
VERMONT SHEEP & GOAT

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Lamb is not beef (so stop comparing them)

By Mary Lake, VSGA President and Newsletter Editor

Before VSGA, before sheep, before butchering, conference season was not a thing for me. I was not aware of the joys and anxiety of agricultural meetings.

At farming conferences, I sometime wonder, "Whose idea was this? Putting a crowd of cabin-fevered agrarians in a room, at least two hours away from their animals and barns and asking them to think about all the work that needs to be done once it thaws is just crazy."

Other times, I find myself smiling and thinking, "I love Vermont. I love working. Sheep are great! And, I'm really going to do it right this year."

Over the weekend I was a presenter with the Royal Butcher and Maple Wind Farm at the NOFA Direct Marketing Conference. We were talking about meat marketing, and a sheep producer asked if the future looked profitable for lamb and chevon producers. "Will our profit margins improve? Should we continue raising sheep and goats?"

I spend a lot of time thinking and talking about this, mainly because I talk to a lot of beef producers who wonder why anyone would raise lamb. I've often heard: Sheep are delicate, hard to contain creatures, and they don't taste very good. But, I think we raise sheep because they offer more than meat. There's wool and pelts and milk and lanolin, but there is also pasture reclamation and rare breed preservation and cultural tradition. Not to mention pure joy.

Working with fellow VSGA members has taught me there is no one-way of making a profit from raising sheep and goats. The more producers I meet, the more I realize the possibilities are endless and the animals bring value and profit to the producer through varying means. Identifying that value and putting an

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The Vermont Sheep & Goat Association Newsletter is edited by Mary Lake (mary.m.lake@gmail.com, (802) 338-2250), and is a venue for sharing stories, images and reports related to sheep and goats. If you enjoy writing, reporting or photography and have content of your own or are looking for an assignment, contact Mary. Send submissions, comments or questions to the e-mail above.

HEALTH

Lambs select tannins and alfalfa, Parasite egg counts decrease Coincidence? Science thinks not

Research shows given nutrition-rich feed, sheep will select what makes them feel better

By Mary Lake, Newsletter Editor

The following article was posted on the Utah State University Cooperative Extension Web site last year and sent to me by a friend. We thought it would be a great topic for local shepherds. I sent the article along to a few experts in our sheep and goat community and they offered their thoughts and suggestions to Vermont livestock and grass farmers.

Sheep select diets to control parasites

Tannins are secondary compounds produced by plants. Tannins reduce forage intake and protein digestibility but at the correct dose they may benefit ruminants by reducing the number of internal parasites. Most shrubs contain tannins as do sudangrass, birdsfoot and big trefoil, sorghum, sulla, sainfoin, and sericea lespedeza.

USU research assistant professor, Juan Villalba, and graduate student, Larry Lisonbee were curious if sheep infested with high levels of internal parasites would prefer to eat foods containing tannins when compared to sheep with low levels of internal parasites.

In the first study, lambs infested with parasites ate more of a supplement that contained tannins than lambs with low levels of parasites. This behavior continued as long as parasite levels in the infested lambs remained

high. As the trial progressed, differences between groups became smaller and disappeared near the end of the study as parasite numbers in infested sheep declined.

During the second study, two groups of lambs with and without internal parasites were offered an alfalfa/tannin mixture. Intake and preference for the alfalfa/tannin mixture were not different between groups at the beginning of the trial or when parasite levels were low in both groups. When lambs were infested with parasites, they had a higher preference for, and ate more alfalfa/tannin than lambs with low parasites levels. When lambs infested with parasites ate the alfalfa/tannin mixture their fecal egg counts (a measure of parasite infestation) also decreased. There was a direct relationship between the amount of alfalfa/tannin eaten and the decline in fecal egg counts.

These studies suggest: 1) lambs can detect internal parasite infestations, 2) they can learn about the relationship between the flavor of tannin and relief from internal parasites and 3) tannins can reduce parasite levels.

Utah State University Cooperative Extension Web site: <https://extension.usu.edu/behavior/htm/current-projects/pasture-project/controlling-parasites>

Vermont's take

Alison Cornwall of Williamstown, VT, is a mobile large animal veterinarian servicing central Vermont. She grew up working with horses and raising



Image from DarvillsRarePrints.com.

