



Post Office Box 1693
Helena, MT 59624
Phone (406) 442.1330
Fax (406) 449.8606
UPS Delivery: 7 Edwards St.



****PRESS RELEASE****

MONTANA WELL-REPRESENTED AT THE AMERICAN SHEEP INDUSTRY(ASI) CONVENTION IN ARIZONA

By Jesse Wallewein, Montana Wool Growers Association

Thirty-six sheep producers from across the state of Montana braved the sunshine and warm temps in Arizona to attend the national American Sheep Industry (ASI) Convention held in Scottsdale the last week of January. Under the convention theme of “The Strength of a Voice United”, the camaraderie was evident between lamb and wool producers from across the country, and with even a few attending from Australia and New Zealand.

Encouraging to the producers in attendance at the national convention was the announcement of an increase in sheep numbers nation-wide and a growing popularity of wool products amongst consumers. Excitement grew as the announcement of the 100-year Anniversary of the Dubois Idaho Sheep Experiment Station was also announced. Meetings held throughout the week gave producers a chance to discuss topics such as the new changes to the H2A shepherd rules, veterinary feed directives, retained COOL labeling for lamb, the new Working Dog Liability Insurance program, and the “Let’s Grow” grant funding program.

During the Industry Awards Luncheon, Betty Sampsel of Stanford, received recognition for her time spent on the American Lamb Board. Sampsel served on the Marketing Committee for 3 years and the Industry Outreach committee for 3 years, during which time her committee helped fund numerous grants to assist members of the industry introduce consumers to the health benefits of American lamb. Betty and her husband John, along with their son Jeff, raise cattle and sheep near Stanford on the ranch that has been in her family for 123 years. Also receiving recognition for their time spent on the American Lamb Board was Reed Anderson of Oregon, Dan Lippert of Minnesota, and Angelo Theos of Colorado.

With a growing focus on involving the next generation of sheep producers, the two-day Young Entrepreneur Program provided 39 attendees from 15 different states the opportunity to hear from industry leaders and guest speakers on topics ranging from nutrition to succession planning. Montana was well represented in this group, having sent 7 attendees to participate in the program with hopes of bringing back new ideas and excitement to the Montana Young Sheep Entrepreneur group. Henry and Sara Hollenbeck from Molt were tri-chairpersons of the ASI Young Entrepreneur committee and spent several months planning this program. Evan Helle of Dillon spoke to the participants about his family’s clothing company, Duckworth. Duckworth makes garments out of their super fine, home grown wool.

Those who attended the Industry-Wide Welcome Reception Friday night were able to sample lamb flavors from around the globe during the “Lamb-Jam”, an event sponsored by the American Lamb Board. The convention closed with the ever popular ‘Make It With Wool Banquet and Fashion Review’. Junior and senior contestants from around the country competed for the top prize. Representing Montana in the Junior Division was Annie Townsend of Fairfield and in the Senior Division was Jasmine Powell of Havre, who won the Creative Machine Embroidery Award. Congratulations, Jasmine!

It was an exciting week for producers as they caught up with old friends, made new ones, and held conversation about an industry they are passionate about. The 2017 National ASI Convention is slated to be held in the Mile-High City, Denver, Colorado.