

UW SHEEP PROGRAM & WYOMING WOOL INITIATIVE

ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 2023-JULY 2024



UNIVERSITY
OF WYOMING

College of Agriculture,
Life Sciences, and
Natural Resources



WELCOME

Welcome to the annual impact report of the Wyoming Wool Initiative and the University of Wyoming (UW) Sheep Program. This report highlights the significant strides we have made in advancing the sheep and wool industry in Wyoming through education, research, and community outreach. Our initiatives are dedicated to supporting the unique needs of Wyoming Sheep Producers, fostering innovation, and ensuring sustainable practices within the industry.

OUR MISSION

The Wyoming Wool Initiative and the UW Sheep Program are committed to enhancing the sheep and wool industry through comprehensive educational programs, cutting-edge research, and extensive community engagement.

We aim to support sheep producers, by providing them with the knowledge, tools, and resources they need to thrive.

OUR VISION

To be a leader in the sheep and wool industry by promoting sustainable practices, driving innovation, and supporting the next generation of sheep producers. We envision a future where Wyoming's Sheep and Wool industry is recognized for their quality, resilience, and contribution to the agricultural economy.

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:

► WY 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.

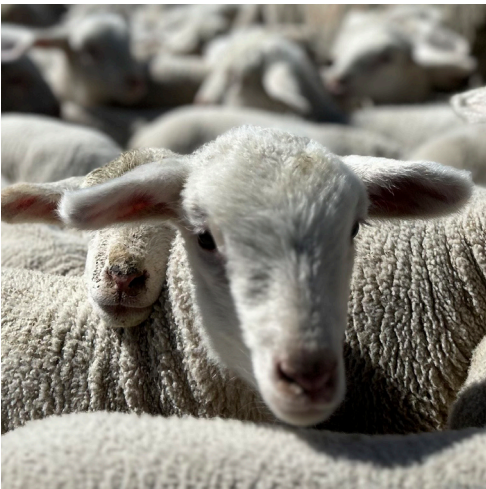
▶ **HONOR HERITAGE & EMBRACE INNOVATION**

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 supported by University of Wyoming, public-private partnerships, and donations.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

- » **STUDENT TRAINING & SUCCESS:** Record enrollment in advanced sheep production classes and successful hosting of the 7220 Wool Judging Invitational.
- » **OUTREACH:** Expansion of educational outreach, program development, field consultations, and industry collaboration.
- » **BLANKET PROJECT:** Continued success and innovation in the Blanket Project, including the production of limited-edition wool throws.
- » **LAMB-A-YEAR PROGRAM:** Significant contributions from producers supporting teaching, research, and extension.
- » **FUNDRAISING AND DEVELOPMENT:** Addressing the challenges faced by sheep producers through collaboration & grass roots efforts.
- » **RESEARCH:** Driven by needs of sheep producers in the state and the industry, we conducted research on rangeland management, targeted grazing, production practices, nutrition, and economic benchmarking.

THANK YOU



We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all our supporters, partners, and stakeholders. Your dedication and support have been instrumental in our success. Together, we are driving innovation and sustainability in the sheep and wool industry, ensuring a prosperous future for all.

We invite you to explore this report and learn more about our achievements, ongoing projects, and future goals. Your continued support and engagement are crucial as we move forward in building capacity at the Wyoming Wool Initiative and the UW Sheep Program. As we grow, we will better serve and advocate for the Wyoming Sheep and Wool industry.

STUDENT TRAINING & SUCCESS

7220 National Wool Judging Contest

The annual 7220 National Wool Judging Contest offers youth and collegiate teams a unique opportunity to explore wool judging. This event promotes hands-on learning, skill development, and a deeper appreciation for the wool industry. Participants evaluate fleece quality, refine their wool grading skills, and compete in a spirited environment. With involvement from 4H, FFA, and collegiate teams nationwide, the contest inspires future careers in the wool and sheep industry.

The event includes thorough training and realistic practice, mirroring industry standards. Recognizing outstanding performers, the 7220 Wool Judging Invitational equips participants with valuable skills and knowledge for future success in agriculture. In 2024, over 160 contestants from collegiate and youth wool-judging programs participated.

Support from the Wyoming Wool Initiative, Wyoming Wool Growers, Wyoming Wool Growers Auxiliary, Campbell County Wool Growers Auxiliary, Albany County Fairgrounds, Sweet Grass Targhees, and Skull Creek Targhees made the 7220 contest possible.

Sheep Production Course

This year marked a record enrollment in our Advanced Sheep Production Class, with 31 undergraduate students. Additionally, two undergraduate students in the Lamb-a-Year program presented their research to the international Society of Animal Science meeting.



