



The ACRA Newsletter

The American Cotswold Record Association: Spring 2024

What's in the news?

- Maryland Sheep and Wool info - Cotswolds are the featured breed!
- The Great Sheep Adventure
- Thoughts from the board
- The new ACRA board
- Goals for the year
- Livestock Conservancy Grants
- Odds and ends

Maryland Sheep and Wool Show

The Cotswold sheep will be the featured breed this year! If you haven't made it to a sheep and wool show, this is a great one to attend.

May 4 and 5th at the Howard County Fairgrounds in West Friendship, MD

ACRA is sponsoring this year's featured breed and will have a display in the breed barn along with Cotswold sheep. Everyone bringing Cotswold sheep to the show is encouraged to make signs with information about our fantastic breed to hang by your sheep stalls.

ACRA is sponsoring the Best White Cotswold fleece, the Best Natural Colored Cotswold fleece and Overall Champion Cotswold Fleece. Entry forms must be received by April 25th to participate in the fleece competition. Register your fleece today! See the Maryland Sheep and Wool Show website for more information.

<https://sheepandwool.org/>



MD Sheep and Wool Cont.:

There are multiple classes for shepherds to take (see website) All Cotswold fans are invited to a social hour in the breed barn on Friday afternoon at 4:30pm. Come by and say hello! A big thank you to Sydell for sponsoring this event.

Can't make the show? Make sure to check out the article about Cotswold sheep: <https://sheepandwool.org/2024-featured-breed-cotswold/>

The Great Sheep Adventure

By Kay Lytle, Open Door Farm and Rare Fields Fiber

What was there to do on a bleak, boring winter day, but stir up some excitement? Always the moments I get myself into trouble! Next thing I know, I'm talking to Sue Kenworthy, a shepherdess I met several years ago. I decided this was the year to finally start expanding my farm business, Open Door Farm, and fiber business, Rare Fields Fiber.

The Kenworthys raise a rare line of Cotswold sheep. Actually, saying the Kenworthys raise Cotswold sheep is like saying Alaska has winter. They had the largest flock of Cotswolds registered by ACRA in the US. Naturally, when I learned they were retiring and only had a few sheep left for sale, I claimed them!

There's always time later to ask yourself "what have I gotten myself into?!"

Like... about here.

Talk about loaded down! That's hay wrapped and tied on the tailgate. The cab is full of bags of wool, bales of hay, Mr. Sloan, my English Shepherd, and all of our travel paraphernalia. Somehow I managed to squeeze in behind the wheel. Possibilities are on the horizon now!





(The Great Sheep Adventure cont.)

Mr. Sloan watching his sheep on the road.

The plan was to have professional haulers bring the Cotswold sheep down. They were scheduled, but the day came and went without a peep. The haulers never showed up. They didn't pick up the Cotswolds or return any of my calls. Time was of the essence, because Oklahoma summer heat would be kicking in soon. Since the sheep were coming from Wisconsin, they needed to get down here ASAP to adjust to our environment before the blazing heat set in.

No one else was available for that route, so the plan changed at the last minute. I drove from Oklahoma to Wisconsin in early May to get 6 Cotswold ewes and 1 ram. All I had was my livestock hauler in the bed. The hardest part was getting the sheep up in it. Thankfully the Kenworthys were able to do the heavy lifting – literally! Each sheep had to be lifted up onto the tailgate. We used a cut down cattle panel inside to separate the ram from the ewes.

The sheep sure thought I was a scary creature. It's no wonder. After traveling for two days and loading in rain and wind, I'm sure I was a sight! And nervous? Oh boy. It had been many years since I had sheep. Would I remember what to do and how to do it? Would I be able to cut it as a shepherdess? I'm no spring chicken anymore.

The water buckets were tied on with orange baling twine. You can see the tail of one hanging in some of the pictures. I was very careful to not leave any loops that a head or leg could get through. Only a straight line of twine for each bucket. I also tied a hay bag in each corner, again making sure there was no material forming any loop that would be a hazard. However, I took the hay bags out on the way home. They flopped in the wind and spooked the sheep who weren't used to hay bags.

