

NEWSLETTER

EARLY 2011



Photo by Mary Lake

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear Members,

We hope you and your flocks – two and four-legged – are off to a happy and healthy new year! We on the VSGA board have worked hard this year to make sure our organization is ready to thrive in 2011. This newsletter contains many signs of such growth, from the fantastic festival to our solid financial footing.

First, we have several valuable educational opportunities to inspire and inform your winter months.

Our annual meeting on January 26 - note the new location, closer to the Farm Show - will feature a workshop on the latest information and strategies for evaluating and improving your flock health. What diseases should you test for? How can you test? What is scrapie genetic testing and can you afford it? Can you afford not to do it? What certifications should you consider for your flock or for new animals you are considering purchasing? What diseases are really the risks at fairs and festivals? How has the scrapie ID program changed? What are your options as a shepherd? Dr. Sarah Coburn, USDA veterinarian, will present the latest information, and Chet Parsons, Pam Smith, and Betsy MacIsaac will present their hands-on experiences as shepherds. We also will have an update on state agricultural

issues and new staff at the Agency, the big New England parasite study, the wool summit and new directions for fiber, and Chet's idea for a master shepherd program. You can read about several of these topics inside this newsletter, but you'll have more fun and more food discussing them together at the Annual Meeting. Do come!

The Grassfarmers and NOFA conferences – thanks in part to our sponsorships – will feature several workshops of particular interest to sheep and goat producers. We have links to these events at our Web site, but here are some highlights.

The Grazing Conference on January 21 and 22 at Lake Morey offers Friday sessions on meat production and growing your value-added business. Saturday's workshops feature: the Yankee Shepherd, our own Chet Parsons, squaring off against Mr. Fencing, David Kennard; Tatiana Stanton of Cornell on pastured kidding and lambing; meat regulations; two veterinarians' perspectives on small ruminant health issues including maximizing dewormers, scrapie testing, etc; grass-based marketing; forage analysis; Tom Wessels' keynote and more.

The NOFA conference at UVM on February 12-14 will feature excellent sessions on flock health, fiber workshops featuring
▶ *Continued on Page 8*

IN THIS ISSUE

Feature	Page 2
Editorial	Page 4
Fiber	Page 6
News	Page 8
Book Review	Page 7
Calendar	Page 8
Board of Directors	Page 9

COVER PHOTO

Raw Icelandic fleece from Knoll Farm in Fayston and oatmeal colored Border Leicester yarn spun at Green Mountain Spinnery for Blue Heron Farm in Grand Isle.

SUBMISSIONS

VSGA Newsletter
Edited by Mary Lake
To submit stories, ideas or photos call (802) 338-2250 or e-mail mary.m.lake@gmail.com

Mass. shearer plans wool pool for region

By Mary Lake
Newsletter Editor

Shearer Aaron Loux, 26, runs a shearing business out of Cummington, Mass., that serves large and small farms alike across New England and New York. One of his largest clients is Matt Kyle's farm in western New York with 3,000 Dorset and Cheviot sheep.

Last year, while shearing for Kyle, Loux met a wool grader named Stanley Strode from the Mid-states Wool Growers Cooperative Association, who was on the farm to grade and buy Kyle's wool. Strode is one of two wool graders from the Ohio organization and manages wool grading in the eastern states. He works with wool producers and handlers to buy wool to sell to processors in the United States and overseas in China, Uruguay, and India.

Growing up with sheep and shearing professionally for the past 10 years has made Loux's appreciation for wool obvious. And, being well aware of the need for more business options for wool producers, Loux decided to organize a wool pool for New England. With the help of Strode as an on-the-spot wool grader and buyer, the event could prove beneficial for local wool producers.

Loux's intention is to hold the wool pool on July 2, 2011, in the Cummington area and open it to any and all wool producers in New England. With the help of volunteers and his own wool baler, Loux and Strode should be able to sort, grade, bag and pack all in one day.

Strode comes from Ohio and is used to dealing with large

Professional grader and buyer to participate

quantities of the same or similar wool qualities. In an interview last week, he acknowledged that at the July wool pool, he will be working with a wide range of breeds, colors, and lengths, which could be time consuming to sort and organize. He is confident, however, that the wool submitted will fit into his grading categories and he is interested to see what he ends up with at the end of the day.

"We won't know if it's beneficial until we try it," Strode said.

"Any effort to pool and sell Vermont wool would be beneficial," wrote Phil Hobbie of Hartland in an e-mail last week.

No Vermont wool pools exist at this time, wrote Hobbie. In the 1980s and 1990s, an annual wool pool was held by the Vermont Sheep Breeders Association, now known as the Vermont Sheep and Goat Association. Hobbie's role with the wool pool was to contact potential buyers in New England and the southern states.

