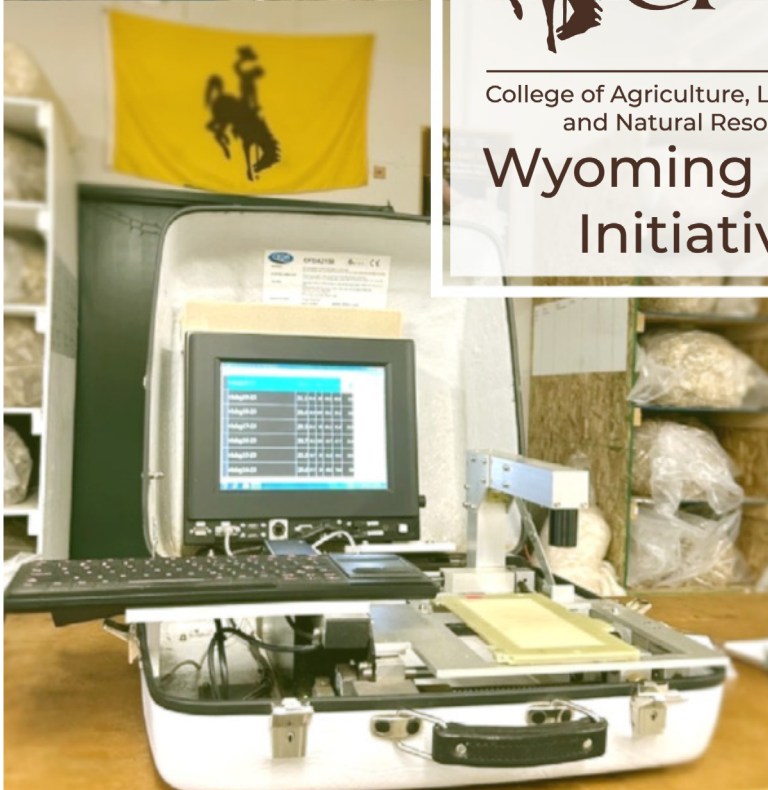




UW

College of Agriculture, Life Sciences
and Natural Resources

Wyoming Wool Initiative



ANNUAL REPORT

July 2022 - July 23

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About Us

We work to support and grow Wyoming's sheep and wool industry.

Wyoming is proudly home to the **highest-valued wool clip in the nation**. Notably, Wyoming is 4th in total sheep numbers and 3rd in breeding sheep in the U.S. **The number of WY sheep operations is growing**. In 2012, there were 771. In 2017, there were 859. (USDA 2017 Census)



Some Factors that motivate us to work for the sheep and wool industry:

Wyo is No. 1 in the U.S. for Wool Value

In the 2017 Census of Agriculture, Wyoming ranked nationally 1st in wool production with 2,796,792 pounds shorn, 3rd in breeding sheep, and 4th nationally in total sheep. Most of Wyoming's wool leaves the state where further value added processing and manufacturing is conducted.

Untapped Potential of Wyoming Wool

The Wyoming Wool Initiative recognizes the economic worth and potential of the raw wool produced and wants to generate processes and resources that will help entrepreneurs and producers capture more value of this ecofriendly fiber. By investing in the wool industry, Wyoming Wool Initiative is utilizing a sustainable fiber of

international reputation already well established across Wyoming's famous open spaces. As the Wyoming Wool Initiative continually works to grow the wool industry, it is also celebrating Wyoming's agricultural heritage while focusing on innovation for the future.

Honor Heritage & Embrace Innovation

To ensure this unique heritage thrives, Wyoming Wool Initiative is actively engaged in research, programming, and processing and marketing innovations that bolster and increase Wyoming's ability to add value to its abundant supply of raw wool. Wyoming Wool Initiative is a non-profit organization supported by University of Wyoming, public-private partnerships, and donations.

Our Mission

Wyoming Wool Initiative promotes synergies in public-private partnerships within the Wyoming Sheep Industry to drive innovations for contemporary challenges.



What we do

We Respond to Industry Needs: Supporting Industry in Transition

Post-pandemic opportunities exist as consumers want to know the provenance of their food and fiber. Wyoming Wool Initiative promotes linkages in public-private partnerships for Wyoming's Sheep Industry by serving as a resource for all sheep industry stakeholders

We Collaborate & Generate Partnerships

WWI is responsive to industry needs and recognizes that collaboration is the recipe for finding contemporary solutions to complex problems. Our team works with UWyo, Land Grant Universities, and USDA Scientists across the nation, as well as international collaborators in the fields of:

- Marketing and Value-Added Innovations
- Wool and Lamb Quality Improvement
- Sheep Management of Production
- Regenerative Sheep Grazing
- Youth Development
- Sheep Genomics

Industry Partnerships

We actively partner with industry groups to work together on industry-wide initiatives. They seek our expertise and help fund undergraduate and graduate students' research projects and experiential learning.

