

# Lamb And Wool Queen Promotes Sheep For New 'Woolennium'

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**HARRISBURG** (Dauphin Co.) — Sheep have been around since the beginning of time, but Pennsylvania Lamb and Wool Queen Laurie Bero believes sheep today are exactly what is needed for the new "woolennium."

Sheep find adequate nourishment on marginal land and replenish the soil that feeds them. Sheep offer both meat and fabric for consumers' needs.

Wool, unlike synthetic fabrics, is a natural and renewable resource. Shear a sheep today, and a year from now, when the fleece has long since become fabric, the same sheep is ready again for shearing.

Twenty-one-year-old Laurie touted the goodness of lamb and wool's outstanding qualities long before being crowned industry queen during the state Farm Show.

"If people taste lamb, they like it," Laurie said.

The dilemma the industry faces is overcoming pre-conceived prejudices against lamb.

When entertaining, Laurie serves lamb to her guests.

"I often don't tell them it's lamb until after they taste it," Laurie admitted. She has no qualms about upsetting people because, she said, "I haven't found anyone yet who has tasted it and not liked it."

Guests' positive reaction to lamb sampling is probably due to Laurie's expertise in knowing proper cooking methods for pre-

paring lamb. But the best secret lies in using American lamb instead of imported product.

Americans breed lamb for tenderness and process them under one year of age, unlike many countries where sheep are only processed after they are no longer agile.

Many Americans, especially those who served in the armed forces, associate lamb with aged mutton because that is what was available during World War II. Those who tasted it didn't like the tough, strong flavor of the aged mutton, and therefore don't include lamb in their diets.

American lamb is available in most upscale restaurants where chefs are trained on proper cooking methods and the clientele enjoys good tasting lamb.

Lamb is best cooked to medium or medium-rare doneness. Lamb provides high quality protein and all the essential amino acids needed to build, maintain, and repair body tissue.

Lamb is also high in B-vitamins, iron, and zinc. Lamb is considered a high nutrient density food (ratio of nutrients to calories). A 3-ounce serving of cooked, lean lamb contains about 221 calories, yet provides 40 percent of the protein requirements, 17 percent of iron, and 31 percent of required zinc for adult males.

The best market for lamb are the ethnic markets, which are growing the United States. The industry is especially targeting ethnic populations primarily in cities, according to Laurie.

Many of these groups have grown up preferring lamb and goat more than other meats.

The industry faces another obstacle. Some people believe wool is too itchy to wear.

"Wool is not itchy if it is processed properly," Laurie said.

Some processing methods use acid to clean wool and remove the natural lanolin to use for other products.

"Wool that is cleaned with an acid process can irritate skin because some of the acid remains in the wool," Laurie said.

That problem can be eliminated if people buy wool directly from the grower.

Many people who raise sheep have wool to sell.

An expert shearer, using a shearer similar to a barber's clippers, can shear a sheep in less than five minutes. The fleece is rolled off with long smooth strokes, beginning at the legs and belly.

Laurie excels in fitting and shearing sheep. She said, "I have a whole wall of trophies."

She grew up around sheep, learned to show, shear and spin the wool from her Tunis and Border Leicester sheep, and also raises market sheep on the family's Alum Bank farm. Her parents are Edward and Rosemary Bero. Laurie also has an older brother Steven.

In addition to her homestate, Laurie has showed sheep in Maryland, Virginia, New Jersey, and Ohio. During these shows, Laurie often met the reigning wool queen.

"I wanted to be queen ever



**Pennsylvania Lamb and Wool Queen Laurie Bero sheared, spun, and dyed the wool from her registered Tunis and Border Leicester flock for her mother to knit into the sweater Laurie is wearing.**

since I was a little girl," Laurie said.

Laurie didn't sit back and wait for her dream to unfold. Instead she immersed herself in the industry and participated in every aspect of competition such as lead line, where contestants lead a sheep and are judged on their wool outfits, the lamb's appearance, and the shepherd's control of the lamb in the show ring.

Contestants for the state lamb and wool queen crown needed to first compete at the local level. Laurie won the title in Bedford County. In fact, Laurie had won the same title when she was only

15 years old. According to state rules, she needed to be 16 years old to compete for the state crown. Now 21 years old, this is the last year Laurie is eligible for the position. She won the Bedford County crown to become eligible to compete for the state crown during the state Farm Show.

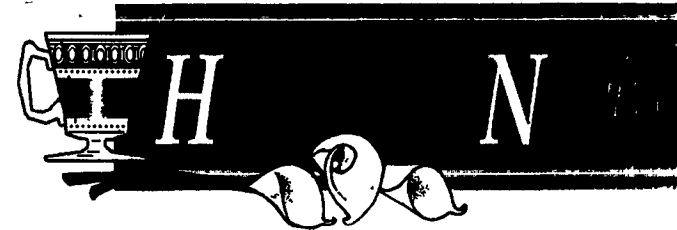
Contestants needed to create a display on the industry, give a speech, write an article, and be interviewed by a panel of four judges for five minutes. Each segment was worth 25 points.

The following day, the six contestants needed to present their prepared speeches to the

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**Helping Pennsylvania Lamb and Wool Queen Laurie Bero, center, with promotional events are Runnerup Amanda Darr, Somerset County; right, and Princess Amanda Wilson, Cambria County.**



**Laurie shows her reserve champion Tunis ram yearling, one of the lambs from her flock in Bedford County.**