An illustration of Birdsfoot Trefoil by Frederick Edward Hulme.

sheep and goats in North Carolina. Her husband, a Vermonter, introduced her to this state and she has been working here as a vet since 2007. In an e-mail to me in early January, she wrote, "Tannins in feedstuffs for ruminants is a fascinating and incompletely understood topic."

I'll paraphrase the girth of her e-mail: Tannins are a promising addition to the list of natural alternatives to deworming with chemical dewormers. Diatomaceous earth, wormwood, garlic and/or onion compounds, nematode-trapping fungus, and copper wires are the most common, and are effective, but do have down sides or risks. Diatomaceous earth can cause respiratory irritation, wormwood decreases milk production and can be toxic, and garlic and onion compounds kill parasites, but only at doses high enough to cause red blood cell damage. Nematode

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trapping fungus is safe and effective

because it interrupts the lifecycle of nematodes including the barber pole worm, but it is hard to come by. Copper wires work well in other species, but it is toxic for sheep and because of that it can be considered an unsafe parasite control method.

The USU study shows tannins are effective, but further research may find that general weight gain from a tannin-rich diet may jeopardize the overall health of the animal and their ability to reduce worm egg shedding rates.

She continues: "Generally, tannins are compounds that bind with proteins in legumes and render the feeds less digestible and less palatable when present in high concentrations. In lower concentrations, they prevent bloat and help protein digestion by the rumen. Some types of tannins are known to be toxic to ruminants. In my opinion, we do not yet have enough data to effectively manipulate the tannin content of feeds for parasite control."

Dr. Cornwall suggests offering a tannin-rich legume in conjunction with other high-quality hay and feeds to create an excellent adjunct to parasite control plans. She encourages: FAMACHA and regular fecal parasite egg testing, proper pasture rotation, low pasture stocking rates, selecting for naturally parasite-resistant animals, and use of nematode trapping fungus if possible.

Dan Hudson of University of Vermont Extension is a grass expert, an agronomist and nutrient management specialist. Hudson grew up on a birdsfoot trefoil seed production farm and leads many presentations on grazing and how to reclaim pastures.

"As far as I know birdsfoot trefoil is the main common source of tannins

available to grazing animals in northern states, and it is not extremely common in grazing systems. The reason I think it is not as common as it otherwise might be is that the seed is expensive, slower to establish than clovers, and intolerant of continuous grazing ... If a person wants to have pastures with a lot of trefoil, they will have to manage it with trefoil in mind. That means higher grazing heights and paying close attention to how well it is recovering between grazing events," he wrote. Hudson also mentioned grape leaves as possibly having tannins, and that integrating sheep into vineyards is being tried in some places.

I asked Hudson why mixing tannins with alfalfa was effective. What is it about alfalfa that is so appealing to animals and why does it supposedly help parasitic animals? Hudson responded: "Well managed alfalfa is high in protein, has good energy values, thrives in higher temperatures, and is highly palatable to ruminant animals. As with people, I think that 'flavor' to grazing animals includes much more than what their taste buds are in contact with ... it seems to me that once animals associate positive physiological responses with particular plants, they 'like' that plant at some level and learn to eat it in proportion to the amount that they find beneficial, assuming it is available at that level."

"Lousy pastures will reduce animal performance," Hudson continues. "Pasture renovation is very important, especially in Vermont, but farmers need to understand which approaches are likely to be most cost-effective in their particular situation. In general, addressing soil fertility problems is a higher priority than over-seeding. As the soil fertility is being corrected farmers should take notes about what is growing in their pasture compared to what they want."

Dr. Alison Cornwall's general chemical dewormer overview:

Always, work with your vet to devise a parasite control program that is best for your flock or herd.

- **Safeguard** and **Moxidectin** are easier on pastures than **Ivermectin**, which kills dung beetles.
- **Ivermectin** is great to use to clean your animals up after a hard frost, and Safeguard is nice in the spring to interrupt pasture contamination.
- **Moxidectin** should be reserved for serious worm problems.

FAMACHA is a scoring system used to determine an animal's level of parasite infection. It scores the color of the animal's eyelids to determine anemia, which is an indicator of parasite infection. Using this system, you can selectively deworm infected animals and prevent chemical dewormer resistance.

