

# NEWS EWE GOAT TO KNOW

By members for members to support the sheep and goat agri-business in our region.



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## From the President

On behalf of Jennifer Miller-  
McClellan

I hope you enjoy this newsletter – we plan to have a newsletter a quarter in 2021, especially since our full Club meetings are still not happening due to COVID restrictions. We hope to have our very popular Member Farm Tour in August (we are working out details), but we'll also have to observe COVID restrictions – perhaps, being outside and distancing will allow us to get together.

This time of year, when plants are just beginning to bud and come out, it is a great time to check your fields for plants that may be poisonous to your herd/flock. Poison hemlock, Jimson weed, and Nightshade are among the most common in the fields in our region. [NC State Extension](#) has a very useful description and list of plants of concern for sheep, goat and cattle that forage (hopefully, the link works!).

If any member is involved in a farmer's market, we'd love to know about it and try to support you by getting the word out. Please let Marilyn know (when, where, what you are selling). The Club also offers to pay part of your vendor fee if you will have a spot on your table for Club materials. Let us know!



# New Holland Market Update

By Cecil King

Since January, the Club has arranged two shipments of animals to New Holland, the largest livestock market in the US North East. Several members received recorded prices. Currently, goats and sheep are selling higher than usual. Hopefully, this trend will continue. In January one member received \$4.05 per pound for their 57lb lambs. Several members were paid \$3.85 - \$3.95 per lb for 60 to 80 pound lambs. My 111lb lambs averaged \$3.10.

Last week, several members sent lambs that did not send them in January and for them the prices were highest they have ever received. Last week 80lb lambs were as high as \$3.30 per pound.



Goats have received high prices for the last three years. One old billy in January sold for \$460. Goats sell by the head not by weight.

For New Holland, the best weights:

Goats: the bigger - the higher the price, because goats sell by head, not by the pound.

Sheep: 60 to 90lbs

Both species need to be healthy and exhibit muscle mass and large bone.

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# Time to Shear Your Sheep? Prepare!

By Cecil King and Crew



It is that time of year when goat owners feel lucky, the needs of sheep owners are many, and the sheep shearers are few! The Club has a list of local sheep shearers – you can find them on the website. Since shearers are in demand, now is a great time to get to know your fellow Club members and join together to help the shearers get a full day's work and bring the animals to them if needed.

**Make sure you have been in touch with your shearer at least by the end of March.**

The best thing you can do is prepare for the shearer so that you, the shearers and the sheep all have a good day. How to prepare? Here is a brief list:

1) Have your animals caught and ready for shearing (fasted and dry). Don't have your shearer show up and spend an hour trying to catch your animals. You may not be their only client that day and could make them behind schedule and inconvenience other clients.

2) It is your responsibility to have a clean and suitable working environment. The barn should be set up and ready to go when the shearer gets to the job site. Talk to your shearer prior to shearing day about what that means for them. Shearers will differ with what they need to do the job quickly and efficiently with minimal stress for the animals and humans. (Continued on Page 2)

## New Holland Market

(Continued from page 1)

Because animals get lost and to help identify ours, each farm is given a special mark and color and Club tags are put in every animal at take up. Scrapie tags are also required (see the



Club info package you received in December for Scrapie and shipping to New Holland information).

Since we have

worked with the buyer to educate them on our livestock, they know these animals came straight from a family farm and they look for our tags and often pay a premium. *(photos are of Club livestock in New Holland pens - last shipment)*

### **The next trip to New Holland April 24.**

Looking forward, currently we are in negotiations with a processing plant in Southern Indiana to sell direct. We hope it provides another option for members to sell their livestock at a premium price.

Indiana processes 1,800 sheep and goats each week. The buyer said they need a steady supply and it appears they pay more for healthy, well muscled animals in the summer and fall months. Indiana will purchase all we can send.

They publish their prices on Wednesday morning and those prices are good until the next Tuesday afternoon. Goats and sheep are sold by weight. They currently have to send trucks to Texas to meet their needs.



## Time to Shear Your Sheep? Prepare!

(Continued from page 1)

Poor quality setups make a hard job harder. Poor lighting is often overlooked and is especially important if you have colored animals.

### 3) Fasting, Fasting, Fasting.

All animals must be fasted from food and water a minimum of 12 hours, longer if you have larger animals (bigger animals have bigger stomachs) this includes all forms of food; grass, hay, grain, anything they can eat.

