

Fall 2018 Quarterly Meeting, Saturday 10/28 11-2 at 4H Acres, Ithaca NY

Key Panel Q&A Takeaways:

Kraemer Yarn in Nazareth PA has quick turn around and decent prices (need to wash yourself)

- See Lisa Ferguson for more details

There are mini-mills that will wash fiber for you in our region:

- [Windy Meadows](#) (Hamlin, NY)
- [Acorn Fiber Works](#) (Churchville, NY)

Mills often have a booth at fiber festivals, can drop-off at one and pick-up at another)

**time for processing depends greatly on what your product is (yarn takes longer than roving)

Not all mills will accept your washing

Not all mills will wash

** Need to check services offered and expectations

Having a draw helps when having an on-farm store

- People come to see the alpacas, they are a curiosity

Large mills vs. mini-mills

- Large mills 'faster'
- Mini-mills can work with smaller volume (i.e. keep certain animals together in the fiber)
 - Marketing 'This is Katie's fleece, great when folks can meet the animals

Festivals worthwhile?

- There are fees associated with festivals and there are a few ways to handle assessing if the fee is worth it:
 - Smaller festivals \$500 in sales minimum (see Margaret Flowers)
 - Larger festivals, a certain percentage of the fee (see Karen Stern)

Knowing the value of the different parts of a fleece can help increase returns

- A given fleece can go to various uses (see Karen Stern)
 - Roving, yarn, locks etc....
- Spring clip for some might be a good use for items such as dryer balls (see Margaret Flowers)

Demonstrations are valuable at markets and festivals

- Can result in sales via different ways:
 - Interest in replicating
 - Interest in having experience with the story
 - Simply having the booth populated attracts more people to the booth
- It is good will
- If demonstration implies >1 person in the booth helpful for breaks!

Educating the kids is key (make the connection between farm and product)

- In schools, coordinate with other organizations:
 - FFA, Ag Societies, CCE
 - Chemung Co. does this
- At festivals demonstrations help educate

Key Marketing Panel Takeaways:

Online (Teresa Fallon)

- Look for relevant pages on Facebook and IG
 - Interact (comment and complement)
- Start by selling fleece and build a reputation
 - People will promote you on their own if they have a good experience.

Fall 2018 Quarterly Meeting, Saturday 10/28 11-2 at 4H Acres, Ithaca NY

- General thoughts:
 - Be clear in your farm philosophy and share it.
 - Use hashtags (Instagram, google 'how to use hashtags')
- Her online presence has helped her build relationships
 - BestMade (also through her work with Dr. Helen Trejo)
 - Laura Nelkin Knit Ithaca (also through her work with LocalFiber)
- She is on IG and Facebook every day, it is like a second job. It takes work.
- Follow Ironwoodhillfarmstudio on IG and Ironwood Hill Farm Finn sheep n Finn Fiber on Facebook to learn more
- Facebook groups to sell fiber:
 - Dirty Fleece Done Dirt Cheap
 - Raw Wool for Sale
 - Paca This Fiber Sales
 - LocalFiber Fibery Goods Marketplace
- Link social media to your online store and website

On-Farm Store (Chris Houseworth & Barb Sodums)

- It's about education
 - Creating an opportunity for the public to learn more about the animals and their fiber
- Location is important
 - Access to market and marketing opportunities (i.e. rack cards in wineries)
- Opportunity for repeat customers
- Alpacas are a curiosity, helpful in marketing
 - Maybe opportunities for other livestock (i.e. lambing season)
- Have quantity and variety in stock so something for everyone.
- Pricing is essential
 - Even here cannot mark-up 200% from wholesale, people won't pay it (processing is expensive)
- Have a big sign
 - Farm name
 - Phone number
 - Visits by appointment
 - Mention farm store
- Marketing
 - Coordinate with other area businesses
 - Lawn signs when events are happening and put them all over
 - Have business cards out
 - Guest book
 - Ask friends to share event posts on Facebook
 - Have your website reflect your business goals
 - Want people to come to your farm, make that the front page

Various Experiences (Lisa Ferguson)

- Markets, on-farm events, looking into agritourism, farm tours
- Charge \$30 for 1 ½ hour farm tour.
 - I take time to walk around