He concludes that alfalfa is not the best legume to use in pasture renovation because it is not very shade tolerant. "Red clover is probably about the most shade tolerant and most common legume I have seen used in pasture improvement."

Hudson is in the process of offering more for farmers related to this topic and will keep in contact with VSGA when those resources become available.

Both Hudson and Dr. Cornwall are great resources for improving your farm's parasite management program. For further questions or more information contact:

Dan Hudson: (802) 751-8307 ext.356, Daniel.Hudson@uvm.edu, or **Alison Cornwall:** (802) 505-9639, alisoncornwall@gmail.com, alisoncornwalldvm.com.

FARM PROFILE



Small border farm has big reach

By Katie Sullivan
Sheep and Pickle Farm, Brookfield

Willowbend Farm

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Photo submitted by Willowbend Farm

If the quandary for Vermont sheep and goat farmers is "how do we make a living with our tiny flock/herd out here in the wilderness with no one dropping by," let the lessons of Jack and Mary Ellen Friedman of Willowbend Farm offer some kernels of wisdom.

Way up in Island Pond, the Friedmans manage a small flock of natural-colored and white Cormo and Cormo Cross sheep. What started as a daughter's 4H project predictably grew into a love affair with the wool Jack describes as "buttery soft." The Friedmans now have nine sheep primarily for fiber. The sheep graze rotationally on a small acreage and are presently reclaiming three acres of overgrown land, limiting the possibilities for the size of the flock.

While restricted flock size and the remoteness of Island Pond might seem like a marketing disadvantage, the Friedmans live directly on Route 105, a main route into town. They are able to take advantage of the summer tourist traffic by opening their micro store, operated on their property out of a tiny and tidy shed built from their own trees. A sign directs traffic to park in the driveway. On pleasant days, Mary Ellen sets up a pop up tent and spins on her spinning wheel, attracting plenty of attention and business from passers-by. The sheep are visible right from the road, a nice bonus for visitors who've never met a sheep up close before. Visitors also find Willowbend through well-placed ads with Northeast

Kingdom Travel and Tourism as well as the annual Farm to Yarn tour.

Inside the micro-store, visitors find skeins of soft Cormo roving and yarn processed and spun at Hampton Fiber Mill in Richmond Vermont. Visitors enjoy trying samples of Willowbend Farm's Natural Lanolin Handcream. Concocted with pure lanolin and essential oils, the hand cream transforms what usually treated as a waste product into a useful and practical product. The hand cream is available unscented, and with Lavender, Lemongrass or Natural Citrus essential oil scents.

Visitors who don't knit have the opportunity to buy some of Mary Ellen's knitted crafts. Committed to quality, Mary Ellen offers soft sweaters, socks, and traditional Thrum Mittens from the Canadian Maritime provinces. From just a hand-tracing pattern, Mary Ellen knits a standard mitten, and then incorporates "thrums" of unspun fiber which fill the inside of the mittens with puffy fleece. Over time, the fleece felts into a thick, lush lining that protects against the harshest Arctic blasts the Northeast Kingdom can dish out.

So the next time your up by the northern border, don't miss dropping by Willowbend Farm.

EDUCATION

Chet Parsons to lead master shepherd course

Classes to feature local farmers and livestock experts;
VSGA members receive registration discount

By Mary Lake, Newsletter Editor

As many members know, Chet Parsons' is a dear friend of the VSGA. He's a long-time member and was the UVM Extension Livestock Specialist for many years. He's a shearer and led the shearing schools co-sponsored by the VSGA and UVM. Now retired, Chet has designed a new project to keep him busy: A master shepherd course. And, for many members, this is like a dream come true.

The course will be a series of ten classes taught by Chet and Chet-approved guest teachers. The classes will take place at Chet's farm – Parsons' Farm in Richford, VT – and at the farms of a list of interesting and appropriate hosts.

Although the classes will cover the primary aspects of sheep husbandry, selected aspects of goat and camelid husbandry will also be discussed.

