



**Adding Value
to Your Wool for the
Fiber Artist Market**


**CULTIVATING
SUCCESS**
small farms education

**2019 Small Farm
Webinar Series**
Month Day, 2019


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Today's Presenter



Kate Painter
Boundary County Extension Educator
University of Idaho Extension



Colette DePhelps, moderator
Community Food Systems
University of Idaho Extension

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Webinar Tips



Close all other programs running on your computer



Check your sound – problems with clarity, speed, etc. switch to the phone

Call-in number provided in the welcome email
Mute computer sound when using phone



Type in questions for speakers (or for help with viewing & sound) into question box



Handouts are available to download on your computer

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Poll:

Who is on today's webinar?

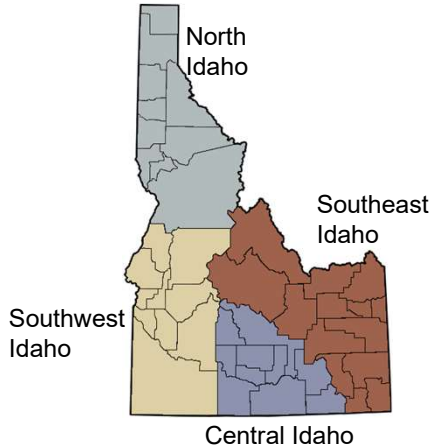


Photo: Sarah Swett

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Poll:
Where are you located?




North Idaho
Southeast Idaho
Southwest Idaho
Central Idaho

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Poll:
**What animals do you raise?
What are your fiber plans?**




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Making \$\$ with wool

- Not an easy process!
- You will have to slowly build up your reputation
- Research the market and your competition
- Learn as much as you can about your market
 - What breeds are popular?
 - White or colored or dyed?
 - End uses



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Quality fiber

- Good breeding stock
 - Healthy, young sheep
- Good management
 - Shear near lambing, as lambing often creates a weak spot in the fiber
 - Lambing, illness can cause breakage in the wool
 - Good nutrition is essential for producing high quality fiber



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Quality fiber

- Correct breed for fiber
 - What is your market?
- Length and softness are breed appropriate
- Clean fiber, even if raw
 - Beautifully clean fiber is hard to find!









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Wool breeds


Icelandic






Merino



Blue-faced Leicester



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Quality considerations

- Dirt washes out
- Vegetable matter (feed, etc.) is very difficult to remove, however
- No breaks in the fiber
 - Should ping but not have a tearing noise
- No matting or felting
- Second cuts must be minimal
- Should smell like a good barn, not musty or soiled smelling







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When
in
doubt,
throw it
out!

- Reputation for quality is paramount
- This will allow you to continue to sell at premium prices
- Customers can leave comments online
 - Can help or hinder
- Guarantee customer satisfaction!
- You can sell or use second quality fleece for other purposes
 - Roving, stuffing, felt






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Price differentials

- Wool pool prices hardly cover shearing costs
 - \$3-\$6 per head to shear
 - Fleeces weigh 5 – 10 lb
 - Wool pool prices ~ \$0.50 per lb
- Premium handspinning fleeces go for as much as \$180 for 4.5 lb!
 - That’s the asking price!



#807
 CORMO
 3 1/2" LONG
 4.32 LBS
 \$180 WHOLE OR \$90 HALF FLEECE





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Price differentials

- Typically in the neighborhood of \$10-\$25 per lb
- Covered fleeces sell quickly and for a premium
- Higher prices for smaller, premium quantities



AltitudeFarmStore ★★★★★ (59)
Ultra-fine Merino Fleece 100grams, Less than 16 Micron, Raw Fleece, White Merino
\$5.90

[Ask a question](#)





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Coats for your sheep



- Rocky Sheep Company, rockysheep.com, has very sturdy sheep coats made from breathable woven nylon, 1000 denier
- Prices range from \$19 - \$28, depending on size
- Reduces sun damage and contamination from feed, bedding, and manure
- Covered fleeces command a much, much higher price
- Uncovered fleeces are hard to sell to fiber artists





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Coats do much more than just protect the fleece...







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Skirting fleece

- Traditional, "correct" way to prepare a fleece for storage, sale
- You are often removing a great deal of weight but no one wants to purchase poor quality fiber
- Better to sell just the premium portion of the fleece at a higher price and maintain a good reputation

<https://youtu.be/CgvOIMbKTFY>

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Skirting fleece

- Use a skirting table
- Remove belly and leg wool
- Remove coarse breech wool in leg area
- Remove greasy tags along rear and sides near sweat glands
- Remove vegetable matter (VM)
- Remove any manure or soiled areas
- Shake off or pick off second cuts
- This can take a long time!

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Storing fleece


- Wool is prone to felting if compressed
- Plastic bags are not great for storing fleeces as they can retain moisture, causing felting
- Cardboard boxes that are big enough to accommodate the fleece without compressing it are best
- Moths are a destructive pest!
 - Mothballs are toxic
 - Herbal approaches somewhat effective

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Adding value = adding costs

- Washed fleece
- Dyed fleece
- Carded roving
- Quilt batts
- Spun yarn
- Blankets
- Socks







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Spinderella's Creations: A Fiber Mill



Washing Services
based on incoming weight

Wool \$4.50 per pound
Alpaca \$5.50 per pound
Mohair \$5.00 per pound

Washing charges added to all orders except those services that are all inclusive.

