

Highland County Sheep Lead  
Brooke Beam, PhD  
Ohio State University Extension, Highland County  
Agriculture and Natural Resources/Community Development Extension Educator

September 4, 2018

I want to congratulate all of the participants of the Highland County Fair. I had the pleasure of viewing many of the livestock shows and assisting with the junior fair sales. I was impressed with the professionalism and courtesy the participants showed their peers and the judges. In particular, the sheep lead sticks out in my mind because I was a multi-year participant as a youth in this contest. I participated in the sheep lead at the county, state, and national level for over ten years. Without fail, every time I participated the temperature would be the hottest of the fair, which for the sheep lead really means something.

In typical sheep lead fashion, the Highland County Sheep Lead occurred on one of the hottest days of the Fair when the high was 91°F. Why is the heat important to consider when considering the sheep lead, you ask? It is important because all of the participants must wear predominantly wool apparel for the contest.

The sheep lead is unique in the sense that it combines both a livestock and fashion show together to highlight the sheep industry. Each participant must model their outfit and show their sheep while maintaining poise and grace. Lambs must be breeding sheep or market lambs that are trained to be shown by a halter. The combination of livestock and fashion is a treat for many spectators.

The sheep industry in the United States changed after World War II. Synthetic fibers replaced the use of wool in many instances and caused a shift in the market for lambs to be driven by meat production. According to the USDA, there were only 150,000 sheep in Ohio in 2003, which was a decrease of over 50 percent of the sheep population in Ohio from 1975. Although at the Highland County Fair Sheep Lead this year there were several first-year participants in the contest.

While the sheep industry has declined in size, there are opportunities for individuals to become involved in the sheep industry. The Southeast Ohio Sheep and Goat School covers a multitude of topics for beginning and experienced herdsman, ranging from parasites to reproduction. For more information about the Southeast Ohio Sheep and Goat School contact Christine Gelley at [gelley.2@osu.edu](mailto:gelley.2@osu.edu) or 740-732-5681. Another opportunity is the Ohio Statewide Sheep Shearing School being held on Friday and Saturday, September 14-15 at the Dave Cable Farm (10491 Canal Road, Hebron, OH 43025). For more information about the Ohio Statewide Sheep Shearing School contact Roger High at 614-246-8299.

If you are interested in participating in next year's sheep lead, the contest is open to all ages. For more information about the 2019 Highland County Fair Sheep Lead Contest contact Diane Keltner.

Upcoming Events:

**Beef Quality Assurance Trainings:**

- Thursday, September 13, 2018, 6:30 P.M., Producers Stockyards, Hillsboro
- Thursday, October 25, 2018, 6:30 P.M., Producers Stockyards, Hillsboro

Call your local Ohio State University Extension Office to register for the date and location of the BQA training of your choice. The Highland County Extension Office can be reached at 937-393-1918.

Tickets for the **2018 Farm Science Review** are now available at the Highland County Extension Office. Tickets purchased at the Highland County Extension Office are \$7, tickets will be \$10 at the gate. Children 5 and under are free.

###



Highland County Sheep Lead Participants:

Back row: Grace Matthews, Brenna Wright, Lana Grover, Emma Yochum, Kallie Posey, and Sara Newsome.

Front row: Emelia Roehm, Evelyn Roehm, Kinlee Case, Eloise Roehm, Ella Brown, and Katie Cook

Highland County Youth Dog Show Participants



From left to right: Anne Marie Ogden, Jennielynn Ogden, Isabelle Clevenger, Kathryn Ogden, Hayden Scott, Emma Sanderson, Kyah Chaney, and Keria Scott.