"The pool was not graded. The categories were white, colored (any color) and tags. We averaged in the neighborhood of 30,000 pounds collected," Hobbie wrote. "The wool pool was held on one day in one location."

For the wool pool to be offered through the VSBA, volunteers organized the collection, weighing and labeling of wool bags, and the organization received a small percentage of each pound of wool sold. The bags were then loaded onto trailers or trucks provided by the buyer.

"It became increasingly

harder to sell the wool without testing and grading," wrote Hobbie. "I would spend hours on the phone trying to gather buyers. As a result we called an end to the pool."

Hobbie wrote that efforts were made to increase the value of the clip, but it proved impossible to get uniformity in whiteness, micron or yield. The VSBA clumped all white wool, whether coarse, fine or in between into one lot.

The New England wool pool organized by Loux would be similar in some ways. Volunteers would be needed to help with wool collection and managing, said Loux. And the buyer, Strode and the Mid-states Wool Growers Cooperative Association, will be taking the wool with him back to Ohio. What will be different is the final graded presentation of the wool, which may be more appealing to domestic and international buyers than what was produced at earlier wool pools.

Ann Buermann, of Paradise Bay Farm in South Hero, Vt., caters to the handspinner's market with her Border Leicester and Romney crosses and said she has no need to participate in the wool pool. Out of the 50 fleeces she produced in September, all sold for \$8-10 per pound. Buermann has focused on producing high quality wool and has maintained a sustainable sized flock for her business. Shepherds whose main commodity is not wool, might benefit more from a wool pool, Buermann said.

"They don't want the wool, but it has to be sheared and

they have to get rid of it," Buermann said.

Looking at the VSGA membership, there are 103 farms that have a total of 3155 sheep, making the average flock size about 30. There are six members who have flocks of over 100 sheep and they are mainly meat or dairy breeds, like East Friesian and Dorset. Most flocks under 100 sheep are made up of breeds known for their fiber and meat, like Romney, Border Leicester, Shetland, Cotswold, and Merino.

A wool pool might not offer much for smaller scale farmers because the price of wool is so low, only 10-40 cents per pound. A wool pool does offer something for larger scale meat or cheese producers; a destination for their otherwise discarded wool.

Artisan cheese producer Mark Fischer, of Woodcock Farm in Weston, Vt., raises East Friesians and said their wool is white with a natural curl and probably classes as medium rather than coarse wool. In the past he has sold his wool to shearer David Hinman for 50 cents per pound.

"That was a generous price," Fischer said. "We were trying to cover the cost of shearing."

Hinman, who passed away this June, had wool he bought or collected from his shearing jobs processed in Canada and made into yarn, which is still sold through The Shearer's Yarn (www.theshearersyarn.com). This year, Hinman's daughter, Gwen, sheared for Fischer, but he's not sure what he'll be doing with his wool. Ideally, he'd like to be able to process his yearly 800 pounds of wool into something he can sell, but such an opportunity or idea has not panned out yet. Throwing out or composting wool is not an option for Fischer. He has tried using it as mulch in the past and was not impressed. If he could get 30 cents per pound for his wool, he would consider the wool pool, Fischer said. Otherwise, it might not be worth the cost of getting the wool to Massachusetts.

Vermont shearer Jim McRae met Loux at a shearing school and wrote in an e-mail last week that the VSGA could be involved, "if even to offer trucking from collection points around the state."

"Wool is at a 20 year high in Australia,

the fashion industry is embracing it and the future looks strong," wrote McRae.

Stating prices for the wool pool is difficult to do this far in advance, Strode said. But within a few weeks or even a month prior to the pool, he would be able to give prices for the different classes.

Dave Rowe, general manager of Mid-states Wool Growers Cooperative Association, said wool

values have improved for clean, staple length wools across all grades, with fine wools seeing the greatest increase in value.

"With a pick up in the summer months, it is difficult to give a value today what the wool will be worth then," Rowe said. Today, fine wool is worth \$1.00 to \$1.15,

medium wools near 45 cents per pound, coarser white wools are about 30 cents per pound, and black face reaches 25 cents per pound.

Taking a small cut from each pound sold maybe typical for the organizers of wool pools to cover the costs of holding the event, Loux said.

"I'm not looking to make a lot of money off it myself," said Loux, who added he sees the wool pool as an opportunity for him to give back.

"Sheep farming has been good to me," Loux said. And the support he's received by being a member of the Pioneer Valley Sheep Breeders Association has helped, too.

"I like to think of this as a chance to help farmers and promote sheep farming in New England," Loux said.