Based on a 3 pound minimum charge



Custom Carding
based on finished weight

All fibers \$6.75 per pound

Additional Charges
Handblend Fibers \$1.00 per pound
Twist of Colors \$3.00 per pound
Angelina Added \$4.00 per pound
Thrumbs Added \$4.00 per pound

Plus washing charges

Based on a 3 pound minimum charge



Custom Carded Batts
based on finished weight

8 oz batts \$9.50 per pound
4 oz batts \$11.50 per pound

Plus washing charges
We will add merino to all alpaca and mohair batts.

Batt size : ~ 50" x 50"

Based on a 3 pound minimum charge





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Do the math first!



- Shipping
- Washing
 - I washed my own fleece
 - Saved money and shipping weight
- Carding
- Spinning into yarn
- Creating uniform skeins
- Packaging
- Any wholesale margin??









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Calculating shrink

- 40% - 60% loss in scouring (washing)
- 5% - 10% loss in each carding operation
- 100 lb of raw wool yields 40 to 60 lb of clean wool
- 50 lb of clean wool yields 45 lb of roving
- 10 lb of raw wool is 4.5 lb of roving

Sells for \$17/lb





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Calculating costs for custom services

- At \$10 per lb, you are paying \$100 for 10 lb but you are getting 4.5 lb of roving, so that's \$22 per lb ($\$100/4.5$) *Loss due to grease & dirt*
- You pay \$45 for scouring 100 lb @ \$4.50/lb and \$30 for carding (\$6.75/lb finished weight), so another \$17 per lb ($\$75/4.5$ lb)
- **Total cost is \$39 per lb (\$22 + \$17)**




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Questions?

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Highest returns for premium raw wool



- Selling online is more commonplace now
- Shipping is costly but expected
- Few venues for selling in person or shops





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Premium markets


- Etsy marketplace
- Your own website
- Facebook: Specific content groups
- Craft sales catering to your industry
 - Maryland Sheep & Wool Festival
 - Black Sheep Gathering
 - Local fairs and events for fiber artists
- General craft fairs

GypsyMountainFarm
in Dugspur, Virginia

	
Lincoln Longwool Lamb ... \$3.75	Hand Washed Navajo Ch... \$5.00
	
Wensleydale Looks, Purpl... \$8.50	Cotswold Lamb Looks, H... \$5.00
	
White Cotswold x Coopw... \$5.00	Cotswold x Coopworth L... \$6.50



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Etsy marketplace






Natural Colored Grey Raw Romne...
CoveredBridgeFiber
★★★★★ (131)
\$30.00

Colored Cotswold Raw Locks
wingandprayerfarm
★★★★★ (489)
\$1.00


White Raw Romney Lamb Fleece ...
CoveredBridgeFiber
★★★★★ (131)
\$30.00

- Very popular site for selling crafts and craft supplies
- Commission is 5% of the total sale, including shipping
- Rated very highly by buyers and sellers
- Excellent tutorials, sellers handbook, guides for taking photos, etc.



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Etsy storefront






AspendaleFarm
Romney and Romney cross fleeces
78 Sales On Etsy since 2017
★★★★★ (34)
[Favorite shop \(99\)](#)

SHOP OWNER



Sue Smalley
[Contact](#)




Items (17) Reviews About Policies More


Solo: 2018 Purebred Romney - Raw Fleece - 6.7...
\$90.46

Jake: 2018 Romney X ram - Raw Fleece - 8.3lbs
\$112.06

Naomi: Romney cross - Raw Fleece - 7.8lbs
\$105.30

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SheepSymphony
Fleece, yarn from my sheep, spinning wheels, tools
Bonners Ferry, Idaho | 136 Sales | On Etsy since 2014
★★★★★ (38)
[Edit shop](#) [Favorite shop \(96\)](#)


Items (2) Reviews Policies

Items


All	2
Samples	1
Yarn	1

[Request Custom Order](#)




[Contact shop owner](#)



Worsted weight 3-ply Rambouillet...
\$12.00



Rambouillet yarn sample, 3-ply wo...
\$3.00 Free shipping

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Website: Nistock farms



The 22th of February in the year 2019

Handspinning Fibers - Wash - Cotswold Sheep





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Website: Nistock farms



4.50" CVM/Rambou/Finn/Cotswold

Crimpy, crimpyl! On the far fine end of medium grade, soft, skinny little locks, a bit cream colored with some luster. Coated. \$18.00 per pound. Full fleece approx. 6-7 lb.


Marshmallow's 2018 fleece is reserved for Liz C.





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Website: Nistock farms






Squash Blossom

I thought I was getting all wild with orange and spruce and natural gray - turns out this roving is similar to Ferns and Moss, but 'cooler' and softer. The colors make me think of working barefoot in the garden when the zucchini leaves are just starting to get dry and dusty. Pretty! And has a very pleasant hand too.