We council with entrepreneurs and private entities

We've provided educational resources and technical advisement to 12 private companies interested in investing in Wyoming's sheep industry. Serving as a liaison to private industry helps us accelerate manufacturing and value-added infrastructure for entrepreneurs.

Research

We conduct applied research relevant to sheep producers by conducting research on campus and field studies on ranches across the state. For example, in our first year of existence, we've implemented some of the following:

- Wool Traceability/American Wool Assurance/Blockchain Applications
- Product Development (Apparel & Industrial)
- Wool Marketing Study
- Feasibility Studies in First Stage Processing



MEETING INDUSTRY NEEDS

How we take action

In 2022/2023, crises like a lamb-market crash, climate extremes with record snowfall throughout the state proved to be a once-in-a-lifetime experience for some of our producers. Barriers to innovation and resources compound the challenges faced by our producers.

Likewise, students are hungry for experiential learning, industry training, and networking. They are eager to make connections and become capable industry leaders, and our efforts meet these needs.

Throughout the past year, Wyoming Wool Initiative has listened to our producers' challenges, looked forward with an eye for innovation to answer their call, and recognized opportunities to bolster and prepare the next generation of sheep industry professionals.

We have remained diligent in our vision of a sheep and wool industry where all sheep producers, wool growers, and entrepreneurs can excel and lead. Here's how we responded to the most pressing needs of the past year:

Student Training & Success

Applied & Experiential Learning

Our undergraduate and graduate wool research integrates all aspects of the wool industry, from the raw wool preparation methods to the traceability of the finished wool goods. Over the past six years, we have had over 180 students enroll in the sheep and wool curriculum at UWYO.

The field is our classroom, and we've integrated our course work through partnerships with our ranchers and private industry. Our collegiate wool growers RSO hosts lamb cookoff tailgate events and travels with us to participate in Wyoming Wool Growers Meetings and American Sheep Industry Association meetings.

Lamb-a-Year

The Lamb-a-Year program provided students with experiential learning in the management and marketing of lamb. Students put in long hours, crunching numbers to learn critical elements of producing lambs. Students gained experience in nutritional management, animal health, record keeping, market dynamics, and tour meat processors.



Wool Judging

We've re-initiated intercollegiate wool judging at UWyo and established an annual national contest (7220 Wool Invitational) in Laramie with over 160 collegiate and youth participants from across the country. Wyoming Wool Initiative is a proud sponsor of the annual competition.

Job Placement

We consistently place our alumni in leading industry careers ranging from university sheep specialists, lamb companies, and international wool export firms. We attribute this outstanding job placement to robust networking, and experiential learning opportunities in and outside the classroom. Coursework such as Advanced Sheep Production, Introduction to Wool Evaluation and Special Topics courses allow students to immerse themselves in the theory and practice of sheep and wool production. Interaction with industry groups through field tours and internships as well the competitive intercollegiate wool judging program allows students to see things in living color.

Outreach



Lamb a year

This fall, the University of Wyoming and the Wyoming Wool Initiative launched the state's first Lamb-a-Year program. The Lamb-a-Year program allows sheep producers to donate lambs to our program and, in return, receive valuable performance and carcass data they can use to inform genetic, management and



marketing decision-making. Producers receive detailed reports on their lamb's performance including growth performance, feed efficiency, and carcass and lamb quality information.

Webinars/Seminars

Sheep Management, nutrition, genetic selection, technology integration, marketing and enterprise health are just a few of the educational efforts implemented through outreach efforts.

Individual Consultations

Individual consultations directly with ranchers are important methods to help ensure responsiveness to emerging challenges. We pride ourselves for having boots on the ground through annual visits. Trouble shooting over the phone, text and even video conferencing enable us to reach the stakeholders around the state. We're proud to roll up our sleeves and work at the ground level to help solve problems.



Raising awareness in the Community

This year, Wyoming Wool Initiative sponsored the Wyoming Sheep and Wool Festival, where we hosted a Wool Learning Kiosk for the public. Individuals were able to learn about the ecological benefits of wool, wool quality characteristics, and the end-point uses of a variety of wool types.

Lamb preparation and cooking workshops were also offered to help educate consumers on healthful cooking methods and ways to incorporate different lamb cuts into the diet.