- Classes will be held on Sunday mornings from 9 to noon.
- Locations will vary based on the subject matter of the class.
- Course syllabus is available on the VSGA Web site: vtsheepandgoat.org.
- As class size will be limited to ensure quality of the class, pre-registration is necessary.
- One can register for individual classes or for the entire course.
- Individual registration is \$60 per class for VSGA members or \$75 per class for nonmembers. Registration for the entire course is \$500 and \$600, respectively.
- The registration form for the course is attached to the course syllabus on the VSGA Web site: vtsheepandgoat.org/2013/01/chet-parsons-vsga-offer-master-shepherd-course/

Here are two descriptions of classes in the Master Shepherd Course:

Fencing, All Aspects of Containing and Protecting

Date: July 14, 2013

Location: Woodbourne Farm, Woodsville, NH (across the Connecticut River from Wells River, VT)

Instructors: Chet Parsons and Tom Cope (Tom has been raising sheep and beef East of the Connecticut for many years. He has always used guard dogs to protect his sheep.)

- The psychology of keeping an animal contained.
 - Physical barrier vs Psychological barrier.
 - Training your animals to stay in.
- What fencing methods are available
 - Advantages of each
 - Disadvantages of each
 - How to construct them
- How to creating your own fencing reels.
- Dealing With Predators
 - Domestic Dogs
 - Wild Animals (Coyotes, Bears)
- Guard Animals
 - Llamas, Dogs, Donkeys
 - Pros and Cons of Each

Sheep and Goat Nutrition

Date: December 1, 2013

Location: Doolittle Farm, Shoreham, Vermont

Instructors: Chet Parsons and Bay Hammond (Bay has been raising animals and teaching Homeopathy for many years.)

- Sheep health and diseases
 - Emphasis on contagious diseases such as Contagious Foot Rot and Caseous Lymphadenitis (CL).
- How to keep diseases out of your flock.
- Homeopathy.
- Providing medical care for animals.
 - Vaccinations, injections, etc.
- Practical Health Care of Animals
 - Trimming feet and foot care, etc.

MEAT

Awfully Good Offal: Tips into the tasty world of organ meat

By Sarah Barron, Mossbank Farm, Woodbury

I was one of those children who liked to eat “weird things,” including kidneys, liver, heart, and tongue. My parents lived in France during the 1950s and had adapted a French attitude about organs, which put offal on equal footing with regular cuts of beef, chicken, lamb or pork. During this period much of America was moving away from these foods and concentrating on more expensive cuts as a sign of superior taste and refinement. Offal became a “weird,” lowly choice at the meat counter - something you would only buy under duress. With the increase in farmers’ markets and a growing interest in local food production it is now much easier to find interesting cuts of meat from a variety of local sources. For instance, Bambi Freeman of Sterling Brook Farm makes a superior meatloaf that incorporates lamb offal. It could serve as a great introduction for the unconvinced.

I admit I’m a big fan of offal and eat it regularly. I like using all the parts of an animal and organ meats are more nutritionally dense than the standard offerings. Heart is a great source of COQ10 and organs contain vitamins D, C, and essential fatty acids like EPA and DHA. Earlier in the fall I picked up a 40 lb. box of mixed organ meats (lamb, beef and pork) from Mary at the Royal Butcher and got to work! Here are a few general things I’ve learned about cooking with offal.

Liver (usually beef) is the one organ meat that you find in restaurants and diners across the country. The classic taste combination with bacon and onions is hard to beat. But, when it comes to texture watch out. “Shoe leather” is one way to describe it but even worse, in my mind, is the “mushy” inner part of a too thick slice of liver.

I prefer really thin slices of liver cooked at a fairly high heat so there is a bit of browning on the outside, but the pieces haven’t toughened up. Cook the liver in the pan after you’ve done the bacon and onions. Lamb liver is so small that it can be hard to slice without squashing it. A solution I use is to slice it very thin when it is partially frozen. This works well for beef and

pork liver too.

Both liver and kidney taste really nice with some spicy heat. The Teeny Tiny Spice Co. of Vermont makes a great Ras el Hanout mixture. Add the spice to the bacon fat once the slices are done. Cook the onions in the flavored fat and lastly the liver. Deviled kidneys call for chili pepper, heavy cream, garlic and red wine, as found in *The River Cottage Cookbook* by Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, pg. 361 - but you could make deviled liver as well. Lamb kidneys are considered the most tasty and delicate of all kidneys and again, I like to slice them very thin and cook quickly. Kidneys with mushrooms on toast make a great breakfast.