Fall 2018 Quarterly Meeting, Saturday 10/28 11-2 at 4H Acres, Ithaca NY

- Most people do not mind paying
- Regardless I thank them for their time (maybe they'll come back)
- Getting out of markets
 - Time consuming to travel
 - Need tax certificates for each state
 - Additional costs of time, lodging, etc.
 - Requires stamina for many days of festival or market
- Signage (know your local laws)!!!!
 - Different towns have different ordinances for signs
 - Maybe have state put up sign on well-travelled road
- Exploring agritourism
 - Awarded a grant to explore
 - A lot of interest from the city to see farms/goats
- On farm events are worth it
 - Maybe not a lot of sales but warm feeling about your farm
 - Animal and product sales do occur at these events
- Looking into creating wholesale accounts
 - Have yarn for knitters and end-use products (e.g. hats, gloves, socks)
 - Orgs that will help:
 - Small Business Development
 - A group of Cornell graduate students (application process)

Markets and Festivals (Margaret Flowers & Karen Stern)

- 2 Key Points:
 - If you don't take it, it won't sell
 - You better take it because there is no way of knowing market to market and year to year what will sell.
- Booth should tell a story of your farm
- Start small to get your feet wet (Area craft show events, Smaller farmers markets)
 - A great opportunity to learn what works and what doesn't
 - More opportunity to talk with folks about what they like etc....
- Farm markets are great for diversified farm
- It is a lot of work to prepare for a market
 - If you want to sell \$X then you need to bring at least \$X worth of items
 - And fit in your vehicle and set-up at the market
 - Variety of items increases sales
 - Going the night before to set up decreases stress
- Be willing to apply more than once
 - Every festival has turn-over
 - Excellence, aesthetic, novelty helps to be accepted
 - Consider improving your application (samples, offer to teach a workshop, pictures)
- Markets are an ongoing experiment
 - Come home think about what sold, why, what can you change for next time?
- Still have an online presence (website, FB, everything is useful)
 - Know your personal purpose for each online venue
 - Use social media to tell your customers that you will be at such-n-such market

Fall 2018 Quarterly Meeting, Saturday 10/28 11-2 at 4H Acres, Ithaca NY

- Know your limits and boundaries (There are plenty of options regionally)
 - Are you willing to pay a farm sitter?
 - Are you interested in tabling at large festivals, small, or both?
 - Back to back markets implies that you will need to restock between
 - How far are you willing to travel?
- Bringing animals can reduce/remove fee (often by invitation)

Notes from the Panel Discussion (11:00 – 12:00)

| | |
|--|--|
| Introductions- Guests | |
| <u>Barb Sodums</u> shepcreekalpacas@aol.com | Shepherds Creek Alpacas Trumansburg, NY -- On-farm store |
| <u>Chris Houseworth</u> chris@cabinviewalpacas.com | Cabin View Alpacas Trumansburg, NY -- On-farm store |
| <u>Lisa Ferguson</u> lisa@laughinggoatfiber.com | Laughing Goat Fiber Farm Ithaca, NY -- A variety of non-traditional festivals throughout the year (i.e. apple festival, clothesline festival, Alternatives Market) Setting up agritourism on her farm open house weekends and events on-farm store |
| <u>Margaret Flowers</u> trinitysheepfarm@gmail.com | Trinity Farm Aurora, NY -- Local fiber festivals throughout the year (e.g. CNY, Finger Lakes, Little York) |
| <u>Karen Stern</u> kastern@empacc.net | Windsong Farm Burdett, NY -- Regional fiber festivals throughout the year (e.g. CNY, NY Sheep and Wool, Maryland, Finger Lakes) |
| <u>Teresa Fallon</u> ironwoodhillfarm@gmail.com | Ironwood Hill Finn sheep and Farm Newark, NY -- Online Sales |
| Q&A (open with introduction of guests): | |
| Teresa (Dana) | (Dana speaks for Teresa) Started by posting fleeces for sell online. When people received and liked her product, they started to promote her. From there she expanded to spinning fiber, yarn, breed stock and sheep sales. She recommends that you look for the relevant pages and interact with people (comment and compliment). Posting sheep for sale it is important to explain your farm philosophy and constant promotion. (note, she is super active on social media and this has led to her success, her activity). She has given me a lot of tips on hashtags etc. |