Well, here we go! No turning back now. It rained without let up through 3 states. As the miles went by and we were into the afternoon, I started looking for a campground for the night. The plan was to get a cabin so the sheep would be right outside the door. It's too early for vacation campers, so there should be plenty of cabins available. Ah, the plans of mice and men! There *were*'t any cabins available. Seems I underestimated our fellow American's hunger for camping.

After driving long into the night, I finally ended up catching a few hours of sleep at a truck stop, lined up between semis. Since Mr. Sloan and I were sharing the front seat for the night, there wasn't any room to stretch out to sleep. It's a miracle no one thought I had expired. Slumping over the steering wheel isn't very restful.



After dozing for 3 hours, I decided we were just wasting time. So we headed back out on the road once more, barely ahead of another storm blowing in.

If I ever make a trip like this again, I will be taking 10 gallon buckets of water with lids. It was a huge problem getting water on the road. I'm used to rest stops that have a water pump available. However, most of the rest stops and truck stops I tried through IA and KS didn't have an outside water source, or one that was working. ACK! I made many, many trips back and forth from restroom sinks with a quart sized dog bucket to refill the sheep buckets on the way home. Note to self: don't forget the extra bucket next time!

We got home a day earlier than expected. It's amazing how many trip hours you can lop off if you don't sleep. That May trip was quite an adventure!

Finally home!

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Find us on Facebook at Open Door Farm with Kay Lytle

Also on Facebook at Rare Fields Fiber

<https://www.etsy.com/shop/OpenDoorFarm?ref=l2-about-shopname>

<https://fiberartistmarket.com/vendors/open-door-farm-rare-fields-fiber/>

ACRA's 2024 Board of Directors

President Kathy Crow

Vice President Lisa Carpenter

Secretary/Registrar Beth Ivankovic

Eastern Regional Director Kaya Farrington

Midwestern Regional Director Kay Lytle

Member-at-Large Director Maggie Brand

To find contact information for board members, check out the website:

<https://cotswoldacra.com/contact-us/>

A few thoughts from our President

Working within a flock brings long hours, wins and losses with sometimes little control and an opportunity to continue learning for even a veteran shepherd. Having entered my tenth lambing season two weeks ago I had my first exposure to an emergency c-section. I had lost a ewe to ringwomb a day earlier and was weary of a repeat performance. My ewe was 10 days late, had prolapsed multiple times and was not dilating even after multiple induced attempts. I'm a heavy reader and am blessed with an amazing sheep vet. His patience and my tenacity helped us to be open to the risk this procedure brings. I take the responsibility of breeding a heritage breed very seriously. I had also grown very fond of this ewe and didn't want to watch her die a painful death. The time came and we prepped her accordingly, gained some interested help and crossed my fingers. A couple hours later I had two ram lambs providing new to me flock genetics and a mom in recovery. Continuous care of the babies and mom has led to a healthy mom and two voracious eaters. I know this experience does not always end this way, but doing nothing sealed her fate. Lambing season is loaded with uncertainties and every shepherd approaches that differently. I leave this experience with more understanding under my belt and a very gracious heart for a great vet and lots of support. No less ready to have my 2024 lambing season behind me.

Spring is quickly approaching and with that comes the tremendous opportunity to be the featured breed at the MD Sheep and Wool Show. <..\Desktop\MSWF-2024-Exhibitor-Letter.pdf> This year's board is eager to show others that ACRA is back up and working to promote our animals and educate the public on all things Cotswold. The MD show is one of the largest shows across the country and certainly on the east coast. This show is one of my favorites for the way that it blends all things sheep with showing, fiber and creativity. One of my favorite things to attend is the equipment auction on Sunday and the sheep shows that are right in the middle of the fairgrounds waiting for attention. Many different opportunities to show off Cotswold's exists for breeders across the country. You don't have to be a lifelong shower to be able to participate and learn the ropes. Most festivals have a breed exhibit even if there is no show and I've been amazed at the opportunity to promote the breed and find new interested shepherds that that creates. Not everyone is expected to join the show ring, but be careful if you do you too will get the bug....