Wool Pool Beta

Who: Aaron Loux, Aaron Loux Shearing Service, www.aaronshearing.com

What: New England Wool Pool

When: July 2, 2011

Where: TBA, Cummington, Mass.



Tannery Farm
Cashmeres
Cashmere Goats

*Breeding Goats • Fleece
Meat Goats • Kids*

Shirley Richardson
Michael Smith
173 Crystal Ave.
Danville, VT 05828
802-684-2293
tanneryfarm@gmail.com

Meat, myself and why you should know your butcher

*By Mary Lake
VSGA Newsletter Editor*

I have been encouraged to write about the coming-of-age journey I have designed for myself. It's been a few years in the making and it could be interesting to possible mentors or aspiring shepherds. I thought I would start with this rather long column and hopefully follow with less long ones in the future.

After graduating college, I realized my passion. On one hand, this was unfortunate because if I had known that I wanted to be a farmer when I was 18, I could have gone to school for agriculture. Fortunately, because I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life, I was drawn to journalism and anthropology, studies that taught me how to learn and how to fully investigate a subject.

Because graduate school wasn't in my budget, I decided to create my own program to learn more about shepherding. I wanted to prepare myself in a way that if I could acquire land, I would be able to farm it responsibly and with great joy. I thought that in order to do that I needed to do three things: find a community of mentors and peers, become a shepherd's apprentice and acquire skills (vague, I know).

The community was easy to find. The VSGA needed a newsletter editor, and I thought it would make my mother very happy if I could combine

my college education with my new-found passion. The apprenticeship also unfolded naturally. Before moving to Waitsfield for my then boyfriend's job, I did a Google search for sheep farms in the area and called the one closest to where I was hoping we'd find an apartment. I spoke to Helen Whybrow at Knoll Farm in Fayston and told her that I wanted to learn about sheep and she said to come over that weekend. We caught an escaped ram together, and she's been my hero ever since. That was more than two years ago. This May, I will start a full-time, year-long managing position at the farm.

Until then, I will continue the skill-acquiring I mentioned earlier. When I started this journey into sheep management, I knew raising livestock required a myriad of skills that began at the thought of an animal's birth to the destination of that animal's meat, wool, oil, or hide. What I didn't know or really think about was that I had the capability of doing and enjoying all these tasks necessary to create all the possible products livestock offers. It started with knitting, then spinning. Next, I was shearing, trimming hooves, washing and carding wool. Soon, I will be weaving and dyeing. But this winter, I'm killing and cutting.

These are not skills I imagined acquiring two years ago. Butchering was brought

up at the first annual meeting of the VSGA I attended. A custom sheep and goat butcher was needed, and I thought maybe my boyfriend would be interested in something like that. I thought, he enjoys keeping our kitchen knives sharp and he loves eating meat and honestly could use a career path. But, when he shrugged off the idea, so did I.

This past summer, Knoll Farm lost a lamb to parasites. Of course, it was a lamb Helen had every intention of keeping as a breeder because it had flashing, a recessive color pattern in Icelandic sheep she had been hoping her flock would someday show. She asked if I would shear the lamb, but I thought if we could save the hide, the flashing pattern would be better saved for us to admire and share. So, another mentor of mine, who had experience butchering, agreed to help me skin the lamb. We had to work quickly because of the heat and the rapidly bloating lamb. To my surprise, I was able to focus easily on the matter at hand, and the desire to preserve something from the short life of an animal I had helped raise overpowered any squeamishness I might have had. Needless to say, I briefly thought of myself as a butcher.

In October, I approached the Royal Butcher in Randolph about an apprenticeship and they agreed to take me on as a full-time employee in November. I've been there for

more than two months and have been able to work in the cutting room, packing area and on the kill floor. And again to my surprise, the kill floor is where I prefer to be. The head butcher, his assistant and I, the trimmer, make up the kill floor staff and together we stun, skin, gut, halve, and trim six to a dozen or so animals a day. The animals are put in a cooler and then cut into steaks and roasts the next day or shortly after.

The kill floor is exciting for many reasons. There is a constant effort to keep everything clean: the chute, squeeze box and cradle, our knives, hands and aprons, the meat and organs. Butchering is a very timely act and often we are balancing multiple processes. Instead of doing one animal at a time, we will try to have one bleeding out as another is on the cradle being skinned, while another is halved and being trimmed. I like this because I feel we are being productive without being careless. Each step of the process is done thoughtfully, and each floor worker is steadily engaged. It is a well-oiled machine, but naturally the process is interrupted and the worker has to be flexible and mindful. I like this challenge and am impressed with how my coworkers adapt.