Fall 2018 Quarterly Meeting, Saturday 10/28 11-2 at 4H Acres, Ithaca NY

| | |
|------------------|--|
| | <p>Posting photos to get attention and share information others can use. Then your followers will support your page and tell others.</p> <p>About Teresa: has a WordPress website that connects to Etsy (may change to a different platform that supports marketing a little better) Due to her online presence, and work with Helen Trejo, she was able to connect with BestMade (a clothing line organizing a ‘Nor’easter sweater and attempting to source locally produced wool). Another thing online, and LocalFiber, has helped her with is she will be a part of Laura Nelkin’s knit Ithaca Knit night market. To note: Teresa is coordinating with this event IG posts and Etsy updates.</p> <p>She says that she takes time every day to work with IG and Facebook, it is like a second job. It is not for everyone, it does take work.</p> <p>On Instagram she pays for sponsor app whenever she puts up something new to help broaden her reach.</p> <p>Facebook, she has a personal and business page, follow others, make connections, search for other fiber related pages. Key is to make connections and build relationships. There are several Facebook groups to sell wool and other fibers (Dirty Fleece – Done Dirt Cheap, Raw Wool for Sale, Paca This Fiber Sales)</p> <p>Instagram create an account and research how to get followers (google). Link these to your online store.</p> |
| Chris Houseworth | <p>Cabin View Alpacas and we are an alpaca breeding farm and we have about 40 head on the farm. We do have a farm store, part of the reason we have started a farm store in the beginning s because we have the infrastructure, it was there, and we thought well it was a logical thing to do to get people to stop by the farm. Our primary goal is to upbreed the animals but still they are all about the fiber, so we really want to push the fiber.</p> <p>One of the things about having a store is it is exposure, we are on the Cayuga wine trail, which is a plus for us, so location is important. People go to the wineries and we have rack cards in all the wineries, so they pick them up and come by. The point of all of it is, we are a small store in North America we are a cottage industry, but when people stop at the store, they get a chance to see what alpacas all are about, they get a change to see what alpaca fiber all is about. They also get a chance to meet alpaca. This is an industry that is still new to North America and it is not industrialized in north America so, what we are doing is teaching the public. When they stop, they have an opportunity to learn what alpacas are about and what their fibers are like, and if we are lucky enough, we get some sales.</p> <p>We sometimes get people who come back, e.g. just yesterday we had a couple that bought alpaca socks the year before several pair each,</p> |

Fall 2018 Quarterly Meeting, Saturday 10/28 11-2 at 4H Acres, Ithaca NY

| | |
|-------------|---|
| | <p>and they made a special trip to come buy more. So, people are learning, they are learning about alpaca.</p> <p>Is our store profitable, yes though we do not push it as much as we could? Though recently I am no longer working another full-time job, so my next goal is to build an online store to so...</p> <p>Again, I think it is public awareness and education.</p> |
| Barb Sodums | <p>Shepherds Creek Alpacas, also in Trumansburg but opposite sides of town but I am also a breeder however I am much smaller and a little more focused on fiber at this point in my life. 15 years of doing this, moving my farm to 3 different states the whole farm the animals and everything and marketing in 3 different geographic areas so my marketing had to change with that. So, I have some ideas about how you sort of target the market that you want with what ever fiber you have. One of the things... alpacas are still somewhat of a curiosity so for Chris and me we can put it out there "come see the alpacas (and shop in our farm store)" which is a plus for our farm store. I don't know with other livestock if a farm store is as viable an option, but I talked with my husband who use to raise sheep. And he had a little bottle fed that would follow him around, and he had lambs that people would want to come and see the lambs during lambing season, so maybe there is some opportunity there...</p> <p>So, we carry enough quantity and selection in our shop they people should be able to get what they want. We have a small herd and we process all our fiber into yarns and roving and then do some handmade items, accessories and stuff. This is ~25% of our inventory the other 75% is wholesale out of South America, and people come, and they might see the handmade and the yarn and the animals right there and be drawn to that. Other people are really drawn to the pretty Peruvian commercial made accessories, so for me it is important to have both. Have a selection.</p> <p>Pricing is essential, even in an area like Ithaca where there is a pretty good socio-economic. I probably mark up from wholesale ~ 20%, they recommend 200%, can't do that since alpaca is so expensive. Our yarn costs me \$10 - \$20 a skein just to have it made, and that doesn't count for the shearing or the animal maintenance. So, we do not make a lot of money is our farm store because of that. Our goal is to try to make enough to help with feeding the animals and offset the cost. Long term it would be nice to be able to do it and make a little profit to pay for all the work we do.</p> <p>Marketing: There are few important things. We have a big sign with our phone number that says farm visits by appointment. It also mentions the farm store, we also have website. I changed my website since we moved here so that what you see initially is about coming to the farm for farm visits only. It used to be about the animals, we are breeders too, so that nationally people could see what we have (seed</p> |