Over the past few years Cotswold breed numbers have dropped, and in turn their awareness reduced. Getting our animals out for the public to see and be seen is an important way for our numbers to increase and for all of us to have buyers for our fleeces and our lambs. Utilizing the website, maximizing social media and being available at sheep shows are some simple ways for others to know where you are. Cotswold numbers in shows are at critical status before they remove them permanently from the breed specific categories. We draw attention to these issues because our sheep are special, they matter in history and need to be preserved. Continuing to let others share in our heritage breed is not only a responsibility, but a privilege. Cotswold's are special animals and preserving their future matters.



This year's new board is focused on getting our registry electronic and creating records from the past to be available for the future.

To continue to grow our membership and of course to grow the national numbers across the country so our breed is stable for the future. Good luck with your lambing this year and come support other breeders at these festivals even if you don't show yourself. We can't wait to see you there!!

-Kathy

AND VP

At Kline Creek Farm, back when we raised a different breed of sheep and showed them, we lambed in January. We now lamb in March with our Cotswolds. The weather in the Chicago area can be unpredictable and brutal, and I would say lambing later is easier both on the lambs and the shepherds! We don't show sheep, so we don't feel the need to have big lambs for the show season. One of the benefits of lambing later is that it allows us more time to focus on our big winter event—Ice Harvest! We have a lake on the property and when it gets cold enough for us to get seven inches of ice on the lake, we cut blocks that we store in our ice house. The ice usually lasts through the summer and kids that participate in our summer camp make ice cream with the ice that was harvested in January.

We harvest the ice using antique tools. The first step is marking out the ice field with the ice plows. The ice plows have large teeth that cut grooves into the surface of the ice. We cut a channel out into the lake from our ramp that goes to shore. From the channel, we make a grid with 20" square blocks. We saw into the blocks with ice saws and break off the blocks with breaker bars. The blocks of ice float down the channel, to the ramp, and onto the horse-drawn wagon which takes the blocks to the icehouse on the farmstead. We even allow the public on the ice to try their hand using the antique tools!



The ice doesn't get thick enough every year for us to do this event. Fortunately this year it did! Ice Harvest is one of the most unique and popular demonstrations that we do here. Now that we've checked that off our list, it's on to lambing, calving, milking, and field preparation. After the cold snap that allowed us to harvest ice, the weather became incredibly warm here, so we've gotten ahead with our spring plowing.

Photo caption: Lisa (with the saw) and colleague Emaly (with the breaker bar) open up the ice channel.

- Lisa
(Lisa Carpenter is the Historical Farming Program Supervisor for Kline Creek Farm in DuPage County, Illinois)

Secretary and Registrar Updates

2023 Totals: 67 ACRA/BCRregistrations and 41 transfers

As always, thank you for payment of your yearly dues and registrations. With the new bylaws, memberships expire a year from the last payment. Please let me know if you have any questions with registrations or transfers especially with the website. We have had PayPal issues here and there (hopefully fixed). Our goal this year is 100 registrations! Let's make that happen!

Sometimes I take on a bit more than I have time for....a big thank you to everyone who has been patient with me for getting back transfers and registrations! I am digging out from my latest adventure.

Last summer a friend, who is also a shepherd, and I made the jump to purchase a wool pellet mill. I've always loved to garden and plant a garden every year. I've also thrown the seconds and thirds from my skirted fleeces into my garden every year and my plants love them. Unfortunately, the next year as I'm dealing with the frustration of felted fleece parts. The first time I read about wool pellets I was intrigued! Plants love all of the nutrients in wool. Wool can hold so much water which leads to less watering. Wool pellets can be a value added product for wool and there is no mess the next year. Win-win-win!

This journey has been an learning adventure from day one. Our pellet mill arrived months later than expected. Expected in September but showed up the first week of December. Because wool pellets fertilize and are "soil/plant additives" they must be licensed in each state and each state handles licensure differently. Naively thinking licensure would take a week or two at most, we've had months of back and forth and lots of lab testing.