The moments I look forward to most are when I get to work with the butcher bringing an animal into the squeeze box and doing the first steps in the butchering process. Every step in the process is important and every step takes



This September, I married Paul Smith, but sheep remain close to my heart.

*Photo by
Natalie Conn*

my full attention, but these first steps seem the most important because it is when the animal transitions from a living being to a commodity, and this is fascinating. When a cow comes in she has a history that can be read in her behavior and can be accommodated. After the cow has been stunned, bled out and skinned, more of the animal's history can be seen. Her muscle tone, her organ condition, her skin quality. And you begin to see the next stage of the animal's existence: her meat. From then on, we work to maintain the quality of that meat. It is a great effort, full of care and skill.

I will admit, I didn't know what I was going to learn from my experience at the Royal Butcher. I didn't know if I would be fired after day one. Or, if I'd walk out wanting the place shut down. The veil was lifted, my eyes were opened and I saw that the butchering business is dirty, but artful. And there are people who understand the art of butchering and enjoy it. When I really think about it, I'm not surprised

that Vermont is home to a slaughter facility like the Royal Butcher. It is not a model without flaws, but it is a sustainable model of a manageably sized facility.

I don't know if I will become a butcher, but each week I take a step closer to that possibility. Every day at work, my responsibilities grow and I learn how to do new things or old things differently. A few weeks ago, I stunned my first animal. A lamb. And with that the job changed for me again. That was the first animal I had ever killed. I stopped his life as livestock and started his life as meat, bones and a hide. It didn't make me feel good or bad, but it didn't make me feel nothing. I do feel like I'm helping to produce meat the way it should be done. I think mindful producers and mindful processors make food I want to eat. And if nothing else, I have learned that I am capable of raising animals for meat and processing them humanely. For that, I feel proud.

Spotlight to shine on Shetlands in 2011

Festival staff reports on October's successful event

*By Jane Woodhouse
Brigid's Farm, Peachan, Vt.*

This year's Sheep and Wool Festival, held Oct. 2 and 3 at the Tunbridge Fairgrounds, was, again, a great success. Heavy rains and flooding two days before ended, and the weather was beautiful. We saw increased activity at the gate and vendors seemed pleased with their sales. Barb Tonnissen, the festival director, worked hard in coordinating a successful ad campaign as well as securing some feature pieces on the festival in some local and national publications. Her efforts brought new and returning visitors to Tunbridge this year. Profits from this year's festival put \$4000 in the VSGA checking account for the organization.

We welcomed some new food vendors and the festival committee is looking to add more to the roster for next year. The ability to bring in good local food has been an important piece in moving the festival to Tunbridge. Several of them offered local lamb prepared to eat at the festival and Neil Urie brought some of his delicious cheese for folks to take home and enjoy. The festival is thrilled to be able to showcase our member's products.

This year included the Eastern Cashmere Association at the festival for its annual meeting and show. VSGA member Shirley Richardson was instrumental in organizing

Get Ready

What: Vermont Sheep & Wool Festival

Where: Tunbridge Fairgrounds, Tunbridge, Vt.

When: Oct. 1 & 2, 2011

the show. We expect this to be an annual event and an opportunity for festivalgoers to see some excellent cashmere goats from the northeast. In addition, ECA brings in top judges who provide educational commentary to both the producers and the audience. We look forward to their return next year.

The animal barn was much expanded and full, taking a place more central in the festival activities. We had a good variety of sheep, angora goats and rabbits, and camelids. Animals are a popular attraction at the festival and offer an opportunity to educate the public on the use and value of our animals. We may see this expanded further next year.

Saturday night, David Ritchie from the Green Mountain Spinnery hosted an event in the Tunbridge Town Hall. David organized a fashion show to celebrate where we have come in our handspun and handmade fiber work. The evening was complete with musical accompaniment. Perhaps this too will become an annual event and we thank David for his efforts.

A special event is

planned for the 2011 festival, Oct. 1 and 2. As many of you know, VSGA members, Linda and Tut Doane, of Maple Ridge Sheep Farm in Randolph imported the first Shetlands to the United States 25 years ago. They have the oldest and perhaps largest flock of Shetlands in the country. Linda has been working with the festival committee for two years to bring the North American Shetland Sheep Breeders Association to Vermont to celebrate the 25th year of Shetlands in the U.S. Events will take place at the festival as well as the preceding week in and around Randolph. Some of the events will include workshops that the festival committee will co-sponsor. Stay tuned for more details. This is an exciting opportunity to showcase Shetland sheep and celebrate the accomplishments of one of our own members. Expect to see a Shetland sheep on the 2011 festival T-shirt.