Fall 2018 Quarterly Meeting, Saturday 10/28 11-2 at 4H Acres, Ithaca NY

| | |
|---------------|---|
| | <p>stock). But I changed it and I get a lot of business from it. Google, website, they see we do farm visits and they come give us a call. That has worked well, tourists. They almost always shop.</p> <p>We do not charge for farm visits. But we do suggest that if the folks do not want to shop, they are welcome to donate to help support the farm. (I had a student from Cornell mail me a \$10 bill recently that said I wanted to donate). I consider visits as marketing time.</p> <p>Business cards, bags have farm info on, guest book to collect emails, and events (e.g. national alpaca farm days event, pre-Christmas). Most of my animal sales are from events. I am across from Hunts tree farm in Trumansburg, (location) and coordinate with Hunts to advertise and lots of people walk over from the tree farm all through December (we are open every Saturday).</p> <p>Get the word out, talk, lawn signs all over the place, flyers. Facebook, lots of sharing of posts, again for events and what we are doing holiday wise. I will ask people to share on their different pages. It is all about getting the word out.</p> |
| Lisa Ferguson | <p>Laughing Goat Fiber Farm. Listening to some of what you all said. We do charge for tours \$30 for up to 5 people then after that there is another charge. So, every time we do a tour, we make a little money. I spend about 1 – 1 ½ hours touring people around, and I think I should get paid for my time. Most people are happy to pay it.</p> <p>I have people who call and hear about the cost and they don't come, which is fine other times they do... I always say thank you for thinking of me. I think a large part of what we do is education.</p> <p>I market my items, I raise mohair, cashmere, and I have a few alpacas. I must do the first step of the process, which is to wash the fiber. I then send my fiber to a mill to be turned into yarn. That yarn is specifically made to be sold to knitters to be turned into finished goods. Everything I sell at the farm has my fiber in it. I usually market at craft shows, though I am getting tired of dragging stuff all over the planet. I've done shows in Ohio, NJ, NY, Conn, Mass... you must have sales tax certificate for each location, you need to get lodging. you got to have the stamina to go for 2-3 days...</p> <p>Looking at opening a shop on the farm. I have a couple of buildings, most of which have some historic value to them (same goes for most of the equipment). My agritourism efforts will also include that.</p> <p>I make a lot of things on farm, and I have a lot of things made for me. I do all the dying, I am looking at trying to home in on a wholesale place, so that I can sell to shops, which would be a lot easier than travelling all over the planet. I find that hard to pin down because of all the costs. I am getting some assistance with that (SBDC) and a program that gets Cornell Graduate students.</p> |

Fall 2018 Quarterly Meeting, Saturday 10/28 11-2 at 4H Acres, Ithaca NY

| | |
|------------------|--|
| | <p>I am right on 79, 5000 cars a day go right by my farm... we just put a sign up. I had a sign up about 4-5 years ago and it was stolen. That has happened a couple of times I 'm guessing because of the name of the farm. With that sign I am hoping to raise the profile of the farm because a lot of people say, 'where are you'.</p> <p>We have a little area for parking, not a lot, but the builds are spread out, so it does leave it ripe for walking tour. There are parts of the farm I don't want them to see. I won a grant to do an agritourism plan, I had a landscape architect work with me, and I have a physical map pf what the farm should/could look like if I were to put another bunch of money into grading etc.... So, we might chip away at it. Then we would be able to accommodate buses from NY. There is quite a demand for going to see fiber farms, people love goats (they are all over the internet right now).</p> <p>There is talk of doing some sort of fiber festival at my farm since the location is so easy to get to. I am not sure if I am up for that...</p> <p>events are very important. It doesn't necessarily result in a lot of sales, but it does get people to have a warm feeling about your farm. And talk with other people about it. I have had animal sales and product sales resulting from people coming to one of the events. The events are usually free. Some of them through CCE, some of them we do.</p> <p>Signage, Barb was talking about putting signs everywhere, know the towns codes (cannot do that in Ithaca). May be getting the state to put a sign up on route 79 (e.g. little green sign saying farm coming up), I have the link to that but never had the time to fill it out.</p> <p>M.F.: Do you charge for tour even if they are intending to purchase goats?</p> <p>Lisa: Yes, I do charge, what if they don't buy, I still gave them my time.</p> |
| Margaret Flowers | <p>Trinity farm outside of Aurora NY, I have Icelandic and Shetland sheep. I am here representing doing festivals. But before I get to this, I want to give you the totality of what I do.</p> <p>I am a solo farmer, so I must be attentive to my energy level therefore I can't do everything that I might want to do, and my farm did not start out as a farm it started out as a house with a garage. When I started getting sheep it was to supplement my love of fiber arts. I am not set-up to do tours, I built sheds for housing, my garage is where my breeding Icelandic are with their lambs. Some of what others talk about as a part of farm operation I don't or cannot do. I also don't want to do tours due to biosecurity reasons. If somebody comes to my farm they are coming as "I am interested in your sheep potentially to buy". Sometimes they buy, sometimes they don't.</p> |

Fall 2018 Quarterly Meeting, Saturday 10/28 11-2 at 4H Acres, Ithaca NY

I have an online presence, a website through squarespace. My focus is selling sheep from that. I have some things in a store and I have a farm FB page on which I selectively share some posts to the Icelandic and Shetland sheep communities. I haven't tried to sell fiber online. I am on the raw wool page, I am also on an Icelandic fiber page, there are quite a few pages available for raw wool to finished goods sales on FB.

