

VERMONT SHEEP & GOAT

FROM THE EDITOR

New American advocate leaves lasting legacy

By Mary Lake, Tunbridge, VT

I met Karen six or seven years ago. I was working at the Royal Butcher and learning and writing about humane slaughter. She asked me to be part of a group of “experts” to help figure out a way to make slaughtering and acquiring goats more accessible for Vermont’s refugee community, Vermont’s New Americans.

This was one of those moments that made me feel honored, inspired and so thankful to be a Vermonter and part of this amazing sheep and goat community. I felt a bit of relief, too, because I was meeting someone who thinks about the same things I think are important, and she was motivated to do something about it.

I only attended a couple meetings with Karen, but we wrote back and forth swapping news and questions. Her project came to life and grew to great success.

Karen started Pine Island Community Farm, a 230-acre piece of Colchester where New Americans raise goats, chickens and bees and grow vegetables. Seven Days reported that more than 60 families have gardens there. The farm also has its own state-inspected slaughter facility. The New American farmers take in bucklings and retired layer hens and fatten them to become food. What they don’t consume



themselves, they can sell to the public.

Throughout the process of the eventual creation and founding of the farm, I watched Karen steadily attain a goal that many would have abandoned.

Karen Freudenberger died of heart failure on December 1, 2016. She was 60 years old.

I didn’t know her well, but she was the type of person that was like an old friend to talk to whenever you saw her. And, just knowing she was in our community doing the work she was doing, always brought me comfort.

I’m most inspired by her humbleness, determination, and strength. Her words are ones that come back to me every once in awhile because they had an impact. Those words challenge me and encourage me as a community leader and as a mother. I’m really thankful I knew her and got to work with her even though it was just in a small way.

If you didn’t know her, or you’d like to read more about her, visit the Pine Island

Community Web site, pineislandfarmvt.com, and read her obituary which ran in the December 21-28 issue of Seven Days. You can also read the obituary online at sevendaysvt.com.

I want to reprint here the second to last paragraph of that obituary because I found it moving, and while I’m mourning her loss, her own words comfort and encourage me once more.

“Karen succinctly described her lifetime devotion to improving people’s lives in a speech she gave in Burlington just days before her death at the Vermont World Affairs Council: ‘The idea, so very simple in theory, but so infinitely complex in practice is that people working together, wherever and whoever they are, can make good things happen. Fixing up trains, building composting latrine toilets, setting up goat farms ... it’s really all the same. People need to decide that they want to do something, join forces, vanquish the naysayers, and get to work.’”

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MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Renew online or fill out this form and return at the annual meeting on Feb. 2 from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in the Miller Room North at the Vermont Farm Show in Essex Junction, VT. RSVP for a free lunch to bayhammond@gmail.com
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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.

COMMUNITY

Farm Show supports VTC, UVM farm program

Charlotte student shows special interest in sheep and goats

Dave Martin

Settlement Farm, Underhill, VT

On October 27, I attended the Scholarship Recognition Ceremony at Vermont Technical College in Randolph. I was there because I am president of the Vermont Farm Show and the Farm Show had just made a commitment of \$10,000 a year for the next four years to the 2+2 Farms Program at VTC and UVM. This scholarship enables students to earn a two-year degree in Dairy Farm Management at VTC and then a Bachelor of Science degree from UVM in Animal Science or Community Entrepreneurship.

Among the dozen students at the table with me was Lydia Smith. Lydia's parents are Tom and Nancy Smith from Vinegar Ridge Farm in Charlotte. The other students were primarily from a dairy background, but Lydia is a sheep person. We had a great conversation. I asked Lydia to write a few words about herself, her experience at VTC, and her plans for the future. This is what she wrote:

"I started at Vermont Tech last year as a VAST student, a combination senior year of high school and freshman year of college program that VTC offers. I majored in Agribusiness to expand my business experience. I had heard about the 2+2 Program through my classmates,



LEFT: Dave Martin (kneeling, bottom right) and students at the Scholarship Recognition ceremony at VTC in October. RIGHT: 2+2 Farms Program student Lydia Smith of Charlotte shows one of her sheep.



Photos courtesy of the author and Lydia Smith

but thought it was only for Dairy Farm Management majors. After I completed the first semester, my advisor did some research and recommended that I apply, as I did in fact meet the requirements and that there was one additional scholarship left. I was accepted into the 2+2 Program in January of 2016. I have one semester left at VTC before I head to UVM in the fall of 2017. I intend to pursue the Community Development Applied Economic major while minoring in Animal Science when I get there.

"I currently have a small flock (~30) of Border Leicesters and Lincolns mixed with the family flock. I show my flock at local and regional fairs during the summer, with a respectable amount of success. The highlight of this summer was winning Supreme Champion Ram at the Champlain Valley Exposition with a homebred ram. My goal is to continue expanding and improving my existing flock. After graduating, I hope to continue with my base flock while integrating mobile grazing. I currently shear local pet flocks and would like to continue to do so. My ideal farm also includes small herds of dairy goats, meat goats, and beef cattle."

I am confident that Lydia will continue to make contributions to the sheep industry in Vermont. If you would like more info about the 2+2 Farms Program you can go to: <https://asci.uvm.edu/farms/>
<http://www.vtc.edu/scholarship/farms-2-2program>

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Join the board

If you are interested in joining the board, contact VSGA President Bay Hammond. Being on the board is a great way to support and lead our growing sheep and goat community.

FIBER

How to sell your wool

A series of articles exploring the ways to make money from your fleeces by **Jessica Dillner**, fiber artist and sheep and goat breeder, of Dillner Hillside Farm in Montgomery Center.