So mark your calendars. Next year will be another packed weekend in Tunbridge. The committee wants to thank the Tunbridge World's Fair, the fairground staff and the town of Tunbridge in welcoming the Vermont Sheep and Wool Festival. Everyone has been not only cooperative but genuinely friendly and helpful to us and extended warm wishes for a successful event. We thank them for their generosity and look forward to next year's event.

Vermont author, chef offers guide to meat consumption

By Mary Lake
Newsletter Editor

I was immediately impressed with this book because of its organization. There are seven chapters: beef, lamb, pork, rabbit, poultry, eggs, and side dishes. Each of the first five chapters starts with a description of the animal, an anatomy of cuts, how to choose a producer, brief descriptions on how to prepare different cuts, and even how to cook with “offal and odd bits.” Then, there are recipes listed in order of body part used. For example, in the lamb section the recipes start with meatballs and stews, then move down the body from neck, chops, shoulder, ribs, leg and shanks. There are also a few liver recipes. For each cut, or body part, there are at least two recipes. And, I literally drooled reading the first one: Middle Eastern Lamb Meatballs with Cinnamon and Cherries.

Something else impressive, but did not make me drool, were some of Deborah Krasner’s “odd-bits” recipes. For example, Old-Fashioned Steamed Suet Pudding



Image from www.maringrassfedmeat.com.

with Brandy Sauce. I’m usually eager to try old-fashioned things, but suet is for birds. However, Krasner is convincing. The list of ingredients and the way she describes the benefits of steam pudding make me want to try the recipe. I appreciate the resourcefulness of her recipes. It is one of the reasons I was attracted to the book.

Along with explaining relatively new jargon around food, such as grass-fed, organic, natural,

Best \$40 I ever spent

Good Meat
By Deborah Krasner
Foreword by U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders
400 pages

conventional and sustainable, Krasner also explains the slaughtering process, referencing Temple Grandin, an authority in humane slaughter practices, and explaining the benefits of small slaughterhouses.

What intrigued me about Krasner’s introduction was that she cites eating local, grass-fed meats as helping lower her husband’s cholesterol. I haven’t spent much time thinking about the health benefits of eating homegrown meats, so this was eye opening for me.

I recommend this book to those looking to expand on how they cook meat, and to lucky folks who just received that half cow they ordered in the spring. This book is also a great resource for any household to help answer technical cooking questions, but also to open up conversation about ethical meat production and consumption.

Stonestrow Farm
QUALITY HAND-SPINNING FLEECES
MOHAIR • WOOL

Katherine Smith
136 Jack Perry Road
Wallingford, VT 05773
802-446-3325
katsmith@vermontel.net

advertise with the vsga

an inexpensive way to sell your products and services

\$10/issue, \$30/year (3 issues)

Contact Mary at mary.m.lake@gmail.com
(802) 338-2250; P.O. Box 321, Waitsfiled, VT 05673

Crooked Fence Farm

Betsy MacIsaac
Putney, VT 05346
(802) 387-5790
crookedfencefarm-vt.com

CVM/Romeldale and Merino Sheep Cashmere Goats

That time of year, again

New Directory to come out,
membership renewals due

*By Mary Lake
VSGA Newsletter Editor
and Membership Contact*

Happy New Year! As you go over your projected expenses for the coming year, we hope you will budget in membership dues for 2011. After a year of transition, the VSGA is eager to make more contacts with new farmers, increase educational opportunities for farmers and youth and provide more resources for our membership. Your support makes that possible.

Please find our membership renewal form in this newsletter package. With it are opportunities for you to advertise your business in the Directory and the triannual newsletter. Note that if you are interested in advertising but do not know how to create an ad, you can contact Mary Lake, (802) 338-2250 or mary.m.lake@gmail.com, for help in designing an ad or logo for your farm or business.

Enclosed in this newsletter you will find the 2010 Directory Supplement. This supplement lists all the new members from 2010 who were not included in the most recent Directory from the VSGA. This supplement should hold you over until the 2011 Directory comes out this spring with new members from our 2011 membership drive.

Also in this package is a survey designed by the board to better help them understand the needs of the membership. The survey should only take a minute or two of your time and can be mailed in with your renewal form. If you have comments or suggestions you'd like to share, feel free to use the back of the survey to express them. Another great forum for discussing the role of the VSGA is the annual meeting on January 26 in Barre. For more information on the meeting, see Page 11 and 12.

President's Letter

► *From Page 1*

our own Jane Woodhouse, and much more. The brochure will be out any day and we'll link to it on our Web site.

So, how are your animals and your farms? What are you producing? What would you like to do more of? What do you want to learn? Inside you'll find several opportunities to share ideas, needs and successes via VSGA. Fill out our survey. And send photos and fiber samples for our new beautiful table display. Every response earns you a chance to win a prize that your flock will love!