Lamb-a-Year

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



OUTREACH

Educational Outreach

We expanded our educational outreach within Wyoming and were invited to facilitate interactive wool workshops throughout the United States. Through seminars for adults and youth, we have raised awareness about the benefits of Wyoming wool and wool products.

Program Development

The University of Wyoming Extension's, newly established, Sheep Task Force delivered virtual and in-person programs and publications to support sheep producers. For the first time in UW history there is a team of professionals being trained to serve and support Wyoming's Sheep producers.

Field Consultations

Our team conducted over 65 in-field consultations, assisting sheep producers and allied industries with various production challenges, from marketing strategies to solar facility design and flock expansion.

Wool Quality Analysis

We provided side sample wool analysis for producers, enabling them to select and breed for the highest quality wool within their flocks.

Wool Felting Workshop

We sponsored a wool felting workshop at the Wyoming Sheep and Wool Festival to promote on-farm product development and marketing of value-added products.

Lamb-a-Year Program

For the second consecutive year, over 100 lambs were donated to the Lamb-a-Year program. Feed efficiency data was collected from all producers' lambs. Donated lambs were then sent to be processed, where students and researchers collected further data to share with producers, and introduce students to the meat processing side of the business. This program integrates all aspects of the land grant mission, providing unique hands-on learning opportunities for our students.

Industry Collaboration

We hosted wool manufacturers and processing partners for a comprehensive tour of the Wyoming sheep industry. This initiative aimed to increase demand for Wyoming wool and explore new avenues for value-added wool products.

WeatherWool & American Woolen Company

We were thrilled to host Ralph DiMeo, founder of WeatherWool, as a guest speaker for our advanced sheep production class. Ralph shared his inspiring journey of building a successful wool company that sources its wool from Wyoming, including range flocks. His visit included a tour of our lambing facilities, showcasing our innovative practices in sheep production.

We loved hosting Jacob Long of American Woolen Company. It is always inspiring to work with industry allies that are passionate about wool! Building bridges, strengthening networks, and good old-fashioned problem-solving are our favorite activities. It was our pleasure to introduce Jacob to multiple Wyoming Sheep producers, and tour him around the Wyoming range, where he was able to witness how our Wyoming ranchers raise their flocks and produce some of the finest wool in America.





SOURCES OF SUPPORT

The Blanket Project

Launched in 2021, the Blanket Project by the University of Wyoming's College of Agriculture, Life Sciences, and Natural Resources, in collaboration with the Wyoming Wool Initiative, combines tradition with modern advancements to support Wyoming's sheep ranchers.

LIMITED-EDITION WOOL THROWS: For the past three years, the Wyoming Wool Initiative has designed and manufactured limited-edition wool throws using fiber from the University of Wyoming's flock of 300 Rambouillet ewes. This project provides all the necessary wool for these exclusive throws.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND CERTIFICATIONS: In 2022, the Laramie Research and Extension Center flock achieved the American Wool Assurance (AWA) Level III - Certified Status, marking the University of Wyoming as the first in the U.S. to receive this prestigious recognition.

SUPPORTING EDUCATION AND RESEARCH: Proceeds from the Blanket Project fund sheep teaching, research, and extension efforts within the College of Agriculture, Life Sciences, and Natural Resources at the University of Wyoming.

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION: Purchasing a blanket supports this vital work, ensuring our heritage is sustained and enhanced through innovation. Blankets are available for purchase at the UW Bookstore.



scan here to
learn more



Lamb-a-Year

This fall, we received 107 lambs from 25 producers across the region, along with generous cash donations. This program generates critical funds to support more in-field programming for students and producers.

This year's Lamb-a-Year program was a resounding success, providing valuable insights into lamb performance for our donors. Each participant received a personalized lamb performance report, featuring crucial data to help producers analyze the performance of their lambs across various breeds and sexes.



KEY INFORMATION FOR PRODUCERS

- » **INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE DATA:** Detailed metrics on how each lamb performed, useful for showcasing the quality of their stock to potential buyers.
- » **FEED-TO-GAIN RATIO:** Highlights the efficiency of lambs in converting feed into body mass, crucial for optimizing feeding practices and profitability.
- » **AVERAGE DAILY GAIN:** Performance ranged from 0.23 to 0.97 pounds per day, with an average of 0.63 pounds per day.
- » **HOT CARCASS WEIGHT AND DRESSING PERCENTAGE:** Essential for understanding the yield and quality of the meat produced.
- » **LOIN EYE AREA (LEA):** Indicates muscle development, which is associated with higher meat quality.
- » **YIELD GRADE AND % BONELESS CLOSELY TRIMMED RETAIL CUTS (%BCTRC):** Measures of the lean meat yield and overall quality of the lamb carcasses.