#5: Hides, Pelts, Skins

Sheepskins and goat hides are certainly one of the last “gifts” our animals leave us at the end of their lives. I feel they are a valuable resource that should be utilized whenever possible. I have always enjoyed the warmth and beauty these hides offer. It is a way to have a “sheep or goat” in your home but it doesn’t act like one! I have often watched potential customers pet and hug the sheepskins I have for sale.

Hides are often a by-product of fall slaughter, and a farmer can maximize their pelt’s value by having a professional skin the animal to minimize cuts and tears. A skin that is removed without the use of a knife is best by either being “fisted” or pulled off. The farmer can also prepare in advance to harvest an animal at a particular fleece length. For example, my lambs are born in late Feb/March. They grow 6 months of wool by August, I shear them, then wait another 6-8 weeks for slaughter. I, then have, a nice lambswool fleece, a shearling lambskin and a carcass to sell. (Note: this really only works with longwool breeds.) Since I focus on raising angora goats, I pay special attention to growing and harvesting the best pelt possible if I decide that the animal needs to leave the farm. Angora hides can be exceptionally beautiful and very valuable. Angoras have very clean, nice fleeces in the summer and with at least 3 months growth of hair (summer harvest), the hide is very nice. A full 6 months long (during fall harvest) is ideal when the mohair is at its maximum length and beauty. Cashmere goats also have

nice hides especially when the cashmere fills in and makes it soft and fluffy. Dairy goats certainly have pretty skins too with their unique color patterns. The one time goat hides are not good to take is during their shedding time usually Jan – March. Angora goats don’t really shed but their hair growth can be funky that time of year.

Of course, sheep and goats die for other reasons besides “harvest” and it is still a valid consideration to save the hide. It may be that the meat is not usable, but the hide could be processed. I once had a one-week-old lamb die. As I performed my own autopsy on it to see why it had died, and I had most of the skin off. So I figured I would send it to be tanned. I received such a soft pretty little lambskin and decided it would be perfect to cut and sew, making baby booties. It was worth the few dollars I spent to have it tanned. Also, sometimes some of our special pet sheep or goats die unexpectedly and their hide saved is a lasting memory of our favorites.

The cost of preserving a skin and making it a usable resource is expensive, but I feel at least in a small farm practice, it is worth doing. Obviously, if you have a large sheep farm, it may not be feasible to save and process every hide but an effort to do the best ones is worth doing. Here is a sample breakdown of costs for 2 lambskins using Bucks County Fur Products.

1/2 hour trimming fresh hide of fat etc. in prep for drying
\$4 (4) containers of table salt
7 -14 days of drying time in a good place (I use my basement with a dehumidifier on)

½ hour to clean up salt mess and box hides to ship out
\$15 to ship hides out
\$100 to tan 2 hides
\$25 to ship home

So, in conclusion, with one hour of time and about \$140 invested, you have two nice sheepskins that could be sold for approximately \$150 each. Make note that prices of hides vary considerably based on size, color, type and length of wool and condition of the skin. In my experience, longwool breeds with their more open like wool and colored hides sell a bit better than just plain white meat type breeds. There are uses for all types of hides, you just need to be creative. Examples: Perfect sheep and goatskins make excellent living room accents on furniture or as rugs, shearling sheepskins are great for seat covers, on motorcycles, for the elderly, for pets. When hides come back less than perfect, don’t be afraid to cut and sew! I had a goat skin return with 2 bald spots. How could I sell that? Easy! I cut it and made 2 pillows, which sold for more than a whole hide would have. Bench covers, trim for clothing, stuffed animals ... there are many ideas out there!

Once you decide to invest in tanning your hides, research how best to prepare them. You can buy books on how to do it yourself or use a processing company. There are different methods using a variety of chemicals or not and some are certified organic.

Here is a short list:

Vermont Natural Sheepskins: 12

Prince Street #2c, Randolph, VT
05060, (802) 728-4433
vermontnaturalsheepkin.com

Bucks County Fur Products: 220 ½ N.

Ambler Street, Quakertown PA,
18951, (215) 536-6614
buckscountyfurproducts.com

Stern Tanning Company: 4010 W.

Douglas Ave., Milwaukee, WI, 53209
(877) 783-7682, sterntanning.com

CALENDAR

For further event details or to post your own event visit our Events page at vtsheepandgoat.org

January 31, February 1, 2

Vermont Farm Show: For agricultural professionals and rural homeowners, the Vermont Farm Show is still the best opportunity to meet with vendors, preview products and machinery, attend trade association meetings, seminars and network within the greater agricultural community all under the same roof. Tuesday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Wednesday 8:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., Thursday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Champlain Valley Fairgrounds, Essex Junction, VT.

February 18 – 20

NOFA-VT 35th Annual Winter Conference: Beyond Borders, Our Role in the Global Food Movement. Three days of workshops, speakers and activities related to farming and local food. To learn more visit www.nofavt.org/conference. Pre-registration costs \$70, \$85 per day, \$18 for lunch. \$10 additional each day for registering during the conference. Saturday 8 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., Sunday 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. UVM's Davis

Center, Burlington, VT.

February 22 – 23

Natural Dying With Natural Materials: Two-day intensive dye workshop using natural dye extracts. Students will produce approximately 80 color samples on wool or a wool/mohair blend yarn dying in a gradated series using 5 to 6 dye extracts to create a pallet of colors. Each student will receive a comprehensive dye notebook with workshop instructions as well as notes for working on your own to dye yarns. \$250. Vermont Tech Center, Randolph, VT. Contact Molly Willard, mollywillard@vtc.edu.

VSGA Annual Meeting

The annual meeting will be held at the Vermont Farm Show on Feb. 2 from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m in the Miller Room North (upstairs from the show entrance). Free lunch if you RSVP to bayhammond@gmail.com.

See you there!

Vermont Sheep & Goat Association

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