

**Michigan Shepherds Weekend**  
***An annual conference presented by the Michigan Sheep Producers Association***

January 9-11, 2026 | Crowne Plaza Hotel  
925 S. Creyts Rd., Lansing, MI 48917 | 517-323-7100

**Schedule of Events – Friday, January 9**

6:30-7:15 p.m.      **Young Producer & Flock Grant Presentations** - Reo Room  
*Young Producer Finalists from the November virtual contest will share their presentations with the audience and answer questions. Winners of the Flock Grant program will also share their successes and challenges with their purchases over the past year.*

7:15-8 p.m.      **Introduction to NSIP and Practical Application of EBVs** - Reo Room  
Presentation by David Scales, Executive Director, NSIP  
*The mission of the National Sheep Improvement Program is to provide predictable, economically important genetic evaluation information to the American sheep industry by converting performance records into relevant decision-making tools. Explore Estimated Breeding Values for tracking and measuring decisions for your sheep flock.*

8-9 p.m.      **Production Decisions for Quality Lamb** - Reo Room  
Presentation by Dr. Travis Hoffman, Associate Professor/Extension Sheep Specialist, North Dakota State University/University of Minnesota



*Engage and learn how sheep producers make decisions within their operation that impacts lamb yield, quality and value.*

**Schedule of Events – Saturday, January 10**

7:30 a.m.      **Registration & Trade Show Opens** – Lobby & Royale Atrium

8 a.m.      **Early Bird Coffee** – Lobby

8:30-9 a.m.      **Welcoming Session** – Ballrooms ABC  
Dave Meeuwse, MSPA President  
Vendor Preview

**American Sheep Industry Update** – Ballrooms ABC  
Larry Hopkins, Region III Director, ASI

9:15-10 a.m.

### **Breakout sessions, Round I**

#### **Livestock Housing: What to Consider – Ballroom D**

Panel Discussion

*Explore the highlights and cautionary tales of building, retrofitting and expanding buildings and other creative spaces to care for sheep.*

#### **Other Ways to Use Sheep – Ballroom E**

Panel Discussion

*Dr. Heather Ludlam will talk about her farm flock and its contributions in health research; Javan Miner will discuss the value of sheepskins from wool sheep and leather from both wool and hair sheep, plus the economics and logistics of the tannery and marketing; and Olivia Fox will present about raising dairy sheep.*

#### **Emergency Response to Accidents Involving Livestock program**

– Ballroom F

Mike Metzger, Small Ruminant Educator & Samantha Wolfe, Agricultural and Occupational Health Extension Educator, MSU Extension

*The Emergency Response to Accidents Involving Livestock program is an effort coordinated by MSU Extension to offer resources for animal control officers, first responders and emergency managers to develop their skills in working with large animals. Learn more about the program's communication strategies around livestock accident & mortality management, educational training materials, and the fleet of emergency response trailers that are active across Michigan.*

10:30-11:15 a.m.

### **Breakout sessions, Round II**

#### **What to Do with Wool – Ballroom D**

Panel Discussion

*The wool industry is a tricky business of balancing tradition with trends. Hear from representatives of businesses that are enthusiastic about the future of wool products in the marketplace.*

#### **Making Economical Sense of Showing Lambs – Ballroom E**

Panel Discussion

*Youth sheep programs are an amazing introduction into agribusiness. This mindful conversation will explore ways shepherds can support longterm goals in growing the sheep industry and Michigan agriculture through youth programs.*

#### **AgrAbility: Assistive Technology – Ballroom F**

Samantha Wolfe, Agricultural and Occupational Health Extension Educator, MSU Extension

*An educational session focusing on assistive technology for sheep producers featuring a case study presentation about animal handling chutes, tubs, fenceline feeders, and feedbox augers on utility vehicles.*

11:45 a.m.

**Lunch – DeSoto Foyer & Reo Room**

*Mingle with vendors. Lunch on your own or purchase tickets in advance.*

Noon

**Ram Session – Ballrooms ABC**

Moderated by Dave Meeuwse

*An open forum discussion about current trends in sheep production.*

**Michigan Lamb Feeders & Shearers Meeting – Ballroom E**

Moderated by Sy Caryl

*An open meeting for sheep shearers to plan their calendars for the year, plus space for shepherds who finish lambs to market weight to discuss challenges, successes and opportunities in 2026.*

1:15-2:15 p.m.



**Keynote Session**

**Insights in the Lamb Supply Chain – Ballrooms ABC**

Presentation by Dr. Travis Hoffman, Associate Professor/Extension Sheep Specialist, North Dakota State University/University of Minnesota

*Our role as sheep enthusiasts is to strive for improved efficiency in the production of lamb and wool. We will discuss progress, vision and next steps for a successful sheep industry.*

**Ice cream break**

2:45-3:30 p.m.



**Solar Grazing Presentation – Ballrooms ABC**

Presentation by M. Charles Gould, Extension Bioenergy Educator, MSU Extension and Sy Caryl, Michigan solar grazier

*A foundational, introductory discussion for what you need to know about solar grazing.*

3:45-4:30 p.m.