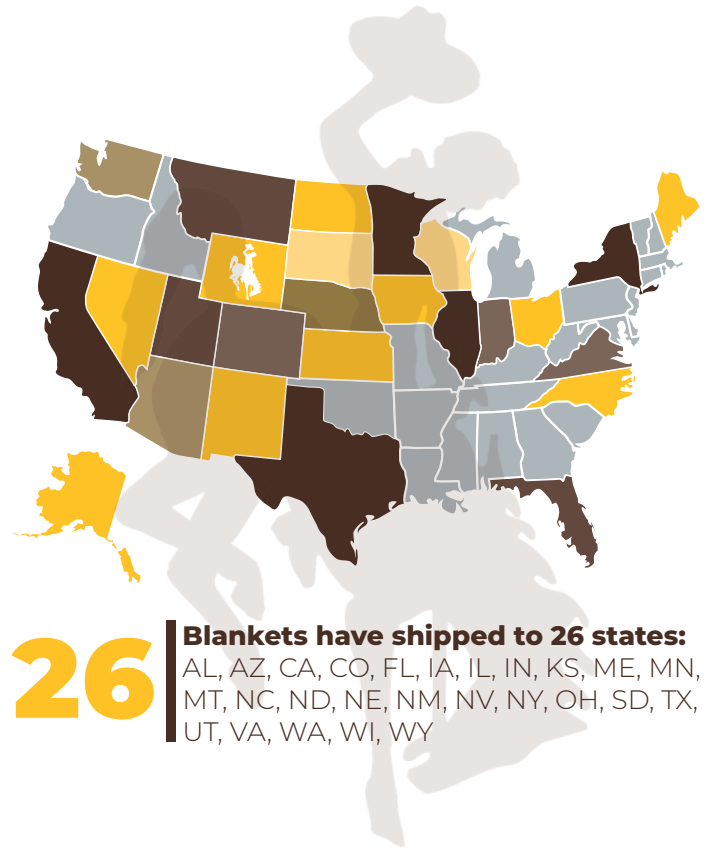


Where Our Support Comes From

The Blanket project

University of Wyoming's College of Agriculture, Life Sciences, and Natural Resources, in collaboration with Wyoming Wool Initiative (WWI), began the Blanket Project in 2021. The Blanket Project is an intentional, innovative continuation of the university's heritage as a foundational support to Wyoming's sheep industry.

Each year, WWI designs and manufactures new limited-edition wool throws. The University of Wyoming's sheep flock in Laramie, Wyoming, comprises 300 Rambouillet ewes whose fleeces provide all the necessary fiber for WWI's Blanket Project and other unique wool products for sale to the public. Wool product research and development efforts with Mountain Meadow Wool Mill in Buffalo, WY and others allow us to integrate demonstration research into outreach efforts. Thus, UWyo branded wool products not only provide funding but inform our efforts to help our ranchers make more from their wool.



In 2022, the Laramie Research and Extension Center (LREC) based flock obtained the American Wool Assurance (AWA) Level III - Certified Status. The University of Wyoming was the first flock in the United States to receive this third-party certification validating our commitment to animal care.

The blanket project is also essential to conducting value-added research for the wool industry. WWI is researching blockchain technology to document stages of production for verification of wool origin and traceability throughout processing. UWyo's graduate students and manufacturing partners keep records of dates, details, and processing information for each of the five stages of blanket production: shearing, first-stage processing, dyeing, spinning, and knitting. This first of its kind traceability framework will allow producers to document and verify provenance of their wool for consumers to prioritize when seeking out source-verified, premium wool products from Wyoming thereby capturing the added value they deserve. You can learn more about WWI's traceability efforts at sheepchain.org.



Lamb-a-Year

Proceeds from the sale of donated lambs sustain and expand programming for Wyoming students and producers. This year, we had 30 donors participate in Lamb-a-year and received 153 lambs.

Both the Blanket Project and Lamb-a-Year fund educational and outreach programs. Funded programs include but are not limited to:

- Field study opportunities for students
 - Undergraduate internships.
 - Graduate research on value-added components for wool and direct marketing for lamb.
 - Producer Educational Programming at the Wyoming Wool Growers Association meetings.
 - Collegiate and youth wool judging opportunities
 - Sponsorship of the Wyoming State Fair wool show.
 - The Shepherders Come Bye Awards Dinner at Wyoming Wool Grower Association summer meeting.
 - Sheep seminars across Wyoming
-



OUR DONORS

Gratitude and thanks

These generous individuals and organizations helped us make a substantial impact in our first year. We are deeply grateful to each one.

7K Ranch	Hamilton Ranch
Aaron Anderson	LREC
Barry Bauer	Marton Ranch
Boner Ranch (M Diamond)	Marvin Schmidt
Camino and Sons	Frank & Elaine Moore
Cassandra Scott	David & Alodie Moore
Curuchet Ranch	Keith & Macey Moore
Brandon Dilts	Regan and Wendy Smith
John Driskill & Bret Goodson	Scott Johnson
Tom Edwards	NexGen Feed Solutions
Bob & Kate Harlan	Geiss Family Partnership
Ivan Laird	Jay Butler
Heather & Weston Jones	Barbara Dilts
Julian Land & Livestock	

Goals for 2023 - 2024



As we move into our second year, we realize the importance of providing accessible and responsive resources and strengthening and growing our team to serve Wyoming sheep producers better.