This is for your animal AND the shearer's safety. An uncomfortable animal won't sit still which can be dangerous.

Imagine eating a thanksgiving dinner and someone folding you in half, extremely uncomfortable!

### 4) Dry animals.

Wet wool causes extra weight that pulls skin away from the body that will cause unwanted cuts on the animal, as well as making your wool undesirable if stored immediately.

In addition to a degrading wool clip it increases arthritis in the shearer and may cause wool boils (imagine having zits everywhere you touch a wet sheep). If it can get a cigarette damp, your animals are too wet!

### 5) Have your own wool bags.

Now that the Club is baling wool, for the wool pool, we don't have the same access to wool bags and they may need to be ordered several weeks in advance. The shearers don't supply the bags.

The most important thing of all is communication! Talk to your shearer! If your shearer suggests something, take it to heart, most truly want the best for your animals.



### **STRAW BALES SUCCESS!**

Every year, the Club contracts with a straw bale business to provide our members with low cost, high quality straw for winter bedding/ lambing/kidding season. This year, an entire tractor trailer (639) bales were sold to members.

## MEET YOUR 2021-2023 CLUB OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS!



**Jennifer Miller-McClellan, President**

**Note from Jennifer:** I grew up on a multi-species farm which included a flock of 50 Suffolk ewes. After High School, I owned and operated a small dairy for 12 years. I stopped farming and worked as a lab tech in a wastewater treatment plant while going to college. Upon completion of my B.S. in Natural Science, I went to work for Virginia Tech's Biological Systems Engineering as a Research Associate. While at Tech, I took classes and completed my M.S. in Public and International Affairs. It was there I met my husband, Phillip, who is an Agricultural Engineer.

Farming gets in your blood! Once a farmer always a farmer and I longed to return. In 2006, Phillip and I bought what is now Nolley Wood Farm - approximately 54 acres in Riner, VA. In 2007 we bought our first (10) Katahdins. Now we run about 70 ewes, dozen Boer cross goats, a few Charolais cattle, hogs, and chickens. We direct market lamb, goat, beef, pork, chicken and eggs at South County Seasonal Farmers Market (Roanoke), have on-farm pick-up, home delivery and have shipped meat (mainly lamb) to customers in North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and California. Currently we're working on a farm website and just recently opened up our on-line store - <https://www.nolleywoodfarm.com/home>

I am a founding member of the Club, been here since the beginning in 2014. I am excited to keep it growing and helping others join and enjoy the sheep and goat agri-business.

**Note from Sarah:** I have been part of Smiley farm since 1974, when we relocated to Pulaski County and the family invested in cattle. This 100+ acre farm is raising Charolais/Angus cattle and Myotonic goats. Working on the farm, in the dirt, with the animals is good for your soul - wish it paid better! My professional career is in international trade and government affairs. I have lived, and traveled, all over the world but I keep returning to these mountains. I am currently the Head of Regulatory and External Affairs for a hemp extract company in Blacksburg, VA.

I am a founding member of the Club, and have held various offices over the years. I firmly believe improving the agri-business industry in our region is vital to economic development. The Club has worked to improve educational resources, improve market access and helps members receive better prices for their efforts. We have also successfully lobbied Richmond on behalf of our interests and are happy to do so again in any way that benefits our members – in any state. But the club is only as strong as its members, so talk to us! Tell us what you need, like, and don't like.



**Sarah Smiley, Vice President**



**Marilyn Meadows,  
Communications Director**

**Note From Marilyn:** I was born on Long Island - but don't hold it against me! We got out as soon as we could and came to the most beautiful part of our country where people are real. I spent my career as an Executive Secretary, while my husband was a New York City Firefighter, we are both happily retired now, and I'm finally living my dream of farming. Ever since I was little I had a love for animals ( I played with stuffed animals instead of dolls ). We've always had dogs and rabbits for pets, and finally just six years ago I finally got the sheep I've always dreamed of. And a couple of donkeys too.

I'm up to 14 sheep now, and that's probably my limit, as I love to spend time snuggling them, and there's just not enough hours in the day. My favorite part of my job as Communications Director is maintaining the Membership Directory. I love when we get new members, and I have the chance to get to know them a little bit, even if it's only on paper or through email.