**Breakout sessions, Round III**

**Lambing to Load-out: Logistics of Lamb – Ballroom D**

Panel Discussion

*Listen to honest reflections about the successes and challenges that are involved in raising sheep and lambs, from lambing to load-out and everywhere in between.*

**Policy Discussion – Ballroom E**

*An open forum discussion about what legislative topics or policies are important to Michigan shepherds right now.*

**PFAS Contamination in Agriculture – What it means for your farm and the food supply chain – Ballroom F**

Faith Cullens-Nobis, Extension Educator, MSU Extension

*Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), commonly referred to as “forever chemicals,” have been used in a wide range of consumer and industrial products—and are now being detected in soil, water, crops, and livestock across the country. This session will provide a general overview of PFAS, exploring how these chemicals enter the farm system, and how they may affect our food supply chain. Learn the science, risks, and current response strategies to help you navigate this evolving issue in food and farming systems.*

5-5:45 p.m.

**Producers of the Year presentations** – Ballroom E

*Presentations by MSPA’s producers of the year awardees honored at the 2025 annual banquet:*

- 2024 Commercial Producers of the Year: Marvin Dane Family
- 2024 Club Lamb Producers of the Year: Salinas Family
- 2024 Purebred Producers of the Year: Anette & Matthew Garcia

6 p.m.

**Social Hour and Youth Auction** – Ballrooms ABC

*Cash bar available as you settle into the evening celebration program*

7 p.m.

**Banquet Dinner** – Ballrooms ABC

*Up to four awards are presented during the banquet program: Commercial Producer, Purebred Producer & Club Lamb Producer, plus the Service to the Industry award. The live auction will continue after dinner to support statewide youth programs.*

**Schedule of Events – Sunday, January 11**

7:30 a.m.

**Registration & Trade Show Opens** – Lobby & Royale Atrium

8 a.m.

**Early Bird Coffee** – Lobby

8-8:30 a.m.

**Faithful Reflection**

8:45-9:45 a.m.

**Solar Grazing Question & Answer Session** – Ballrooms DEF

Panel Discussion

*A follow-up to Saturday’s solar grazing presentation, this panel will address your questions about solar grazing and property management.*

10-10:45 a.m.

**Annual Business Meeting\*** – Ballrooms DEF

Dr. Heather Ludlam, MSPA Vice President

*\*Following this meeting, board members and newly elected board members are asked to meet for a brief reorganization meeting*

11 a.m.

**Brunch** – Ballrooms ABC

*Mingle with vendors. Brunch on your own or purchase tickets in advance.*

Awards will be presented from the youth Junior Quiz Bowl Contest and Master Shepherd Competition.

Noon

**Closing Comments** – Ballrooms DEF

**A Historical Reflection – Trends and Opportunities in the Michigan Sheep Industry**

Presentation by Dr. Richard Ehrhardt, Senior Specialist-Small Ruminant,  
MSU Extension and MSU Department of Animal Science

## **Events of Michigan Shepherds Weekend**

### **Trade Show**

Industry representatives from all segments of the sheep industry have been invited to participate in a commercial exhibit area that will be open throughout the weekend in the Royale Atrium.

### **Warm & Woolly Competition**

This beautiful exhibit celebrates the variety and usefulness of the many types of wool that our sheep produce, as well as the creativity of MSPA members, both adults and youth! Handspun yarn and all other wool crafts may be entered.

Entries can be delivered to the registration area on Saturday before 10 a.m. Entry forms will be available there or can be printed from the MSPA website. Entry forms will include age category (Youth 17 or younger; Adult 18 and over) and Experience in each technique (Novice or Experienced). Entries must be created by the entrant, not previously shown in this competition, and made from wool. Entries may be picked up any time after 4:30 p.m. on Saturday.

### **Photo Contest**

Contestants will consist of two age groups: Youth - 18 years old and younger and Adult – 19 years old and up. Photos shall be a 5x7 only. Pictures may be Black and White or Color. Both Youth and Adult divisions will include the following classes: Portrait of a Sheep, Flock Scene, Human Interest, Fairs and Exhibitions, and Shearer at Work.

Limit – ONE photo per division per contestant. Entries MUST be submitted on Saturday, January 4, between 10 am and 12 noon. Entries must be suitably framed and be able to free stand.

Entries must have the following information on the back of the photo to qualify for the contest:

1. Adult's name or Youth's name with guardians' name
2. Age group and youth's age
3. Class division

Winners will be announced, and awards will be given out on Saturday at the banquet. There will be a special award for Best of Show. Photos can be picked up on Saturday evening.

### **Silent Auctions**

One silent auction on Saturday and one on Sunday will provide an opportunity to purchase some great items to support our youth program. Winners will be able to pay for items at the registration desk with a check or credit card. If you'd like to contribute to the auction(s), please bring items to the conference registration desk.

### **Banquet**

The Annual Banquet will begin with a social hour and auction at 6 p.m. on Saturday. Dinner starts at 7 p.m. The auction will continue after dinner. The auction includes various donated items, and the proceeds are used to support statewide youth programs. The Service to the Sheep Industry Award will be presented and the sheep Producers of the Year recipients will be recognized. Banquet tickets are \$35 and must be purchased in advance. Tickets will be collected at the banquet and will not be available for on-site purchase.

### **Sunday Brunch**

A brunch will be available for symposium participants. Brunch tickets must be purchased in advance and will be collected at the brunch. Adult tickets are \$20 and youth tickets are \$15. Tickets will not be available for on-site purchase.