mature. Lastly, as most burr and seed contamination is found on the neck and lower parts of the fleece, skirting of the contaminated portion of the fleece is recommended.

Beef Quality Assurance

It is well known throughout the beef industry that consumers are demanding a safe, wholesome product from producers, packers, and retailers. At any level within the industry, there is an obligation from people involved to increase their awareness of food safety issues and to practice proper procedures related to beef quality assurance. For example, all cattle producers should know by now that there are proper locations for injecting animal health products into cattle to reduce lesions, blemishes, and scar tissue in valuable meat cuts.

At a recent Beef Quality Assurance training in Southeast Pennsylvania, a pre/post test procedure proved to be an excellent tool to evaluate knowledge gained and attitudes changed as a result of the workshop. Improvement in test scores on the post test ranged from 5 percent to 40 percent with the class showing a group improvement of 20 percent. Of greater significance were the results of three questions regarding proper injection and implanting sites. The class improved their knowledge of these important issues by a whopping 55 percent! My feeling is that this change alone made the QA training very worthwhile for the producers who attended and the cattle industry as well.

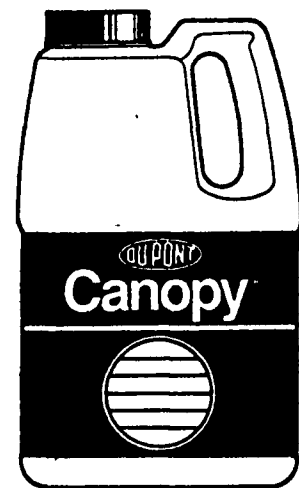
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