I've totally enjoyed our Wool-working classes, and look forward to my other favorite Club Event - our Annual Summer Farm Tour - Hope to see you all there!

**Note from Cindy:** I have been happy to serve the NRV sheep and goat club members in the role of treasurer since the Club was founded.

My family and I have been raising registered myotonic goats (fainting goats) for over twenty years in Hiwassee, VA. We have also had great success in using various guardians on the farm including llamas, donkeys, and livestock guardian dogs (Pirin is a Karakachan LGD pictured with me).

Our 3 Swiss alpine goats supply us with milk for our goat milk soap and lotions that we enjoy making.



**Cindy Kolb, Treasurer**



**Kim Driggs, Board Member,  
Dairy Goats**

**Note from Kim:** I am from an Air Force family and thus used to moving a lot, but I have been in the NRV for six years now and never plan on moving again!

I raise purebred Nubian dairy goats and run a dairy herd share near Blacksburg VA. I'm hoping to connect with members who have or want to get into dairy goats this year! We also started a pack goat last year, and are looking forward to lots of hiking.

**Note from Todd:** I joined the board of the New River Valley Sheep & Goat Club in 2016 and serve as the Website Liaison and Classifieds Ad Manager for the club. My farm is located in Dublin, Virginia where I live with my wife, Sheila.

I have previously raised cattle, hogs, and Great Pyrenees puppies, but after a friend introduced me to sheep, I found my passion. I raise Katahdin Sheep on a 13 acre farm which keeps me very busy, especially during Spring lambing season. In addition to the farm, I have worked in the insurance industry for 25 years and now hold a position as District Sales manager for a large regional insurance carrier.

I am an active member of the Freedom Fellowship Church where I serve as a board member and a trustee. I also served in the United States Navy aboard a submarine during the Desert Storm conflict. In my spare time, I enjoys wood working, camping and spending time family and friends.



**Todd Morrison, Board Member,  
Website Manager**



**Emily Falk, Board Member,  
Meat Goats/Sheep**

**Note From Emily:** I am a veterinarian living on a small hobby farm in Galax, where I raise sheep, goats, and working border collies. I practice in Grundy, VA but also provide services to commercial sheep farms in MD and PA.

My sheep are mostly Dorset x Cheviot crosses and I've experimented with several goat breeds. In vet school I did an internship at the US Sheep Experiment Station in Dubois, ID, where approximately 3,000 range ewes are brought in each year for lambing. I have experience with NSIP and Shearwell/FarmWorks programs that analyze livestock performance on the farm.

Additionally, I am very active in training and competing with my border collies in USBCHA trials across the country. I host trials at various locations, one of which is at the annual PA Farm Show. The biggest indoor agriculture event in the country, the Farm Show attracts 500,000 visitors during its week-long run and is broadcast on local TV, so I am thrilled to have such a great opportunity to educate both producers and the general public about the value of a useful work dog.

Since I do a lot of traveling, I have the opportunity to see all sorts of sheep farms from NY to FL to the Midwest. I enjoy learning about breeds and management systems that are specifically tailored for different regions, and these experiences help me on my own farm as well as those of my clients.

**Note from John:** Colonel John S. Fant, US Army (Retired) co-owns, with his parents, and operates the family farm. Known by its name since the 1800s, Summerfield Farm is a Century Farm located in Grayson County, Virginia. The farm is a cow/calf operation, primarily, that currently raises grass fed beef cattle.

However, John feels the future of the farm is in small ruminants and is working to expand his flock. He is working with local fiber enthusiasts to produce wool of quality for spinning and knitting. The farm has made significant use of federal and state programs to implement conservation practices. While improving management of the cattle herd, these programs have also significantly improved surface water quality and wildlife populations.

Heritage Breeds: Cattle: Red Poll Bulls, Sheep: Clun Forest and Hog Island



**Col. John Fant, Board Member,  
Wool Sheep**



**Cecil King, Board Member,  
Past President, Meat Sheep**

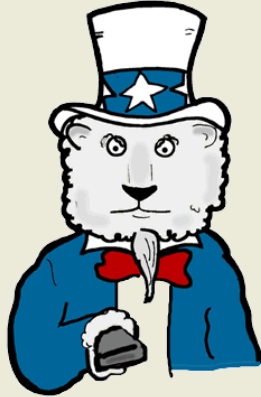
**Note from Cecil:** Live in the Robinson Track Community located in Pulaski County. Raise primarily Hampshire/Suffolk Sheep. Also , a few white face sheep for fall breeding. No pictures available, all currently in use protecting people's vegetables.