This year, I started cooking heart and tongue for the first time. The easiest way to incorporate these meats is to just add them to your regular stew recipes. Tongue should be cooked whole first until tender and then the rough skin can be peeled away. I’ve made some great stews from lamb heart and tongue in my slow cooker. Fennel, red cabbage, onion, thyme, seasonings and lamb shanks along with the organ meats cooked overnight in lamb broth was one great experiment. Basically the meat is dense and tender if cooked slowly with low heat. Heart and tongue are muscles so if you expose it them to high heat they will get bouncy and tough. The flavors of red wine and thyme go well with both of these meats.

Tacos de lengua are traditionally made with beef tongue, but I’m planning on trying this classic Mexican dish with lamb. The tongue is braised in liquid with onions, lots of garlic, bay leaf and pepper. Once it’s cooked, the tongue is peeled and sliced. After the slices are browned in a pan, they are chopped and served in tortillas with salsa verde, avocado, cilantro and red onion.

Of course, the Internet is a huge resource for specific recipes, but I hope these general ideas may inspire a foray into the tasty world of underused organ meats.

FIBER

Festival committee taking proposals for 25th anniversary special events

By Jane Woodhouse, Brigid's Farm, Peacham

This next fall will celebrate the 25th year of the Vermont Sheep and Wool Festival. The dates for this year's festival are September 28 and 29 at the Tunbridge Fairgrounds in Tunbridge, Vermont.

As always, the festival will offer a showcase of farms and vendors from around the state and extending region. Many of these farms sell strictly through sheep and other fiber shows. They are small and local in character and offer an opportunity to buy limited edition fibers and yarns as well as finished products, supplies and equipment.

The festival committee hopes to be able to offer some new events or special events for this coming festival, in particular to honor our 25th year. We will entertain proposals for shows, demonstrations and workshops. The venue lends itself to a variety of activities but we may need volunteers to host an event. If you or your group have an idea please contact me, vtsheepandwool@fairpoint.net with a description of your idea. If we can make it work and it fits the character of the festival we will work with you to bring it to the festival.

I am currently looking into a Sheep-to-Shawl contest for Sunday at the festival. This has not happened in a long time and my last recollection of this contest was in Burke in the early 80's when a small festival took place every May. Some of you may remember it. Typically the festival hosted 3 or 4 teams in the sheep barn that provided some entertaining fiber processing and shawl construction. There was a story that floated around about an earlier (to my participation) team of women who sat in a circle with circular knitting needles pointed left and right knitting a circular shawl- 4 knitters at once- that grew quickly. I have never figured out the technical aspects of this shawl but perhaps this will inspire some of you or your friends to consider entering a team.

I will keep VSGA members updated on progress for the festival through the newsletter, listserv and postings on the website. We will be looking for volunteers for 2 or 3 hour shifts to work the gate, sell T-shirts and park cars. We hope to cut back on the paid parking staff and instead donate some money back to VSGA. So I hope you will consider joining us next year. Volunteers receive a free pass to the festival.

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FEATURE

VT goat meat market looks to grow, findings show it is possible

By Shirley Richardson, Tannery Farm Cashmeres, Danville

On November 27, 2012, Vermont Chevon along with co-sponsors (VT Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets, Farm Viability Program, Farm to Plate, Newport Fresh by Nature, Northeastern Vermont Development Association, and the Center for an Agricultural Economy) held the first *No Kid Left Behind* Symposium. Paul Costello, executive director of the Vermont Council on Rural Development, moderated the symposium which brought together producers, processors, Vermont's congressional delegation, marketers, chefs, and consumers to talk about how to create a new market for the large number of kid goats from the state's growing dairy farms.

The gathering drew about 40 attendees from Vermont, Maine, New Hampshire, and New York. The morning agenda featured speaker's from every step along the production chain: On the Farm, Growing, Processing & Distribution, and Marketing to assess the current state of the industry and engage in a discussion about how to turn the current marginal industry into a viable and sustainable goat-meat industry.

State of the Industry

Goat is the most widely-consumed meat in the world, making up nearly 70 percent of the red meat eaten worldwide. In the U.S. alone, the number of goats slaughtered for food has doubled every ten years for the past three decades, and in 2011 Americans were consuming about one million goats per year. Goat has also become an attractive, healthy meat option for those concerned about the obesity epidemic this country faces. It has 50 percent fewer fat calories than beef, pork or lamb and even less fat than chicken. Goat production also provides an ecologically-sound form of vegetation and pest control.