Finally, we are very grateful to all our board members who share the work of leading VSGA. Erica is grateful that Jane has returned as acting President, bringing her many years of experience and networks, while Jane is grateful that Erica has stepped over to focus on education and policy. Our leadership team includes Amy Kuzio of Moretown (Romneys and Alpacas) expertly shepherding our finances and Karl Ross of East Wallingford (Shetlands and Jacobs) offering business acumen. Our new members bring wisdom, energy, professional skills and fresh perspective: Betsy MacIsaac of Putney (CVM Romeldale, Merino and Cashmere) and Alicia Werner of South Royalton (Icelandics). Rus Franswick continues to share his skills and perspective from many years of service. Mark Fischer and Kimberly Hagen have served us for many years and are now graduating on to focus on leading the states' producers of cheese and fiber, respectively. We are grateful for their vast contributions over the years. We welcome new board members and urge you to contact us ASAP if you have interest in joining the board or helping with a specific task.

See you soon,
Erica and Jane

VSGA Traveling Display Board

Our display board represents the VSGA at conferences, shows and festivals and publicizes the organization and it's members. And, honestly, it needs to be revamped.

Please, send in some yarn or wool samples, knitting or weaving samples, pictures of your animals or products, recipes for your meat or cheese. Send to Erica Zimmerman (1820 Center Farm Rd., Montpelier, 05602) and your name will be entered in a raffle.

Livestock program to be discussed at annual meeting

*Chet Parsons
UVM Extension*

This past October, I started a sabbatical leave to explore the possibilities of developing a master livestock program. In essence, this would be an organization of volunteers that would take questions on livestock and either answer them, or refer them to someone who could. Hopefully, a program like this would be a resource to livestock producers in the Northeast.

It is anticipated that the program would be similar to the very successful Master Gardener program that is presently being run by Nancy Hewlett of UVM Extension. It would start with a comprehensive training class that is open to anyone interested. An up-front fee would be charged for the class, but anyone who is interested in volunteering to answer questions would have their fee reimbursed.

In my initial search for a similar program, I found that a livestock specialist in Maine had done the same sabbatical leave ten years ago. No action was taken on her findings, but when I talked with her, she suggested that we talk about a Northern New England program. I met with the Maine livestock specialists and we decided to go forward with a program. We felt that with web-based educational opportunities, distance would not be a factor as it would have been in years past. It also has the potential of providing local hands-on classes in the area of each volunteer.

This would by no means be just an Extension program. Input from all livestock organizations will be solicited. Support from VSGA would be most welcome, especially a person to help us develop a teaching curriculum. A tentative date of February 7, 8 and 9 in Maine has been set to start working on a curriculum that will concentrate on small ruminants.

I welcome comments from members and hopefully we can discuss this at the annual meeting January.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OFFICERS

•**Erica Zimmerman**

President

Center Farm 1820 Center Road
Montpelier, VT 05602

(802) 223-6930; mczim4@comcast.net

•**Kimberly Hagen**

Vice President

Osprey Hill Farm 28 Norton Rd.
Middlesex, VT 05682

(802) 229-4096; khagen@sover.net

•**Karl Ross**

Secretary

Ross Knoll 1064 Bixby Road
East Wallingford, VT 05742

•**Amy Kuzio**

Treasurer

Spring Mist Farm 244 Honan Road
Moretown, VT 05660

(802) 223-2524; akuzio@verizon.net

DIRECTORS

•**Mark Fischer**

Woodcock Farm P.O. Box 21
Weston, VT 05161

(802) 824-6538; woodcockfarm@verizon.net

•**Rus Franswick**

Mooshaven Farm 1413 Ben Ober Road
Johnson, VT 05656

(802) 635-9482; moosehaven@pshift.com

•**Warren Hathaway**

The Comstock House 1620 Middle Road
Plainfield, VT 05667

(802) 272-2693; rsw@sover.net

•**Betsy Maclsaac**

Crooked Fence Farm 37 Alpin Way
Putney, VT 05346

(802) 389-5790; crookedfence@gmail.com

•**Alicia Werner**

P.O. Box 420

South Royalton, VT 05068

(802) 356-7728; wernervt@myfairpoint.net

•**Jane Woodhouse**

Brigid's Farm P.O. Box 29/123 Slack St.
Peacham, VT 05862

(802) 592-3062; brigidsfarm@fairpoint.net,
jane.w@fairpoint.net

Maine Goat School comes to Vermont

Couple teach goat raising with fiber and dairy focus, session to be held at Jamaica B&B

*By Janice and Ken Spaulding
Stony Knolls Farm, Saint
Albans, ME*

We started our goat raising long before Al Gore invented the Internet and long before cell phones. Back in the days of long distance telephone charges and monthly periodicals with breeders lists. Imagine trying to do that today! Our first goats were located in Lebanon, NH. Two angoras gave us our start. One was a doeling and the other a bred doe. We very quickly became hooked. Just like potato chips “you can’t have just one”. It didn’t take long to have a herd of 40 pampered mohair producing goats. We enjoyed our angoras because we could have the love of our goats and produce a non-destructive product (the mohair).

