

'Reinventing The Appalachian Shepherd' Conference Nov. 9-10

MORGANTOWN, W.Va. — Within the Appalachian region of the U.S. lies a group of counties — eastern Ohio, western Virginia, south central and western Pennsylvania, and most of West Virginia — that shares a topography and climate as well as location well suited for sheep production.

This combination provided the region a rich sheep history, a time when many counties reported agriculture as their leading industry and sheep as the most profitable and largest enterprise. Those days are gone.

Sheep numbers have fallen steadily for the last 130 years. The tragedy lies in the fact that even though the economy has changed and the sheep industry of the past will never return to the previous level of profit or numbers, this area possesses every resource necessary for sheep farming to become a sustainable source of income for farm families. In fact, ewes eat-

ing forages from Appalachian mountainsides might be the management model best able to compete in the current agricultural order of narrow margins and severe price swings.

For sheep to again make an important contribution to farm income and family well-being, the industry will have to be rebuilt with new farmers, new management systems, and new alliances — this means "reinventing the Appalachian shepherd."

A conference with that title is scheduled Nov. 9-10 at the Ramada Inn in Morgantown, W.Va. to consider what is required for a new sustainable and financially important sheep industry.

This conference will become the gathering point for all the researchers, business folks, educators, and producers from the mid-Appalachian region to share their work and consider production models for the future.

Many bright and energetic people from all sectors of the regional sheep in-

dustry are working on more projects than most of us know and solving more problems than most knew existed. This conference will provide a platform for them to share their ideas and everyone else to consider and react to them.

This conference will not be limited to just local presentations and ideas. Some management models from other sheep producing regions will be shared. Those attending the conference should leave with a better understanding of where our sheep industry needs to go and how to get there.

The program includes reports from the following research and industry leaders:

- The Easy Care Ewe Selection and Breeding Program, Dave Notter, Virginia Tech.

- Out of Season Management Model, Keith Inskeep and Doolarie Singh, WVU.

- Internal Parasite Abatement and Forage Management, Bill Shulaw, Ohio State.

- The Predator Control Program of the Future, Bill Bonwell APHIS, USDA.

- Intensively Managed/Low Input Flocks, Jim Clay, Ohio State (retired).

- Sheep Budgets for Appalachian Shepherds, a Pocahontas County, W.Va. Case Study, Jim Pritchard, extension agent, Pocahontas County.

- Incorporating Thousands of Years of Natural Selection Into a Logical On-Farm Breeding Program, Charles Parker, Ohio State.

- The Rewards of a Long-Term In-Flock Selection Program, Marjorie and Walker Rayburn, Edenton, N.C.

- The Fencing Systems of the Future, Stan Potratz, Premier Fence Systems, Washington, Iowa.

- Challenges and Opportunities of Large-Scale Shepherding, John Etchpare, Cheyenne, Wyo.

- The New Shepherding Paradigm, Paul Rodgers, American Sheep Industry Association.

- Forage inventory and production potential for the Appalachian Region.

- The Sociology of Shepherding, Can Shepherds Achieve the American Dream?

The conference begins at 1:15 p.m. Nov. 9 and end at 3 p.m. Friday. Registration fee of \$40 includes Thursday dinner, Friday lunch, and breaks for both days. Single-day registration is \$25.

A block of rooms has been reserved for the conference group. All attending will receive a copy of the proceedings.

For registration information, contact your extension agent or Becky Casteel at rcasteel@wvu.edu or (304) 293-6131 x4231.



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