In Vermont alone, the goat industry has grown, adding 167 goat farms since 2007. Today there are 421 statewide. One unfortunate side effect of all of this good news is the 6,800 male and female kids that are a by-product of dairying. Each year, about 80% of the annual crop of kids born in Vermont is sold as a commodity product at birth or raised through the fall and sold at 50 to 70 pounds. Shirley Richardson and

Jan Westervelt of Vermont Chevon have asked the question: Can these goats become a more viable part of the dairy goat economy if they are raised for value-added meat? At present, the answer is *no*, but it does not have to be.

The *No Kid Left Behind* Symposium participants talked about the many hurdles to overcome. In the case of raising dairy goats for meat, the animals' small size makes transportation and processing costs essentially fixed. Thus, the scale of the system becomes even more of a critical factor in determining profitability.

The Meat-Goat Production Chain

On the Farm

Rene De Leeuw, manager of Ayers Brook Goat Dairy in Randolph, led the On the Farm discussion. This session addressed the myriad of issues that dairy-goat farmers face on a daily basis on the farm, including crossbreeding and breeding out of season, artificial insemination, meningeal and barber's pole worm, biosecurity and fecal testing.

Conclusion: a year-round, steady supply of goats is possible

Growing

Leonard Bull, PhD and Professional Animal Scientist, led the Growing discussion. Dr. Bull honed in on the specific factors that can affect the growth of a healthy goat herd. This session focused on the following issues related to growing: feeding the goats, silage and hay needs for growth, goat-grade examples, use of whey, vitamins and minerals and carcass traits.

Conclusion: Raising goats to a market weight of 110 pounds is possible

Processing & Distribution

Sean Buchanan, Business Development Manager for Black River Produce and former executive chef, led the discussions on processing and distribution. This discussion included the following key processes: transportation from farm to slaughter,

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transportation to the customer, space and time for slaughter of small ruminants in Vermont's existing processing facilities, cost of processing and storage.

Conclusion: Meat processing systems are in place and need to be efficiently utilized

Marketing

Nicole L'Huillier Fenton and Steve Redmond, co-founders of Skillet Design & Marketing, led the marketing discussion. The pair focused on the use of branding principles to dissect the strength of a chevon-industry concept and its introduction to the consumer. Although goat meat is the most widely-consumed meat in the world, it is in the early stages of market development in the United States. The challenge facing goat-meat producers is how to brand and market chevon as a high-quality, high-value product.

Conclusion: Taking advantage of the growing market is a viable possibility

Vermont Chevon's Transitional Vision

New goat farms needed

Richardson put out a call out for farmers to consider operating a "finishing school" with Vermont Chevon. In order to assure a chef or consumer of a consistent quality and size of animals, and a reliable, year-round supply, Richardson reports that, "Vermont Chevon will support the producer by providing a set of standards and protocols for raising the goats, maintain contact through regular visits, and sponsor training events on specific issues related to growing. There's a lot of opportunity here."

The Burlington Free Press reports from the symposium that "Westervelt and Richardson have concluded that a new type of farm is needed to maximize the goat meat opportunity, what they are calling 'finishing schools for kids'."

2013 UPDATE

Last year the VSGA Newsletter ran an article about the Vermont Goat Collaborative and their work to investigate how to replace imported goat meat with local goat meat for Vermont's growing New American and culturally diverse population. Several members of the VSGA offered their expertise and time as mentors for refugees interested in learning and sharing about goat production. Here's an update on the project and some more opportunities to become involved.

Vermont Goat Collaborative Update

By Karen Freudenberger, Vermont Goat Collaborative

Dear Friends and Collaborators,

We are writing to you because you have helped us develop our project, or expressed interest in its progress in the nearly 2 years since a small group first met to begin brainstorming the idea. As you know, we have been researching and designing a project to support New Americans to raise goat meat in greater Burlington, with the objective of eventually replacing the approximately 100,000 lbs of imported Australian goat meat that is sold each year in the ethnic markets of Burlington and Winooski. In planning this project we have had generous help from over 130 people who have contributed ideas and valuable knowledge, as well as organizations who have agreed to fund the start-up costs and provide land for the pilot project.