\$2.25 per oz
\$32.00 per lb

[Buy by the oz. Now](#)

[Buy by the lb. Now](#)

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Facebook marketing example

Posts

 **Seven Spirits Farm** shared a post. 🌐 ...

Yesterday at 7:08 AM · 🌐

TONIGHT colored corno fleece will be posted
FRIDAY the auction ends on the 2 corno lamb fleeces so make sure to get your bid in 😊 https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=2214288685277071&id=198681093504517

SATURDAY the last (8 all together) of the corno white and colored fleeces will be auctioned off.







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Facebook marketing example

 **Seven Spirits Farm**
February 19 at 6:05 AM · 🌐

Im posting a surprise auction on these lamb fleeces today!
They are to keep you busy while I'm working on other fleeces to post this week, and to stop me from putting them in my stash lol

RULES....

1. Bidding starts at \$50 per lb but they are small fleeces so winner will be buying whole fleece.
2. All info will be posted on the first main pic of that fleece and that's where you are to place your bids for that fleece!
3. Shipping is not included in the bidding price.
4. Payment is expected after the auction ends.
5. Auction ends this friday at 9 pm eastern time
6. Play nice and good luck fiber junkies...







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On-farm sales

- Shearing Day on the Farm








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Shearing day

- Customers want to see the farm!
- You could use their help on shearing day!
- Sell as much as possible that day!
- Have fun!




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Fiber & Sheep Festivals


- Maryland Sheep & Wool
 - Average \$15.33/lb
- Black Sheep Gathering
 - Eugene, OR
- Log Cabin Fiber Arts Guild
 - Sat., March 16, in CDA




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Agritourism: Farm stores, customer outreach





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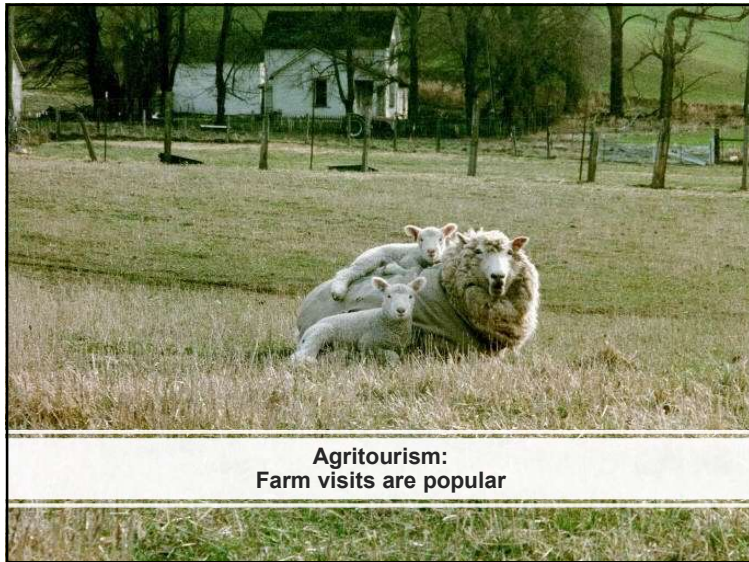
Living with Gotlands

VT Grand View Farm

Blog Ask the Shepherd Farm Store VT Grand View Farm

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Wool as mulch

- Weed barrier
- Warms the soil
- Retains moisture
- Slow to decompose
- Feeds the soil
- Can blow around
- May attract pests

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Increasing the number and success of small farmers and ranchers in Idaho.

The vision of the Cultivating Success™ program is to increase producer and consumer understanding, value, and support of sustainable local farming systems in Idaho through educational and experiential opportunities. Partners in this program strive to create strong communities with infrastructures that provide the resources and skills needed to produce local and sustainable food and agricultural products for the residents of the Inland Northwest.

Featured Programs
Winter-Spring 2019

- Webinar Series
- Idaho Farm Link
- Cultivating the Harvest: Conference

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SMALL FARM WEBINAR SERIES

winter - spring 2019

Cultivating Success™ offers a **FREE**, lunchtime webinar series focused on small farms topics. Learn new skills and build upon old ones!
All webinars are scheduled 11am PST / Noon MST:

Marketing Your Products Online Monday, February 11	Soil Health and Cover Crops Monday, April 8
Idaho Water Rights and Access Tuesday, February 19	Packaging Economics and Food Safety Solutions for Direct Marketing of Produce Tuesday, April 16
Adding Value to Your Wool for the Fiber Artist Market Monday, February 25	Introduction to Starting a Value-added Food Business Tuesday, June 4

New Enterprises for 2019... How to Identify and Evaluate Opportunities
Tuesday, March 5
11:00am - noon PST/
noon - 1pm MST

Ken Hart
University of Idaho Extension,
Lewis County

More from our
2019 SMALL FARM WEBINAR SERIES!

Next webinar:

To register & to see the full webinar schedule:
www.cultivatinguccess.org/2019webinarseries




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Or visit https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Adding_Value_Webinar_Eval

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