In 2001, we purchased our first Boer goats. Even though Boers are a meat goat, our plan was to raise top quality breeding stock (which we did) so that others could be assured of utilizing locally grown animals for their breeding programs. Maine has a very cold climate so hearty, locally grown, stock is important to ensure a thriving goat population.

In 2004, we purchased some dairy goats and are now enjoying the fruits of their labor: fresh milk and cheese. This also brings us back to our original goal of raising animals, to harvest a product, in a nondestructive way.

From the very first days of our goat raising experience we were struck by the lack of information available to beginning breeders. It seemed like no one wanted to share any information. It became a trial and error experience. This has gone on even to the present time. The remark most often heard by us from our “students” always has to do with their surprise in our willingness to



ABOVE: Janice and Ken Spaulding, of Saint Albans, ME, be hosting a Goat School in Jamaica, Vt., this February. RIGHT: Goat School student Raquel Sabatino gets a kiss.



share information. Maybe it comes from our own frustration in having to learn “the hard way”. This to us was always unacceptable. Goats are wonderful, loving, giving creatures and deserve the absolute best care that we can provide. The financial “bottom line” has never been the focus of Stony Knolls Farm or Goat School. Our bottom line was, is and will continue to be the health and well being of the goats.

In November of 2004, we decided that there were people who wanted more information about the proper care of their goats and Goat School was founded! As with most things it had a very humble beginning. If memory serves, we had about 12 people who attended a two hour session on a cold Saturday afternoon. We provided a small folder with a few handouts in it. We never expected it to grow beyond that point. Much to our surprise we started to get a few inquiries about doing a similar event in the spring of 2005. Our first spring Goat School was held the weekend before Memorial Day. We realized

that a two hour session was not enough time to adequately answer all the questions that people had so we expanded it to a full day and included a small lunch.

Fall classes came about in 2006 and two day sessions started with the introduction of guest speakers in the fall of 2007. Our first guest speaker was Bob Glass from Pan Am Vet Labs in Hutto, Texas. The Goat School handouts had become a three ring binder and the pages and topics were greatly increased from the original. We were now seeing the number of attendees increase from the original 12 or so to now a group of 60 or 70. We thought that was excellent. Our first attendees from “away” came from New York State. Soon the word spread and people were coming from as far away as West Virginia. Needless to say we were very excited to see that much interest in our little endeavor.

The big jump came in 2008 when we were contacted by a professional photographer from Hobby Farms magazine. They wanted to do a photo shoot of fall Goat School and feature it in their Nov/Dec 2009 magazine. Fortunately, the weather cooperated and some wonderful images were snapped of both the school and the beautiful Maine foliage. The Hobby Farms article was fantastic and the response was overwhelming. Our spring 2010 school had 112 attendees from 22 states, as far away as Texas, Colorado, Louisiana and Georgia. We were astonished at the turn out. It was a cold, damp weekend but everyone came to learn and have a good time.

Our dream has always been to teach the love and care of goats to as many people as possible. Of course not everyone has the resources to

travel all the way to Maine. We are a bit remote from the rest of the country. This is where Goat School On the Road comes into play. We have been contacted by several former students and some folks just interested in goats about the possibility of bringing Goat School to their community. Because we are still actively farming we decided that we could handle three or four "on the road" events from Thanksgiving until the end of February. While "on the road" is certainly not rural Maine we feel that we can bring that genuine atmosphere and experience to farms all over the country.

Interested?

A Goat School™ in Vermont will take place on President's Day Weekend! Saturday, February 19th and Sunday, February 20th are the dates slated for "Goat School™ Vermont". A soap and cheese class will be held on Monday, February 21st. Goat School™ Vermont will be held in Jamaica Vermont at Cold Moon Farm a beautiful Bed & Breakfast owned and operated by Ed and Irene Glazier. For more details please go to www.goatschool.com and click on the "Goat School™ Vermont" tab.

You can also visit Goat School™ and Stony Knolls Farm on the web at www.goatschool.com or www.maine.goats.com.