It is with enormous pleasure that I can report that we are on the cusp of implementing the pilot project. Thanks to a fruitful collaboration with the Vermont Land Trust, we have access to a farm in Colchester, just a few miles from downtown Winooski where many New Americans live. Chuda Dhaurali and Tika Dulal are experienced goat raisers from Bhutan/Nepal. They, with their extended families, will be the goat raisers for the pilot project. Chuda spent an enriching week at Fat Toad Farm in August, learning more about agriculture and goat raising in the U.S. while perfecting his mastery of electric fences and helping Steve Reid master the preparation of succulent goat curry. Chuda and Tika are excited about moving to the farm in the next few weeks and will begin raising bucklings supplied by Fat Toad and other local goat dairy farms in March. We expect to raise between 50 and 100 goats in this year's pilot project. The plan is to fatten the bucklings and sell them to (primarily) New American consumers this coming fall. The financial viability of the operation depends on having a custom exempt

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slaughter facility at the farm where buyers will be able to slaughter the animals on-site at a facility that is fully compliant with Vermont regulations.

The New England Grassroots Fund and Green Mountain Coffee roasters are helping to cover the start-up costs for the pilot operation. (We are still trying to raise the funds needed to have an operational slaughter facility in place at the farm by October of this year.) Once the goat business is established, it is expected to cover its own operational costs and become a sustainable business that provides supplemental income to participant families. At the same time New American families, for whom goat is a staple foodstuff, will have access to fresh locally produced meat, slaughtered and butchered in accordance with their own cultural traditions. And, in the pilot project alone, we expect to save nearly a million goat miles traveled by replacing Australian frozen meat with Vermont Goat Collaborative animals.

We are working closely with the Association of Africans Living in Vermont (AALV), our “institutional home,” on this initiative and hoping that eventually the Farm will house not only the Goat Collaborative, but also AALV’s ongoing New Farms for New Americans program. Our dream is that, in five years, the Farm will also offer an inter-cultural gathering place where New Americans can connect to the rural Vermont landscape while maintaining and sharing their important cultural traditions. And, of course, we will continue to work towards the goal of replacing *all* the 3,000 Australian goats now imported annually with

Vermont raised goats in a way that strengthens Vermont’s economy while building bridges between old and new Vermonters over shared values such as self-sufficiency, preference for fresh local foods, and maintenance of the working landscape.

We have been able to develop this project on a shoe string budget thanks to the pro bono contributions of a myriad of collaborators. We could not possibly have gotten this far without your help and we hope that we can continue to count on your collaboration as we move forward. In the next several months here are some of the specific ways we could use your help. Please let us know if you can lend a hand on any of these, or know someone who could:

- Legal advice regarding contracts, liability issues, etc.
- Technical advice in designing and making site drawings for the slaughter facility (including plumbing/drainage issues)
- Introduction to farmers who might wish to contribute bucklings to the start-up operation
- Technical assistance in purchasing a used pick-up truck and other farm equipment
- Introductions to donors who would be interested in completing funding of the slaughter facility

Many thanks for all you have done to bring this project this far. We hope to see you at the farm at some point this summer or fall, perhaps for an autumn goat roast party!

Karen Freudenberger, on behalf of the Vermont Goat Collaborative, freudenberger@burlingtontelecom.net

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

It’s time to renew your membership for 2013!

We all benefit from the VSGA, and the organization is growing stronger by the day. I hope you will take a minute to renew and continue to support the VSGA. This organization is here to connect you and support you, and the updated Web site is doing a great job at just that. Review your

farm profile on our Web site and let me know if you have any updates, corrections or additions.
– Mary Lake

mary.m.lake@gmail.com, (802) 338-2250

Fill out the membership form enclosed or renew online at vtsheepandgoat.org/join-us/ and pass your membership application on to a small-ruminant-loving friend.

CALENDAR

January 29, 30 & 31

Vermont Farm Show
Exhibitors and product contests make this event really fun and interesting for producers and consumers. Check out the latest technology in farming, visit with state departments and organizations dedicated to supporting agriculture, find inspiration for your operation in the new year.

