

Sheep, Wool Festival Highlights Show Events

KAREN BUTLER
Maryland Correspondent

WEST FRIENDSHIP, Md. — The Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival was held here at the Howard County fairgrounds recently.

Thousands attended the two-day celebration, which included sheep shows, fleece and shearing competitions, a sheep to shawl contest, and a lamb cook-off.

Highlighting the festival's opening was the coronation of new Maryland Lamb and Wool royalty. The pageant was hosted by outgoing Lamb and Wool queen Laura Langlotz.

Elyssa Hevner, 14-year-old daughter of Clifford and Karen Hevner of Johnsville, Frederick County, is the new lamb and wool queen. Elyssa, a seven-year member of the Johnsville 4-H Club, has 10 Cheviot breeding ewes and one Hampshire ewe. She showed the champion ewe at the state level in 1994 and 1995 and won the shepherd's lead contest at the state fair last year. She has shown her sheep in Montgomery and Frederick

counties, at West Virginia and Maryland state fairs, and at the Keystone International Livestock Expo. She also participates in the Make It Yourself with Wool contest. Elyssa has a sister, Kirstie, and a brother, Tymon.

Jennifer Biser, also 14, will serve as lamb and wool princess. Jennifer is the daughter of Joe and Ruth Biser, Keymar, Frederick County. She has been a member of the Johnsville 4-H Club for three years. Jenny's main projects have been her six Cheviot breeding ewes. She has shown at the county and state levels and last year had the reserve grand champion female at the state level with a Hampshire. Jenny also participates in both the shepherd's lead and the Make It Yourself with Wool contests. She has a brother, Joey.

A keynote speaker at the festival was Dr. Ron Pope, director of raw wool services for American Sheep Industry (ASI), who gave a talk on "Practical Tips For Survival in the 21st Century." He fo-

cused primarily on wool and marketing.

Pope said that there have been many changes in the industry over the past 40 years. Forty years ago, wool was a familiar commodity; people wore it, and it was very much a staple in the fiber industry. There were 40 million head of sheep in the U.S., producing 300 million pounds of greased wool annually.

Today, the contrast is dramatic: there are only eight million head, with an annual output of 63 million pounds of greased wool. Wool is considered a luxury fiber and accounts for only 3.8 percent of fiber use worldwide.

"Producer attitudes for the last 40 years have been based on tradition rather than moving forward," he said.

Wool prices have been on a decline since June 1995, with little firming in the market. Wool is a globally traded commodity, with Australia basically setting the price level wool will be sold at worldwide.

The U.S. is a big consumer of wool, but so are Europe, Japan, and some of the developing countries. Economic recession in Europe and the generally poor economies abroad have dictated a decrease in the quality and quantity of clothing consumers there are purchasing.

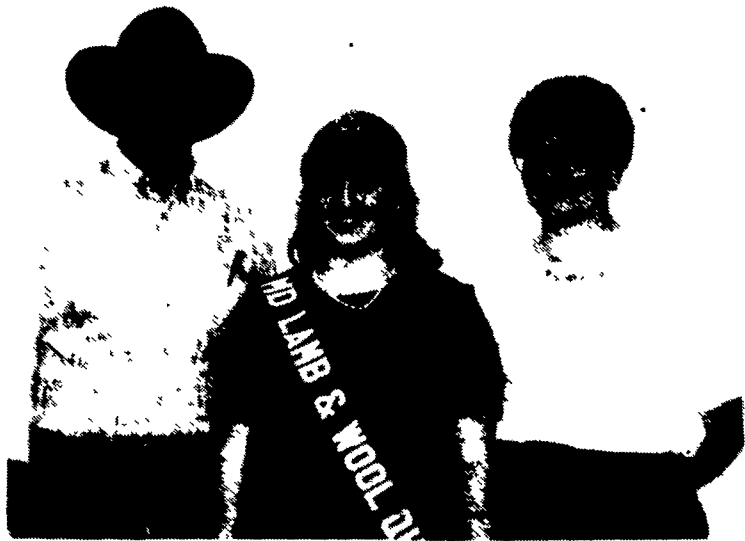
Economic hardship, coupled with a backlog of inventory at the retail level and the fact that wool is often being left off the menu as a purchasable item, have led to unprecedented inventory buildups at the processing and retail levels.