I'm happy to report that all of the tested wool lots have proven to be exactly the same as wool that has been tested around the globe and matches multiple studies on wool pellets.

New businesses are full of learning and this one is no different. My business partner and I are working on how to balance the demands of the new business, our flocks and our other commitments. We are currently working on marketing and education attending lots of gardening shows and events. We are finding local shepherds are excited about the possibilities for their wool and gardeners are intrigued with the product. We are hopeful that once a gardener tries pellets that will come back every year for more!

Pellet mills are being started all over the country. Check out one near you! I love the Fibershed concepts of soil to soil as well as keeping local products local. Small mills can do all of that. With earth week coming up, wool pellets are the perfect environmentally friendly product that make plants happy! If you would like to learn more about wool pellets, check out our website at woollybellypellets.net.

On the cotswold front, we are in the midst of lambing. Seven ewes have lambed and 8 more are ready to go at any time. The cuteness factor has increased dramatically in our farmyard.

I'm never too busy to help with ACRA. If you have any questions regarding registrations or your 2024 dues, please let me know!

- Beth

2024 Board Goals

1. Maryland Sheep and Wool - Featured Breed, organize the Breed table, posters, handouts, fleece competition.
2. Membership and Registrations - continue to grow ACRA to ensure the conservation, development, and promotion of the breed our Cotswold sheep. Goal: 10% increase.
3. Improve marketing ideas of ACRA Cotswold sheep. The board will come up with standards for the use of the ACRA logo on yarn and meat products for members.
4. Develop a census for Cotswold sheep within the United States.

Grant update

ACRA won a \$2000 grant to help input our paper registry into a database. We hired Susan Benjamin who has done multiple historical projects in Illinois. Susan started inputting the data about a month ago. Lisa, Beth and Susan have met to ensure her questions have been answered and the project is moving along nicely!



Fun idea from our Member at Large Director, Maggie Brand

Dyeing wool with Kool Aid

In need of a project to do with a group that has safety concerns such as children or elders? Dyeing with Kool-Aid might fill the bill especially if it is incorporated in a larger project of creating with wool. I have done this project with our 4-H group many times.

The equipment and ingredients are non-toxic and easily available. You will need:

plastic table cloth to protect work surface, latex or plastic gloves to protect hands if desired

clean wool (washed and well rinsed)

quart jars or nonstaining microwavable containers

Kool-Aid packets

white vinegar

spoons or sticks (I use chopsticks) for stirring and lifting

warm water

White wool works best and Cotswold wool is especially good because its natural luster enhances the hue. Natural colored wool can be used but the resulting colors will be muted. The wool can be lightly opened or carded, roving, or yarn. We use hunks of lightly opened wool because it is to be used in either a wet felting projects or cookie cutter felting projects but dyeing roving or skeins works as well.

If using Cotswold locks, wash and rinse the wool carefully, with no agitation, to preserve the integrity of the lock.

The process:

Soak the wool in warm water for at least a half hour, longer if using yarn. This opens the individual fibers. I often bring the wool already soaked in a plastic bag to the meeting.

1. Add ¼ cup vinegar to the water to make the color fast. Kool-Aid has enough citric acid in it to probably make this step unnecessary but the vinegar is good insurance and it doesn't hurt. If using Easter egg coloring or food coloring, then the vinegar is necessary.
2. Add 1 packet of Kool-Aid to each jar and mix until dissolved.
3. Add wool to the jar as much as it can hold and still be freely surrounded by the dye bath. Taking the wool out after a few minutes will produce a soft, pale color. Leaving it to soak for a longer period produces darker shades. You can leave the wool in or remove at desired shade and add more wool until there is no color left and water is clear. A good color should be produced in 15 minutes. To hasten the process, you can microwave the jar/container for 2 minutes at high power.
4. Rinse in water the same temperature as the dye bath to prevent felting. Be careful to use clean water for each rinse so as not to contaminate dyed wool with another color. It may take several rinses. If working with locks, lift from dye bath carefully.
5. Hang to dry or lay out on a rack.