Location: Champlain Valley Fairgrounds, Essex, VT.
Contact: www.vtfarmshow.com

February 15 - 17

NOFA-VT Winter Conference: Generations of Innovation
Featuring over 70 workshops, TED-inspired talks, intensive seminars, and celebration for commercial growers, gardeners, homesteaders and organic eaters.

Location: UVM Campus, Burlington, VT
Contact: info@nofavt.org, (802) 434-4122, www.nofavt.org

February 12

Filing a Schedule F: Tax Preparation for Farmers Webinar
Time: 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Location: Online
Plan to join the webinar about 15 minutes before it begins.
Visit: www.uvm.edu/newfarmer/?Page=webinars/upcoming_webinars.php&SM=webinars/sub-menu.html and click on the webinar title to join.

mer/?Page=webinars/upcoming_webinars.php&SM=webinars/sub-menu.html and click on the webinar title to join.

March 14 - 15

Developing a HACCP Program for Small-Scale Cheesemakers
This two-day workshop provides training in food safety for commercial cheesemakers. Utilizing Peter Dixon's HACCP-Based Program Manual, this class will prepare participants to design and implement a HACCP program appropriate for small-scale artisan cheese-making operations. This workshop will be held in Westminster, Vermont.
Contact: Peter or Rachel at (802) 387-4041 or westminsterartisan@gmail.com

March 22

New England Meat Conference and Meat Ball
Time: 8:00 am to 4:00pm
The goal of the New England Meat Conference is to enhance the production, processing, and marketing of sustainable, nutritious, humanely-raised, and delicious meat from New England farms by providing educational and networking opportunities for meat producers, processors and consumers.
Location: Grappone Conference Center, Concord, NH
Contact: www.newenglandmeatconference.org/

[home.html](#)

March 26

Starting a Commercial Goat Dairy Webinar

Time: 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm

Location: Online

Presented by Carol Delaney, author of The Guide to Starting a Commercial Goat Dairy. Plan to join the webinar about 15 minutes before it begins.

Visit: www.uvm.edu/newfarmer/?Page=webinars/upcoming_webinars.php&SM=webinars/sub-menu.html and click on the webinar title to join.

April 20 & May 4

VSGA Shearing Schools
Taught by Vermont's own shearers. The class will be offered from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Shelburne Farms, Shelburne, on April 20 and the Windham Foundation, Grafton, on May 4
Contact: Jim McRae, (802) 483-2463, vtshearer@yahoo.com

April 28 - May 10

Farm Design: Creating Working Buildings and Landscapes
Location: Yestermorrow Design/Build School, 7865 Main Street, Waitsfield, VT, 05674
Contact: Abby Martin, outreach@yestermorrow.org, (802) 496-5545, www.yestermorrow.org/workshops

From Page 1 appropriate price on it is difficult, but crucial. In Vermont, increasing your prices often means asking your neighbors to give you more, even though what they will be getting in return is the same product you've given them for the last 10 or 30 or 50 years. How do we as producers do this with confidence and professionalism?

Producer organizations – like the Vermont Sheep and Goat Association – exist to help in situations like these. Mainly they help by giving a list of fellow producers and industry experts you can talk to, but they also sponsor and run conferences, workshops and courses. This year, the VSGA is sponsoring or hosting several events designed to educate, inspire and benefit sheep and goat producers. On Page 5, you'll read about Chet Parsons' Master Shepherd Course, a 10-class series on all the major aspects of managing sheep and goats. On Page 11, you'll see a calendar listing for two shearing schools this spring. And, on Page 7, Jane Woodhouse gives a preview of

the Sheep & Wool Festival, an annual event that showcases many Vermont fiber producers. The VSGA also hopes to play a role in the emerging local goat meat market and "finishing schools for kids" as described on Page 8.

The VSGA is a great community of sheep and goat producers and I hope you all take a minute to renew your membership. Since the new Web site went up last spring, the organization has grown a lot. Members who had lost touch renewed and new shepherds and goatherds found the organization for the first time. There are still many sheep and goat farms throughout the state that are not members and could benefit from the VSGA's Web site and support. My hope is to reach out to them in the next few years so the VSGA can become an even better representation of our state's sheep and goat producers.

Vermont Sheep & Goat Association

P.O. Box 420
South Royalton, Vermont 05068