

Sheep and Goat Notes



1009 Twilight Trail, Suite 121
Frankfort, KY 40601
(502) 352-2434
E-mail:
info@kysheepandgoat.org

CENSUS GIVES FARMERS A VOICE IN THEIR FUTURE 2007 Census of Agriculture

Kentucky sheep and goat producers will soon have the opportunity to participate in shaping the future of agriculture as the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) begins distribution of the 2007 Census of Agriculture.

"Many changes have occurred throughout Kentucky Agriculture in the five years since the last Census was taken" according to Leland Brown, Director of NASS' Kentucky Field Office. "One of the most dramatic areas of change has been in Kentucky's growing goat population. The need for reliable statistics about Kentucky's Farmers has never been greater." Conducting the agricultural census is the only way to get information to measure how successful many of the state initiatives and marketing programs have been. The success of these new programs and how fast and how much they have grown will be shown by what producers report on the 2007 Census of Agriculture.

"It is critical that we have an accurate accounting of the numbers of sheep and goats being raised in the Commonwealth, so we're urging producers to complete the Census forms they'll soon be receiving," said Kentucky Sheep and Goat Development Office Executive Director Ray Bowman. For instance, policy-makers use Census data for decisions concerning agricultural and rural programs. Community planners use Census information to target delivery of local services. Companies rely on Census data when determining where to locate their operations. And farmers themselves look at Census data when deciding to make changes in their production strategies.

Conducted every five years by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Census is a complete count of the nation's farms and ranches and the people who operate them. The Census looks at land use and ownership, operator characteristics, production practices, income and expenditures and other topics. It provides the only source of uniform, comprehensive agricultural data for every county in the nation.

Special points of interest:

- Ag Census
- Lamb demand up
- Be Safe, Not Sorry
- Goats vs. Kudzu
- Thomas to head GOAP
- Upcoming Events

Sheep farmers feeding rising appetite for lamb

By Gail Martineau

FOR THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

The sheep on the Mossy Dell Farm don't produce wool for warm winter sweaters or yarn for knitting scarves. They don't produce wool at all.

It's all about the meat on Richard Gilbert's Athens farm. Gilbert raises specially bred "hair sheep," which produce numerous offspring, are relatively easy to care for and don't require shearing. He sells his meat to individual consumers and through United Producers Inc. in Mount Vernon. Gilbert said he got into the

sheep-raising business after helping out with a friend's flock. He first looked into raising cattle because his father was a cattleman, but he found they were too big and destructive. Sheep just seemed like the right animal. "It's really hard to make money with sheep, to make it a sustainable enterprise," Gilbert said. *(more next page)*

Sheep farmers feeding rising appetite for lamb

continued

"What's happened is wool has become a specialty. Unless someone really focuses on the fine-wool market, wool can be a cost for farmers."

Katherine Harrison Haley, manager of Blystone Farms in Canal Winchester, agreed. She said that when her farm sheared sheep, it lost money.

"Wool is not what it once was," Harrison Haley said. "It was a market situation where we knew we had to make some decisions to make sure our product was going to be valuable."

Harrison Haley said her business has boomed since the farm's slaughterhouse opened in 2004. On average, the company slaughters 50 to 75 animals a week to meet the demand for lamb in central Ohio, particularly

among the growing Muslim population.

Joe Blystone, owner of the Blystone Farms, said he sells meat to Columbus' Somali immigrants, who visit the farm, choose an animal and wait for it to be processed in the slaughterhouse.

"We knew we had a market even before we started," Blystone said.

Harrison Haley said the flavor of hair sheep is similar to that of their African relatives.

Blystone Farms also adheres to Islamic slaughtering practices, which call for the animal to suffer as little as possible.

"We do employ two butchers who are Muslim," Harrison Haley said. "The kill is done in a very quick and humane manner."

Osama Saleh, a Muslim and owner of two local Mediterranean markets that carry

sheep meat, said he thinks the flavor of locally produced lamb is much better

than that of imported meat.

"I've tasted the Australian and New Zealand meat, and it tastes like it was in

the freezer," Saleh said.

He also said he hopes to get a piece of the growing market.

"I wish I had extra cash to open a slaughterhouse," Saleh said.

Kentucky Farmers Encouraged to have a Written Safety Plan

A common element among businesses with superior safety records is a written safety plan that helps to identify and correct hazards. In order to ensure the safety and health of yourself, your workers and your family, it is critical that Kentucky farmers make safety and health inspections a priority in your business. Even more important, you must take immediate action to fix any unsafe or unhealthy situations you find.

Accidents occur haphazardly. Safety occurs systematically. Kentucky Farm Bureau has compiled a safety checklist for agriculture that can help you

control farm accidents. It is designed to guide you in spotting and correcting safety trouble situations before they cause an accident.

It covers many hazards connected with farm work sites, equipment, materials and buildings. However, the checklist does not attempt to cover hazards connected with highly unique agricultural operations, buildings, machinery or chemicals. Such specialized information is found in product instruction manuals or is available from dealers, builders, government agencies, extension service and safety organizations or the Kentucky Farm Bureau website.

For a copy of the safety checklist visit the Kentucky Farm Bureau website at www.kyfb.com or contact Terri Bradshaw at 502-495-5191 or tbradshaw@kyfb.com.



Chattanooga Sets Signup Process For Renting Goats To Fight Kudzu

From The Chattanooga

The City Council on Tuesday approved a new procedure allowing citizens to rent goats to fight kudzu, privet and other invasive plants on their property.

Lee Norris, deputy city public works administrator, said, "It will work pretty much like getting a construction permit."

He said the city will have approved goat contractors and citizens can sign up for permission to use their services.