Pope sees several areas the industry as a whole, with specific emphasis on wool growers and marketers, can address in an effort to stay viable in the face of these circumstances.

The first is production. As a



From the left: Elyssa Hevner, newly crowned lamb and wool queen; Laura Langlotz, outgoing queen; and Jennifer Biser, new princess.



Elyssa Hevner, center, is flanked by her parents Clifford and Karen Hevner.

whole, he said, we ignore wool. A lot of management practices focus on lamb production. Shearing is based on lambing time. Feeding practices are based on lambing. Wool is often seen as a by-product. We can have a 50 percent loss of a lamb crop. But it's very different to have 50 percent fleece loss. The fleece may be shorter or less in weight. This leads us into a false sense that there is nothing we can do, Pope said.

Most people can quote lambing percentages, but without the Wool Act and incentives in place, some may not even keep accurate records of total wool production. He stressed the importance of knowing pounds of wool produced, clean weight, fiber diameter, strength, length, and appearance, and using these records as management and marketing tools.

Wool preparation also plays a big part in the viability of the operation. Since the wool grower is producing a raw material, he has

no way of passing on the cost of preparation to anyone. This is true as a whole in the agricultural community, said Dr. Pope, and it carries over into wool and lamb production. Not all wool on the fleece is the same. In both the cottage industry and on the commercial side, Pope advocates separating fleece according to what's in it, and also suggests grouping like wools together.

Years ago, brokers had huge sorting warehouses for wool. Then, as the brokers went out of business, mills started to grade, sort, and separate wool. About eight years ago, mills found that it was not cost effective; that they could buy Australian wool and not have to worry about it. As the domestic clip keeps getting smaller, the domestic grower must grade and sort the wool himself, or another profit center in the chain will. Not every producer needs to totally skirt and class their clip.

(Turn to Page D10)

Bunker Silos



Precast Concrete Bunker Silos or commodity buildings built to suit your needs. Bunkers available in 8 Ft. or 12 Ft. High

KEYSTONE CONCRETE PRODUCTS INC.

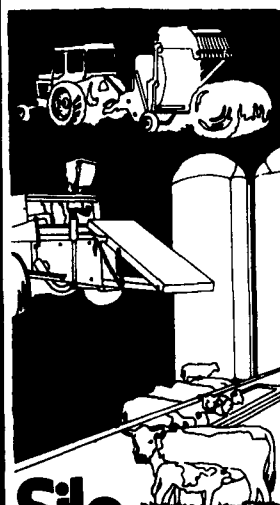
"WAFFLE SLAT"

Sym-Con Corporation

477 East Farmersville Rd., New Holland, PA 17557

(717) 355-2361

Are You Robbing Your Forages Of Valuable Nutrients?



Silo Sym
Your Forage Guardian

Protect Your Forage Investment With SILO SYM

"Your Forage Guardian"

- a natural product containing no harmful chemicals or aids
- allows you to bale hay at up to 28% moisture and still maintain safe storage conditions
- a definite hedge against bad weather
- reduce nutrient losses which occur during harvesting and storage
- enhances forage palatability
- non-toxic to livestock
- higher feeding value, due to less leaf loss
- non-corrosive to equipment
- easily applied with Gandy Applicator
- helps ensiled crops to retain a higher percentage of the original dry matter, energy and other nutrients
- really works on square or round baled hay, haylage, corn silage and high moisture grains

SL

Symo-Life, Inc.
3507 US 62
Millersburg, Ohio 44654

Telephone (330) 893-2732
Toll Free 1-800-544-7122 (In Ohio)
Toll Free 1-800-388-8892 (outside Ohio)
Fax (330) 893-3317