Michigan Shepherds Weekend
An annual conference presented by the Michigan Sheep Producers Association
January 8-10, 2027 | Crowne Plaza Hotel
925 S. Creyts Rd., Lansing, MI 48917 | 517-323-7100

Schedule of Events – Friday, January 8

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.*

Schedule of Events – Saturday, January 9

7:30 a.m.	**Registration & Trade Show Opens** – Lobby & Royale Atrium
8 a.m.	**Early Bird Coffee** – Lobby
8:30-9:15 a.m.	**Welcoming Session** – Ballrooms ABC Dr. Heather Ludlam, 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**

Animal Health Update – Ballroom D
Dr. Wineland (MDARD State Veterinarian) & Dr. Amey (USDA Veterinarian)
New World Screwworm, Scrapie & other concerns.

Using Sheep For Dairying– Ballroom E
Olivia Fox, Crafty Fox Acres
An introduction to dairy sheep production for shepherds interested in diversifying or expanding their operations. Participants will learn about dairy sheep breeds, nutrition and flock management, milking systems, lambing considerations, milk quality, and value-added dairy products such as cheese and yogurt.

Judging - Youth & Lambs– Ballroom F
Presenter - TBD

This presentation helps exhibitors, volunteers, and livestock enthusiasts better understand how youth and lambs are evaluated in the show ring. Participants will learn about common judging criteria, proper animal presentation, showmanship skills, and the characteristics judges look for in market and breeding lambs.

10:30-11:15 a.m. **Breakout sessions, Round II**

Understanding Today's Lamb Market: Insights from UPI – Ballroom D

Doug Brooks

*Join representatives from **United Producers Inc.** for an update on current lamb market conditions and industry trends.*

Solar Grazing – Ballroom E
M. Charles Gould, Bioenergy Educator, MSU Extension

As solar development expands, sheep producers are uniquely positioned to provide vegetation management services. Learn what solar grazing is, how it works, and the opportunities it may offer Michigan sheep operations.

Judging - Breeding Sheep & Wool – Ballroom F
Presenter - TBD

An overview of how breeding sheep and wool are evaluated in livestock shows and exhibitions. Participants will learn the key traits judges assess in breeding stock, including structure, breed character, productivity, and overall soundness, as well as the characteristics of high-quality wool such as fiber diameter, uniformity, length, and cleanliness.

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.

1:15-2:15 p.m. **Keynote Session**
Building Better Sheep: Genetics, Innovation, and Opportunity – Ballrooms ABC

Presentation by Dr. Andrew Weaver, Extension Small Ruminant Specialist, Department of Animal Science, North Carolina State University

Ice cream break

2:45-3:30 p.m. **Meet & Greet with New MSU Sheep Specialist** – Ballrooms ABC
Presentation by TBD, MSU Extension

3:45-4:30 p.m. **Breakout sessions, Round III**

Marketing Your Lamb: Highlighting Cuts, Sharing Your Farm Story, and Expanding Online Sales Opportunities – Ballroom D

Panel Discussion - Emily Boeve, Elaine Palm & more
Panelists will share effective ways to educate customers about lamb cuts, create compelling farm stories that build trust and loyalty, and leverage websites, social media, and e-commerce platforms to reach new markets. Attendees will gain insights into connecting with today's consumers, differentiating their products, and turning their farm's unique story into a valuable marketing tool.

Solar Grazing – Ballroom E
Panel Discussion -
A follow-up to Saturday's solar grazing presentation, this panel will address your questions about solar grazing and property management.

Beyond the Fleece: Finding Value in Your Wool Clip
– Ballroom F
Sandra Morris, Mitten State Sheep & Wool

This session will explore how sheep producers can evaluate their wool, recognize characteristics that affect fleece quality and marketability, and identify opportunities to add value to their wool clip.

We'll discuss fleece health, soundness, cleanliness, and preparation for sale, along with what buyers look for when purchasing raw fleeces. We'll also explore different markets and selling opportunities, helping producers make informed decisions about getting the most from their flock's fiber.

5-5:45 p.m. **Producers of the Year presentations** – Ballroom E
Presentations by MSPA's producers of the year awardees honored at the 2026 annual banquet:

- 2025 Commercial Producers of the Year: n/a
- 2025 Club Lamb Producers of the Year: Fleming Farm
- 2025 Purebred Producers of the Year: n/a

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 10

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 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 **Applying Genetic Tools to Your Flock** – Ballrooms DEF

Presentation by Dr. Andrew Weaver, Extension Small Ruminant Specialist, Department of Animal Science, North Carolina State University

Using specific goals and scenarios provide application of genetic tools to demonstrate value in reaching goals.

Closing Comments

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 & Wooly 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, 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 $40 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 $25 and youth tickets are $15. Tickets will not be available for on-site purchase.