After the application process, "the deal will be between the citizen and the goat contractor," he said.

Mr. Norris said the city will inspect the property to make sure it is suitable for goat grazing and also check it during the work.

He said the contract is only for the duration of one growing season.

Mr. Norris said the

goats "work quickly. We had two projects for them this year and the goats finished ahead of when we had anticipated."

Mr. Norris praised the kudzu-champing services of the goats. He said, "After they have done their job, the kudzu won't be eliminated, but the property owner will be able to manage the problem."

He said Chattanooga is the only area city he knows using goat contractors, but he expects more will follow suit.



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www.kysheepandgoat.org

ROGER THOMAS NAMED EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF GOAP

Kentucky Governor Steve Beshear has announced the appointment of Roger Thomas, 57, as Executive Director of the Governor's Office of Agricultural Policy. Most recently, Thomas served as Executive Director of the Kentucky Dairy Development Council. He served as a state representative for the 21st district in the Kentucky General Assembly from 1996-2004. During his entire tenure he served on the Agriculture and Small Business Committee, serving as Chairman from 2000-2004.



Thomas also served as co-founder and co-chair of the National Legislative Agriculture Chairs Summit from 2002-2004 and remains on the Executive Committee. Furthermore, he chaired the Agriculture and International Trade Committee of the National Conference of State Legislatures Agriculture and Rural Development Committee; chaired the Southern States Bio-Based Energy Alliance and the Council on State Government Agriculture and Rural Development Committee; co-chaired the Kentucky Tobacco Settlement Oversight Committee; served on the Tobacco Task Force, the Kentucky Aquaculture Task Force and the council of State Government Agriculture Policy Task Force.

"Roger's extensive experience will allow him to serve the Commonwealth's agriculture community well by administering the Agriculture Development Fund and serving the needs of the Agriculture Development Board," said Governor Beshear. "His experience will also benefit rural areas of the state as he works to diversify Kentucky's agriculture economy."

Thomas lives in Smiths Grove with his wife of 37 years, Doris. They have three grown children.

SOUTHERN SAWG CONFERENCE IN LOUISVILLE FEATURES GOAT SESSIONS

The Practical Tools and Solutions for Sustaining Family Farms conference returns to Galt House in Louisville, Kentucky, January 16-19, 2008.

On Friday, Jan. 18, Dr. An Pieschel will present **Great Goats** — Keeping your goat herd healthy and happy. You can improve condition and reduce internal parasites through forage based nutrition, smart pasture management, and strategic vaccination. This session will also discuss farm biosecurity for the safety of your goats, plus cover body condition scoring for healthy productive does and kids. An has lived in South America on a large sheep and cattle ranch, and managed a beef cattle research facility in Alaska. In 1985, she began raising meat goats in the Hawaiian Islands, moved them to California, and also taught in both those states. She has now moved her goat farm to Tennessee and also works as the small ruminant extension specialist for both Tennessee State and the University of Tennessee.

On Saturday, Jim Tanner of Bonnie Blue Farm (www.bonniebluefarm.com) will talk about **Small-Scale Goat Dairy** — in this session you will learn what is needed for a successful small-scale goat dairy. Learn the kind of facility you need, what breeds are best, what is needed to bottle milk, what is needed to make cheese, what the regulations are and how to market. Originally from Covington, KY, Jim is currently a goat farmer and operates the only licensed grade A goat dairy and farmstead goat cheese operation in Tennessee. He and his

wife Gayle were recently named "Small Farmer of the Year" for the State of Tennessee.

Joel Salatin, this year's keynote speaker, will address the entire gathering at the Saturday evening Taste of Kentucky Dinner on the topic "Healing the Planet, One Plate at a Time." Earlier in the schedule Wendell Berry, Kentucky farmer and renowned author, will be part of a conversation on the necessary work of sustainable agriculture.

The conference attracts over 1,200 farmers and advocates working toward sustainable food systems in the South. The two full days of regular conference sessions start a half day earlier this year on Friday morning with even more practical sessions from which to choose.

The complete conference schedule is available at www.ssawg.org or call 678-494-0696 to request a brochure.

Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group, Inc. (Southern SAWG) is a 501(c)3 organization founded in 1991 to promote sustainable agriculture in the southern United States.



ASI/NLFA Convention: Partners in Progress

At the end of this month, members of the U.S. sheep industry will converge in Las Vegas, Nev., for the industry's annual convention.

For those already registered, the convention will provide a forum for discussion about challenges in the industry, successes of the past and the direction of the industry's future. Jan. 8 is the deadline for early registration. However, registrations are accepted up to the date of the convention which is Jan. 23-26, 2008.

Joining the American Sheep Industry Association and the National Lamb Feeders in Vegas will be the American Lamb Board, the American Sheep and Goat Center, the Western Range Association, the National Livestock Producers Association, ASI Women and Make It With Wool. For the first time, Food and Fiber

Risk Managers LLC, the industry-owned insurance agency, will also have representation at the convention.

Four workshops are sure to attract many attendees.

- **Techniques and Tools for Predator Management**
- **Projected Effect of Biofuel Production on the Sheep Industry**
- **Applying the Concepts of Prescribed Grazing**
- **Managing Your Risk Through Insurance**

Along with these workshops, the annual events of the industry-wide welcome reception, industry awards lunch and the Make It With Wool dinner and fashion show and sure to entertain those attending.

For questions or to register for the convention, visit www.sheepusa.org and click on the 2008 convention details link or call ASI at 303-771-3500 ext. 0.

Previews of Coming Attractions!



ASI Annual Meeting

January 24-26

Riviera Hotel and Casino

Las Vegas, Nevada

Visit <http://www.sheepusa.org/> for details