This is just a basic description. The possibilities of making different colors, or manipulating shades by twisting or tying are endless. Remember, Kool-Aid can stain but will wash off of hands with a good washing. Have fun!

- Maggie

Congratulations to ACRA member Kay Lytle on her microgrant from the Livestock Conservancy!

<https://livestockconservancy.org/2024/02/05/the-livestock-conservancy-awards-2024-microgrants/>

ODDS and Ends.....

Welcome to 2024 new members:

Jr. Member, Azalia Davidson

Sandra Brunsell

Charles Reed

Elizabeth Eroh

Historical Records Update:

The board has been on a quest to find all records starting in 1878 to present. We have them all except for 1916-1933. The secretary for 1916- was named Frank W. Harding and he lived in both Wisconsin and Illinois. We have contacted the following museums and here are their replies:

Waukesha County Historical Society and Museum:

“The Harding name is familiar in Waukesha. I believe that Frank W. Harding's grandfather was once the mayor of our city.

However, I can state with about 90% confidence that Frank W. did not leave any records pertaining to Cotswold Sheep to our Society. We will be in the Research Center on Friday and can take a closer look, but these records do not sound familiar.

A quick search of newspaper records online indicates that while Frank W. had a stock farm in Waukesha Township, his residence was in Wheaton Ill. I have a feeling that might be your next place to look. We'll see what information we can gather about F. W. Harding in those years and get back to you. I have a feeling that the best we will be able to do is give a few more clues as to his whereabouts.” - John Schoenknecht, volunteer researcher

The DuPage County Historical Museum in Wheaton has nothing on Cotswolds or Harding. Nothing at Wheaton College either. - Lisa Carpenter

Two past members we reached out to heard that the records were burned:

"All the records of our organization were housed in the Cotswold Association's registry offices in the great Livestock Exchange Building at the Union Stockyards in Chicago, until an enormous 15-alarm fire burned down to the ground that enormous building on May 19, 1934, along with a large part of the entire facilities. A lot of animals died, but despite many injuries, no people, I think." - Nathan Griffith, past member and President of ACRA.

"I received the records from Roger Bortel whose father, Virgil, had been Secretary of the ACRA prior to me. I passed what I had along to Vicki Rigel of Plympton, MA who was Secretary after me. Mr. Bortel did tell me that some records had been destroyed in a fire." - Patricia L. Frisella, past member and Secretary/Registrar for ACRA in the 1980's and founding member of the American Minor Breeds Conservancy (now the Livestock Conservancy)

There is a high probability the records are gone but possibly another copy is tucked away somewhere? I've reached out to a few museums in Chicago about what may have been in the Livestock Exchange Building but have not had any replies. The registry list from 1933 and 1934 will probably be the best place for searching for ACRA information. Unfortunately, it does not list where the breeders were located just names with some of them including Wm Riddell and Sons, H.D Harms, D.J. Kirby, Chas. J. Shore, Jas. A Campbell, Homan and Sons, M.E Harding, Shaffner, Lorenzo Giles, etc. There are multiple pages of breeders for each year. I have also searched through newspapers.com for those who were actively showing in the early 1930's and I've started in the midwest. My thought process is if ACRA was housed in Chicago, the board members would probably be in states near Illinois? It would be nice to piece together who was on the board for the association during the time of the fire and check out their local historical museums. Here are some names and dates that I have found between 1925-1935:

George Marco Farm: La Cross Tribune September 28, 1925 - see below

Mr. M.F. Hogan: Veteran Shepherd who exhibited sheep for 35 years. (Newspaper The Wisconsin State Journal September 7, 1927) - see below

**Mr. E.B. Moore: Board member of the American Cotswold Registry Association in Chicago, IL (Newspaper Sheridan News March 10, 1933) - see below

Mr. Rooth: President of the Cotswold Sheep breeders association. Nov. 29, 1940 (Newspaper Rock Island Argus and Chicago's Daily Drover's Journal)

Were there two associations in the 1940's or did the newspaper get the name wrong? Another fun fact to delve into!