Lambs were initially fed on meadow hay before transitioning to a finishing diet. The data collection included feed intake monitored by Vytelle's "GrowSafe" feeders for accurate feed-to-gain ratios. Each year, producers are recognized at the Shepherders Come Bye banquet, where awards and recognitions for top-performing lambs are presented.

OUR DONORS

Gratitude and Thanks

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

2023-2024 Giving Day Donors

Alma Kersh
Anne Leonard
Brandy Wallace
Joe Mills
Julie Horsch
Kathleen Bertoneclj
Sherri Tams
Suzy Noecker
Tessa Maurer

Colleen Downey & Patrick
Frank Moore & Elaine Moore
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Macey & Keith Moore
Ramona Belden
Robin Hill
Thomas Majdic
Todd & Lynette Taylor
Taylor & Neil Estate
Sean Valentine

2023-2024 Lamb-a-Year Donors

Dutton Sheep Co.
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Ivan Laird & Glenda Hlavnicka

Von Krosigk Family Targhees
Marton Ranch
Kay & Dave Neves
Regan & Wendy Smith
Alicia Rux
Marvin Schmidt
Paradise Sheep Company
Driskill & Goodson Livestock





Fundraising and Development: Why it Matters

Sheep producers face numerous challenges, from fluctuating market prices to the high costs of production inputs. Limited access to applied research, innovative practices, and quality resources further exacerbates these issues, hindering the sustainability and growth of the industry. While there are a select few programs aimed at supporting sheep producers, many fall short in providing comprehensive, practical solutions. They often lack the integration of hands-on training, advanced research, and direct community engagement, resulting in a gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application.

The UW Sheep Program and Wyoming Wool Initiative offer an ideal solution by combining education, research, and outreach. Our programs are designed to bridge the gap between theory and practice, providing producers with access to the latest research, hands-on training, and practical support. Our initiatives like the Blanket Project, Lamb-a-Year Program, and extensive outreach activities ensure that producers receive the resources and knowledge they need to thrive. We excel by fostering a collaborative environment that brings together producers, industry experts, students, and researchers. Our holistic approach ensures that every aspect of the sheep and wool industry is addressed, from production, rangeland management, marketing to education and industry innovations. By leveraging our unique strengths and partnerships, we create impactful programs that drive sustainable growth and success for the Wyoming sheep industry.

Looking to the Future

As we move forward, we remain committed to advancing the Wyoming Wool Initiative and the University of Wyoming Extension Sheep Program. Your continued support will enable us to further our research efforts, enhance educational programs and expand our community outreach. As we collaborate and partner with industry allies, dedicated donors, and stakeholders, we will drive innovation and sustainability in the sheep and wool industry, ensuring a prosperous future for all.

FROM DR. WHIT STEWART

Reflections on the Past Year

Reflecting on the work done and, more importantly, the team effort that makes all these programs possible, is remarkable. It's the collective contributions of everyone that make programs like the Blanket Project, Lamb-a-Year, and Shepherders Come Bye happen. We are grateful for the partnership of producers, industry groups, students, UW faculty, and administration.

Supporters like you have allowed us to sustain our programs and build capacity for Wyoming's sheep and wool industry. We look forward to learning from your experiences and visiting with you in the future.



Thank you for your deliberate support and dedication to our mission. We look forward to sharing more successes with you in the years ahead.

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



IN THE MEDIA



UW Magazine
Sheep to the Rescue



UW News
UW Sheep Program Certified AWA Level III



UW Foundation YouTube
Find out the latest developments and achievements in the UW sheep program



UW News
UW Master's Degree Student Earns American Sheep Industry Association Scholarship



UW Extension YouTube
Sheep Shearing I UWyo Blanket Project



UWAgNews
Wyoming Wool Initiative Seeks to Celebrate and Expand Sheep Industry



Wyoming Public Radio (WPR)
New UW Initiative Hopes to Become a Powerful Resource for Wool Producers



UWAgNews
UW and Wyoming Wool Initiative Launch Inaugural Lamb-a-Year Program



Wyoming Public Radio (WPR)
The New Lamb-a-Year Program



NorthernAg Network
UW Launches Lamb-a-Year Program and Wool Initiative



Western AgNetwork
An interview with a UW sheep extension specialist about the new Lamb-a-Year program.



ASI Sheep Industry News
University of Wyoming in ASI Sheep Industry News - April 2023 Issue (pages 16-17)



Western AgNetwork
Inaugural Wyoming Sheep & Wool Festival

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