CALENDAR

January 8

NOFA Direct Marketing Conference

South Royalton, VT

NOFA Vermont holds an annual Direct Marketing Conference to provide a networking and educational opportunity for farmers' market managers and vendors and farmers marketing through Community Supported Agriculture and farm stands.

January 12

Online Tax Time Techniques for Beginning Farmers

Dennis Kauppila, UVM Extension Agriculture & Farm Business Management Specialist 7 p.m. to 8 p.m.

All you need to participate is internet access and a computer that you can hear sound through. To participate, please go to <http://tinyurl.com/UVMEXT-FarmTaxesWebinar> at about 6:45 pm Eastern time. For more information, contact newfarmer@uvm.edu or call (802) 223-2389x203.

January 13

VT Organic Dairy Producer Workshop

Red Schoolhouse, VT Technical College, Randolph Center, VT

This daylong event will focus on improving dairy animal health through low and no grain feed strategies and homegrown forage production. There will be a veterinarian panel with Dr. William Barry, Dr. Chris Dutton, and Dr. Hubert

Karreman, who will address herd health concerns. Cost: \$20. For more info visit nofavt.org or contact Deb Heleba at (802) 656-4046 or debra.heleba@uvm.edu.

January 21 - 23

VGFA 15th Annual Grazing & Livestock Conference

Lake Morey Resort, Fairlee, VT
Integrating Natural Systems and Business Strategies. Featuring Tom Wessels, author and Professor of Ecology at Antioch University New England. The Vermont Grazing Conference is an annual event focused on technical and informational resources for a diversity of grass-based livestock farms. The conference features a variety of keynote speakers, topical workshops, tradeshow, networking opportunities, lunch discussions, and a celebration of local foods.

January 25 - 27

Annual Vermont Farm Show

Barre Civic Center, Barre, VT
In its 77th year, the Farm Show is a tradition that celebrates the state's agricultural heritage. The three-day event hosts 200 exhibits, product competitions and other special events open to the public at 9 a.m. each day. For more info visit: vermontagriculture.com

January 26

VSGA Annual Meeting

First Presbyterian Church of Barre at 78 Summer Street, Barre, VT

Meet VSGA board members for a potluck lunch and discuss current issues in the sheep, goat and fiber animal world. There will be an animal health workshop and discussion on the possible master livestock course. For directions see Page 12.

February 12 & 13

NOFA VT 29th Annual

Winter Conference

UVM, Burlington, VT

The Annual Winter Conference is the benchmark of the winter season for anyone interested in Vermont's most important conversations about food system change, farm viability, garden innovations, sustainable living, and more. Saturday Keynote: Shannon Hayes is the author of *Radical Homemakers*, *The Farmer and the Grill* and *The Grassfed Gourmet*. Sunday Keynote: Bill McKibben & the 350.org team. Vermont author and activist Bill McKibben has been a key advocate for uniting the world in finding solutions to the global climate crisis.

February 19 & 20

Goat School

Cold Moon Farm, Jamaica, VT

Topics will include choosing your new goat, management, breeding, kidding, medical problems, nutrition, hoof trimming, milking, tattooing, necessary paperwork, record keeping and emergencies. Buffet lunch included both days. For more info visit goatschool.com.



Vermont Sheep and Goat Association
P.O. Box 321
Waitsfield, VT 05673

CALENDAR

Don't miss the VSGA annual meeting

The VSGA annual meeting will be held in the First Presbyterian Church of Barre at 78 Summer Street on Wednesday, Jan. 26 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The First Presbyterian Church is a green building at the foot of the Seminary Street, which leads up to the Barre Civic Center and Auditorium, where the Annual Vermont Farm Show will be taking place. The Civic Center is one block in from Main Street just past the Lenny's Shoe and Apparel and RiteAid parking lot.

Parking will be available at the Farm Show. There is also limited metered and street parking near the church. There are permitted lots that should be avoided.

The VSGA annual meeting is also a potluck lunch. This is a great opportunity to share a favorite dish (lamb meatballs, goat cheese and crackers, fresh cider, perhaps some cheese cake). There is a full kitchen, but please bring whatever pot or plate needed for heating and serving potluck dishes.

For additional directions, or help while navigating call Erica Zimmerman's cellphone (802) 461-5628.

Be there

What: VSGA Annual Meeting and Potluck Lunch

Where: 78 Summer Street, Barre, VT

When: Wednesday, Jan. 26, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Kirby's Happy Hoofers
Registered Angora Goats --
Mohair and Mohair Products

Debbie Kirby
977 Forest Dale Road
P.O. Box 224
Brandon, VT 05733

802-247-3124
debbie.kirby@kirbyshappyhoofers.com — www.kirbyshappyhoofers.com