If you like to dive into puzzles, see what you can find and share away! This may not lead to anything but who knows! My next search will be to look into Mr. E.B. Moore as he is looking like the best lead so far.

Veteran Shepherd



M. F. Hogan, Wannakee, left, and the old James Anthony, Sr., owner of the farm, in a photograph taken at the fair. Hogan is leading a champion yearling Shiloh ewe. Anthony is with a champion yearling Shiloh ewe. Both ewes are yearling ewes of the breed and the old James Anthony, Sr., is the owner of the farm and the old James Anthony, Sr., is the owner of the farm.

M. F. Hogan, Wannakee, Has Exhibited Sheep At Dane County Fair For 35 Years

The Herald-Press
Thu. Dec 01, 1932 - Page 1

DEFEATS BOYS AT LIVESTOCK SHOW



Fran Linka, 16-year-old, of Emerald, N. D., was first honors in the junior individual stock judging contest at Chicago International Livestock Exposition. She defeated all the boys entered and there were plenty

Abundant

L. Linka, 16-year-old, of Emerald, N. D., was first honors in the junior individual stock judging contest at Chicago International Livestock Exposition. She defeated all the boys entered and there were plenty

100 COTSWOLDS AND 78 SHORTHORNS ON GEORGE MARCO FARM

Sunnyside Stock Farm, South of City, Makes Big Strides in Recent Years

In this article it is our purpose to tell the story of a family whose system of farming is unique in a district such as La Crosse county, where the majority of those following the occupation of agriculture rely on the "cream check" for their cash income. Everying holds, as it should, the premier place in Wisconsin, but there are many farmers throughout the state who from personal choice have followed, and successfully, other systems of farming than that of the Gairy man.

Seven miles from the South Side of the city of La Crosse lies the fertile farmstead of the Marco family. Anyone familiar with the history of live stock breeding in La Crosse county has heard of George Marco & Sons, owners of Sunnyside Stock Farm, where purebred Shorthorns of the beef type, Cotswold sheep, and DuRand China swine are bred and marketed.

Visitors at the La Crosse Interstate Fair will remember the Marco exhibit of prize-winning roan Shorthorns and Clevelandes.

Mr. George Marco and his father bought their land in 1889. The family at Sunnyside today include Mr. and Mrs. George Marco, their sons Charlie and William, and two daughters. The Marco family have not followed the lure of the city but stay staying on the land. The effective and creative work of this family is apparent when the number of purebred stock they started in with is compared with the number now driving on the 200 acres at Sunnyside this season.

In 1919 three Canadian-bred Cotswolds were purchased. This season the farm will produce nearly a hundred. Two Shorthorn heifers were obtained in 1923. Now 78 head are grazing in the Marco pastures. Mr. Marco feels that his Shorthorns cannot be bested from his pastures and replaced by sheep profitable as the latter are. He will maintain his Cotswolds but not too many will be kept. Sheep are found to be profitable here just as at his Rock for two years. A ready market is found for his purebreds. One order has recently come from Mexico for 50 head of breeding stock. Sunnyside produces west breeding stock and mutton for market.

The farm has, of course, a large acreage of field crops, 16 acres of clover, 10 acres of field corn, 25 acres timothy and clover, 20 acres of oats, one acre in row crops for stock feeding, one acre to be planted in Holland cabbage to be marketed during the winter, four acres of alfalfa are given special attention because they were planted without lime and have given a satisfactory crop. Mr. Marco will leave the fourth cutting on for protection from winter killing. The additional stubble left in this manner keeps the snow from blowing off during the winter and thereby protects the vital parts of the plants from freezing.

Everything, practically, is fed on the farm and the maintenance of soil fertility is thereby insured. Students from the agricultural school at West Salem are some of their training in stock judging at Sunnyside. Mr. Marco wants to make even greater progress in stock raising and thinks that the La Crosse district is just about the best farming country there is.

DEFEATS BOYS AT LIVESTOCK SHOW

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This one is for our Junior girl members!

