

***UP-dates from the Board*** - Ben Bartlett, President.

Spring and early summer has to be the best time of the year. The snow is gone (for good I hope), our flocks multiplying with the miracle of new births, and all the fields are turning green with the rapidly growing forage harvesting the free sunshine. Of course, that also makes it a crazy busy time of the year also. We are right in the middle of lambing and I am wondering why I am sitting at the computer instead of checking ewes, fixing fence, hooking up the pasture water system, or planting what few fields we want to cover crop this year! There is a good reason to spend some time with the MSPA. While farmers/shepherds tend to think of themselves as “rugged individualists”, we are all really part of a team and couldn’t do it by ourselves. You may think it’s “just you” when you are out in the lambing barn at 2 am but what about the neighbor who helps out with processing whenever you call, or the Co-op who can fix the broken hydraulic hose so you don’t have to wait on ordering one, or even the person you call with that sick sheep or sick tractor question that you can’t figure out. You never get a bill, just the expectation that you will “pitch in” when it’s your turn. There’s a lot of value in being part of a group and I have a couple of MSPA examples to share.

We have two new MSAP promotional banners, one floor stand (31” x 78”) and one table top (24’ x 36”) that can be used to promote MSPA. Our Executive Director, Maury Kaercher (269 569 9592) will house these banners and will be responsible for approving and scheduling their use and getting them to the requesting party. The person who requested it will be responsible for their care, use, and getting them back to Maury or other appropriate person. Besides the team work by the banner committee to design and get them made (Jason Scramlin, Elaine Bristol, and Denise Bartlett), Jason stepped up to figure out a better way to ship the banners around. Shipping cost rumored to be up to \$40 or so and the well-being of the banners as they were hauled around was a big concern. Jason figured out a shipping package of PVC pipe and the new banners will be both safe and shippable at a reasonable \$15~20) rate. People stepping up and doing their part. Now, it’s your turn. If you have an event that could help promote MSPA and increase our membership, please give Maury a call. Those banners won’t do any good sitting in his garage.

Going new places as an individual sure has advantages but it also has limitations. Some places don’t have time for one or two people but will give organizations or groups tours. Some experts may not be accessible to just you. And, most important, you only have one set of eyes to process what you are seeing. I don’t know how many times my wife and I have gone somewhere together and still only saw about 50% of the same things. I “see more” and learn more when I am part of a group. I am asking you to look over the MSPA educational trip, Rocky Mountain Shepherd’s Tour, we have planned for Sept 10 ~ 15, 2018. It will be a great time of the year with fall colors, informative visits to sheep operations, a feedlot, packing plant and many more stops planned. But again, it’s the seeing, learning, and encouragement you will get by traveling with fellow sheep producers that will make the trip special.

Summer is a very busy time of the year but please take time for two things. The first and most important is to appreciate and enjoy the livestock species we have all chosen to partner with, sheep. They are special. And second, be an active member of the MSP association. We need everyone to “pitch in” where they can. None of us need to do it all, we just all need to do our part. Hope you can join us at the summer picnic in July at Averill’s and Scovill’s and on the Rocky Mountain Shepherd’s Tour in September.