



MENTOR – / – WOOL OUTREACH EVENT

(Please Specify Whether it is Mentor or Wool Outreach)

Event: KY Farm Launch

(Please use separate form for each event and specify which event took place)

Date: March-August 2025

Total money spent for event: \$2550

(Mentor) or (Wool) Outreach money spent for event: Mentor

Approximately how many producers, consumers or registrants were involved? 40

What happened at this event?

KSWPA joined with the University of Kentucky (UK) and Kentucky Center for Agriculture Rural Development (KCARD) to create a beginning farmer co-hort called KY Farm Launch that meets every Monday from March to August. The goal of the program is to help beginning farmers earn \$1000 of income from their operation within a year. Participants have learned about the sheep industry, marketing, nutrition, genetics, reproduction, lambing, health, hoof care, parasite management, fencing/facilities, quality assurance, rotational grazing, pasture management, and record keeping.

The education has been multi faceted- instruction from industry specialists and mentor sheep producers. All concepts taught during this program have had a hands-on component taught by mentor sheep producers. We wanted the participants to get first hand experience in handling sheep so they would not only understand the proper way to complete tasks, but to see how other producers utilize them on their own farms.

Here is a list of education provided:

- 1) Shearing School conducted by Zack and Taylor Schwartz, Schwartz Meat Company and Show Stock. Taylor Schwartz shears sheep part-time. The Schwartz brothers produce over 400 head with their father. Participants learned about equipment setup and maintenance, as well as how to shear on a stand and on the floor.
- 2) Lambing Clinic conducted by Sue Churchill- Sue is the owner of Thistle End Farm and has had sheep for over 10 years. Participants were able to assist Sue in working newborn lambs, as well as vaccinating older lambs almost ready to wean. Participants

learned about move sheep through a working chute, how to properly administer medications, how to handle dystocia positions, what equipment is needed to lamb care, and how to feed ewes with lambs.

- 3) Facilities & Working Dogs- Harry Frederick, Winding Creek Farms, conducted a working dog demo showing participants how to utilize dogs to not only herd in a field but to push sheep through working chutes. Harry discussed pasture lambing versus barn lambing and equipment needed for various tasks.
- 4) Marketing- co-hort members learned about the variety of ways to market by listening to Lynn Mansfield, Four Hills Farm (markets in grocery stores), Susan Bell, Bell Farms (markets in farmers markets), and Jeff Rice, Hickory Hollow Acres (markets breeding stock and graded sales). Each of the panelists explained why they market in their respective areas and how they maintain those markets. Co-hort members then attended a graded sale at Bluegrass Stockyards Richmond where Jason Wachter, Kentucky Department of Agriculture Marketing Specialist, explain how graded sales worked.
- 5) Record Keeping- Richard Popham, Circle P Katahdins, taught co-hort members how to utilize an excel record keeping system he developed that is compatible with the NSIP program. Members were then able to enter some of their own data and learn how to manipulate the sheet to gain insights for culling purposes.
- 6) Wool Production and Processing- co-hort members attended a class at a local fiber mill to learn how to wash and process fleeces on a small versus large scale. Participants were taught how to grade fleeces, followed by lectures on how to produce quality fiber animals. The Kentucky Department of Agriculture also gave a presentation on agritourism to show another way to expand profits for wool production. (Instructors were paid for the class and materials- Sarabeth Parido, Cheryl Kersey, and Melissa King)
- 7) Parasite Management- All the participants attended a health, parasite, and quality assurance day where Jessie Lay, University of Kentucky Small Ruminant Specialist, explained how to identify, treat, and prevent common illnesses. Kentucky State University Staff helped teach about hoof trimming and deworming. Kay DeMoss, Lazy K Farm, taught members how to conduct fecal egg counts.
- 8) Guardian Animals and Parasites- Shawn Harper, KCTCS Adult Ag Instructor, taught co-hort members the pros and cons of various guardian animal options, as well as parasite resistance and connections to health.
- 9) Nutrition- co-hort members learned about rotational grazing and forage management from two Kentucky Cooperative Extension Agriculture Agents. Forage analysis was taught by the University of Kentucky sheep unit, and how to create a balanced ration was taught by Richard Popham who created a spreadsheet that allows participants to enter their hay test analysis and feedstuffs to create a balanced ration for ewes, rams, and lambs in all stages of production.

What was accomplished at this event to further (Mentor) or (Wool) Outreach?

All participants of the co-hort program have reported learning new skills and knowledge that will impact their operations. All participants received their Small Ruminant Quality Assurance Certifications, FAMACHA certifications, lambing kits, and fecal count testing supplies. They have also received the excel production record and ration balancing spreadsheets.

Most participants came into the program already in production. Participants reported the program has helped them evaluate and create marketing plans which will require them to change their plans for breeding, feeding, pasture rotation, and parasite management.

For those that did not have sheep before starting the program, they reported identifying the breed that will help them reach their marketing goals. They have developed plans on how to renovate existing buildings on their farms to accommodate the number and breed of sheep they plan to purchase.

All participants reported that keeping records is going to be the crutch to keep their operations profitable and progressing. They also said they better understood how record keeping and utilizing NSIP data can make a larger impact on their breeding programs.

What perception did a participant walk away with? Participants overall have been very impressed and thankful for this program. Although there was a lot of information shared, participants said they feel confident in asking industry leaders and the mentors for help.

All the mentors reported having positive experiences with the co-hort group. They appreciated that all participants were willing to jump into work, even if the participants had never done the task before. Mentors appreciated the questions asked by the participants as well, stating that they felt the participants were vested in the future of their operations.

Since the program has not finished, we do not have all the reporting data at this time.

Attached to this form are copies of checks, receipts, and invoices to cover the financial output for this event.