We will continue to build translational resources from our research in wool quality, processing, and manufacturing to help stakeholders gain more value for their wool. Building linkages across wool industry segments to help connect the producer with greater opportunities for value added manufacturing will continue to be a focal point.

We look forward to expanding our impact on the industry by building on some of the past year's successes.



Lamb-A-Year

We look forward to year two of the Lamb-A-Year program and enhancing the value of the information we collect and student learning experiences. This year, we look forward to capturing feed efficiency data from our GrowSafe system and carcass data that helps decision-making for the producer. We will continue to provide experiential learning opportunities for students in managing donated lambs, including innovative marketing opportunities for the retail product.



Sheep Extension Programming & Emerging Entrepreneurs

Providing relevant and timely information to producers and students is our top priority, and doing so through interactive industry-based learning and networking opportunities is what we aim to do. This year, we will provide in-depth field-based learning activities for University of Wyoming Extension educators to enhance field-based learning opportunities through train-the-trainer activities. These in-depth trainings will also coincide with young producer field tours to strengthen producer and extension linkages while focusing on addressing emerging challenges in the industry



Wool Manufacturing and Marketing

Efforts to help producers get more for their wool through manufacturing and marketing innovations are at the forefront of the Wyoming Wool Initiative. Over the past year, we've consulted with over eight new private companies and entrepreneurs to enhance value-added and marketing opportunities for Wyoming wool. We'll continue to build this network and provide technical expertise wherever possible.

What people are saying



"The Wyoming Wool Initiative has quickly become an important and trusted partner for the sheep industry in Wyoming. It's our go-to source for learning about production and research advances. Wyoming Wool Initiative is setting the stage for innovations in the marketing and use of Wyoming wool. The strength of this partnership is reflected in not only producer participation in programming but the overall increase in recognition and celebration of Wyoming's agricultural heritage, including Wyoming's first-ever Sheep and Wool Festival."

- Cat Urbigkit

Wyoming Wool Growers Association Vice President, & Wyoming sheep and wool producer

"I cannot express enough my appreciation for the relationships formed from my involvement at the University of Wyoming. From judging and exhibiting sheep, evaluating wool, sheep production classes, farm tours, etc. The list goes on for the amazing things the University of Wyoming offers for people interested in the sheep and wool industries. That said, you can "network" all day long, but the relationship you create is an important aspect of networking. And all involved with the UWYO Sheep Program make that connection and relationships real and expose those in the program to other industry leaders with that same connection."

- Bryce McKenzie

Sheep Program Alum & 4-H Youth Development Extension Educator



"The UWYO Sheep Program was how to think critically and progressively. The sheep industry is small, and the only way to keep going is to be progressive and be able to analyze the industry critically."

- Lexi Springer

Sheep Program Graduate Alum & Wyo / CO Sheep Producer

"We are proud of this initiative. We want to support rural communities and the sheep industry."

- Dr. Barbara Rasco

Dean of UWyo, College of Agriculture, Life Sciences and Natural Resources



"In today's sheep industry, there are plenty of challenges we face on a day-to-day basis. To have a sheep specialist with a successful program is essential for the industry in Wyoming. We appreciate what Whit and the university provide for our operation. It eases my mind to know it takes one phone call to help with our daily challenges."

- Kirby Camino

Wyoming sheep and wool producer

FROM DR. STEWART

Reflections on the past year

It's hard to believe that our inaugural year as the Wyoming Wool Initiative is drawing to a close- it's been a productive year. Reflecting on the work done, but more importantly, the team effort that makes all these programs possible is remarkable.

Much like the collective efforts at shearing, docking, and other production events that make our ranches work, it's EVERYONE's contributions that make programs like the blanket project, Lamb-A-Year, and Sheepherders Comeby happen.

We're grateful for the partnership of many (producers, industry groups, students, and UWyo faculty and administration) that have made this year successful.

Supporters like you have allowed us to sustain our programs in building capacity for Wyoming's sheep and wool industry. We hope to be worthy of that continued support as we seek to strengthen this industry we all love. As always, we're grateful for opportunities to learn from your experiences and welcome the opportunity to visit.

Sincerely,

Whit Stewart, Ph.D.

Associate Professor and Extension Sheep Specialist
University of Wyoming
Department of Animal Science
College of Agriculture, Life Sciences and
Natural Resources



Ways to Support Wyoming Wool Initiative



To donate or learn more about how to support Wyoming Wool Initiative, please scan the QR code or contact our Program Coordinator, Lindsay Conley-Stewart, at lstewar9@uwyo.edu.

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