**Note from Cecil's Daughter, Laura Beth:** He has a degree in Dairy Science from Virginia Tech (VT). He actually worked 3 jobs (all at the same time) to put himself through VT. He managed Kelgey Dairy Farm after graduating, worked for Vigortone Minerals, then opened his own mineral business - King Ag Products & Summit Minerals. He formulated all of his own extremely high quality minerals for beef, dairy, and brood cows, sheep, goats, and swine and delivered them directly to farms in Virginia, and parts of Tennessee, West Virginia, North Carolina, and even Maryland. He also did feed rations for his customers and silage samples. He's an incredible animal nutritionist. When I was 9, at his suggestion, we bought our first 2 sheep, my show lambs named Fluffy and Tuffy. My dad showed lambs when he was growing up in Snowville and wanted me to, also. Everything started with those two lambs. He kept learning about sheep and we began keeping the ewes at the end of show seasons and the rest is history. Now there are hundreds. He has served on various Virginia Governor Boards and in associations on behalf of the sheep industry.

**Note from Writer:** Cecil was the founding force behind the Club and was President until this year. His phone # is the Club phone # and he is happy to talk sheep and goats any time. He is also the guy that all the buyers in New Holland know and created the Club brand for that market.

# Close the Gate – Wrap Up

## We Need EWE!



How did you hear about the Club? Through a friend? Through the website? You may have seen a flyer.

We would greatly appreciate finding new locations throughout the region to hang Club posters. Please volunteer and we will mail you flyers (8.5"x11")! Email or call.

Help us spread the word about the Club!

## Need to Sell Something or Looking to Buy?

Use the Club's Classified Ads on the website. The 30 day ads are free for members. The Club is moving a lot of animals and helping many small farms find breeding animals. Just the other week, Cecil King found two rams from a members to sell to a farm in North Carolina that had found our website. We had two members that each had a ram they wanted to sell now rather than wait for early Fall, so all three parties were helped.

The Classified Ads are also helping our artisans find new customers and direct customers to their websites.

People are selling farm equipment, livestock guardian animals, soap, hay – you name it. It is resource created for members to help support your efforts and promote your business. We have thousands of visits to our website every month, from across the U.S. Please use it!

### **NEXT CLUB PHOTO CONTEST** – April 2 – April 11, **Theme:** Love These Babies

The Club's FB page, which feeds onto our website, receives thousands of views. People love to see photos of cute baby lambs and goats, so this is a fun opportunity to send us your best photos and have the chance to win a club short sleeved tshirt of your choice. The photo with the most likes over the time period wins.

This is also an opportunity for you to let your farm shine and direct buyers to you.

**Send us, via email or FB messenger:** 1) Photo with title, 2) Information about your farm/business, 3) your website or FB oage as people will want to learn more about you and this may mean more business for you! *IDEA: put an ad on the Club Classified page and direct people to it in your writeup.*







**Get To Know a Farm:** The 2020 Club Award winners were announced last year, and will be receiving their awards soon. Our plan is to take each winner and highlight their story in a writeup and photos on our FB page and website. This is part of our commitment to educating the public on the sheep and goat agri-industry in this region as well as helping members get more visibility for their efforts.

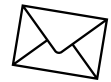
**Who We Are:** The New River Valley Sheep & Goat Club was established in August 2014. We are a network of sheep and goat producers and enthusiasts dedicated to promoting, advocating for, and growing the number of sheep and goats in the mountains of rural Southwest Virginia, as well as nearby regions of North Carolina and West Virginia.

At this time, we boast over 200 Member Farms, totaling over 500 individual members. Our members understand the importance and value of sheep and goats to the economic health of our communities and agricultural diversity of our communities, as well as our responsibility to educate the general public regarding issues related to farming, working with animals, and rural economic development.

Have Questions?  
Need Help? Have  
Ideas? Have a  
Reason to  
Celebrate and  
Want To Share It?  
**Talk to Us!**

**NRV Sheep and Goat Club**

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**Website:** [www.NRVsheepANDgoatClub.com](http://www.NRVsheepANDgoatClub.com)

*We are often contacted by reporters or groups who want to visit farms or local businesses. If you have a story to share and want some press, please let us know!*

