

## **MWGA Convention Provides a Wide Variety of Workshops along with Top Notch Keynote Speakers**

Sheep producers from across Montana, as well as attendees from Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Idaho, had the opportunity to hear from some of the best speakers in the business on a wide variety of topics.

Jon Arneson and Taylor Brown with the Voices of Montana kicked off the convention by interviewing President Dave McEwen, Public Affairs Director Jim Brown, MSU Sheep Extension Specialist Dr. Whit Stewart, and Angela sheep rancher Kacie Killen. Dave McEwen spoke on the state of the association and the challenges the sheep industry has been facing. Jim Brown spoke on the upcoming legislative session and the bills and policies that will affect MWGA. Dr. Whit Stewart spoke on the Next Generation Wool Grower Program and the events and activities that MSU Extension and MWGA have planned for the young sheep ranchers across the state. Kacie Killen, recipient of last year's scholarship trip to the ASI convention spoke on her experiences with the Next Generation Wool Grower Program and how to get involved in the association's activities. It is always a pleasure to have Voices of Montana kick off the convention.

Bridger Fuez, Livestock Marketing Specialist and Educator for the University of Wyoming Extension, provided the attendees with his insight on what the lamb market outlook looks like for the future. Rachel Endecott, MSU Beef Extension Specialist, explained the changes to the Veterinary Feed Directives and how that will affect sheep producers. It was great to have her on hand for producers to ask questions about the new rules.

US Senator Steve Daines attended the convention as the Friday lunch Keynote Speaker. He spoke about the surprising election results and the direction that he feels the country is headed in. He also reassured the Wool Growers that he has fought to keep the US Sheep Experiment Station open in Dubois, Idaho and he will continue to do so. We know that Senator Daines has a busy schedule so we were very happy that he fit us in and we look forward to meeting with him in March in Washington.

MSU Sheep Extension Specialist Dr. Whit Stewart, MSU Professor Dr. Tom Murphy, and MSU Extension agents Brent Roeder and Mike Schuldt provided a very interactive, hands-on workshop. Producers were able to get their hands on some ewes to adequately determine whether or not they should be culled based on reasons such as broken mouths or bad bags. Dave Scott with NCAT (National Center for Appropriate Technology) also taught the participants the "Cover, Push, Pull, Pop" procedure that is helpful in checking for parasite problems in their herd.

Jim Larson and Les Graham with the Montana Ag Safety Program talked about rule changes that might affect MWGA members. John Steuber with Wildlife Services, George Edwards with MT Livestock Loss Board, and Mike Honeycutt with the Board of Livestock all gave industry updates. Larry Prager with Center of the Nation Wool also provided an update on the wool outlook and trends.

Dr. Laurie Gaugler DVM was very informative in her talk about sheep protocols and the changes

to the veterinary feed directives. She also gave the producers a pop quiz which gave them the opportunity to get up and talk protocols with other producers.

Dr. Emily Almberg, Dr. Jennifer Ramsey, and John Vore, all of FWP, Dr. Maggie Highland with ARS, John Helle of Helle Livestock, and Brian Solan of the Montana Wild Sheep Foundation provided a panel type discussion on the Tendoy Mountain Big Horn Sheep depopulation. This conversation is just a small part of a bigger event that is being planned between FWP, MWGA, ASI, ARS, and the Montana Wild Sheep Foundation for February.

We had the pleasure of hearing from WAR editor Linda Grosskopf during the Saturday noon meal. Linda was definitely a crowd pleaser and had the whole room captivated by her wisdom and wit.

Steve Vantassel, Montana Department of Agriculture, talked about M-44's and the benefits of using them to protect your livestock from predators. He also addressed the safety concerns involved and was very informative on the procedures. Dr. Bret Taylor with the United States Sheep Experiment Station in Dubois Idaho gave a quick update to convention goers before the Annual Meeting.