When I had just a few sheep (I have ~90 now) I started realizing that I was spinning a lot and I was making a lot of yarn, more than I could use myself. I had an opportunity to sell at a little 1-day craft fair in a school gym, I did that and did surprisingly well, so I thought okay, we'll go with this. I had an opportunity, through Cheryl, to join a farmer's market in King Ferry. Which initially was only every other week, then it met ever week and went belly up from that (likely due to location). Regardless I was able to get some sales, get my feet wet, the idea of how to sell (I am not a marketer). I had been going to fiber festivals for several years as a visitor (not vendor) I had the opportunity of getting into CNY in their 2nd year, then I joined finger lakes (was on waiting list and then got in). Taking the animals got me in to that one. The other one I do is Little York, since it's inception. It is a smaller show but high quality and very nice.

I have tried Rhinebeck a couple times and it ended up being a problem for me since I ma a solo farmer. The other ones are close enough that I can come back and take care of me sheep, that one I cannot and would require a farm sitter. I might try it again, but it is not high priority for me. I am also doing Endless Mountains now for the Icelandic Breed Display. It gives me free sales area, I don't have to pay an entrance fee because of the animals granted I have to transport and feed the animals... Not totally free but I don't have to pay a fee. I also did the LocalFiber pop-up which I hope to do again this year, did it last year and was surprised at how well I did. Finally, an opportunity came up for the Schweinfurth in Auburn, a one-day event, close a few hours in the afternoon. I can fit that in, I can do that and RocDay from the Blacksheep hand spinners guild.

Basically, I limited myself to 4 major shows that are 2-days shows and a few small things as they come up.

What I've learned:

If you don't take it you won't sell it, so I pretty much take all my inventory, which for me I have raw fleece all the way up to yarn. I don' have finished goods. (By personal choice) I've diversified a little bit by making yarn balls from the spring clip of Icelandic sheep (which can tend to be plentiful with VM). I have started taking my fleece to mills to make roving, and then the yarn I sell is handspun. I also sell sheep milk soap, some of it felted.

Fall 2018 Quarterly Meeting, Saturday 10/28 11-2 at 4H Acres, Ithaca NY

| | |
|-------|--|
| | <p>You better take it because, there is no way to predict from one show to the next what will sell and no way to predict from one show year over year what will sell.</p> <p>Main part of my business is selling breed stock, but I make a decent amount at these craft shows and fiber festivals. The sheep pay for their hay, a fair amount of their treats (i.e. alfalfa pellets) and they pay for their tax bill. (2 9:36)</p> |
| Karen | <p>Windsong Farm we have long wool sheep (wensleydale, Cotswold, Teeswater) My husband and I have diverse interests. He likes to grow things (e.g. fruit) and I like this work. That diversification initially led us to start with a booth at the Trumansburg Farmers Market (2009). That was just a way to get our feet wet.</p> <p>Our first fiber product was Cotswold roving and sheep skins. I didn't have a fiber background, it came after the sheep. The farmers market was a good choice because we had diverse products. (E.g. chicken, berries, jam...)</p> <p>We did that for a little while. I eventually decided to dye fiber and have yarn made. I had an opportunity to introduce yarns on a small scale and get some feedback. When you go to the markets like that you can tell right away if people like things or if they are not so interested. That was helpful.</p> <p>We are now at the Ithaca Farmers Market (it took 2 application processes to get in, that was 2012. This is the 1st year that we have a booth of our own (2018). We do the farmers market because of David, it is not my ideal, but it is a great venue for diversified farm.</p> <p>The first fiber festival (2011) was CNY. If you could see our booth back then it was simple, tables with sheep skins, roving but nothing packaged... What I've learned at the festivals is that it is a lot of work to get ready for them. You must have inventory for them (if you don't have it you can't sell it) but then when you get there you have 2 days, with lots of interaction then go home and recover. I'm not a great online marketer, so the festivals help me to market and establish recognition for my work.</p> <p>CNY since 2011, applied for Finger Lakes in 2011.</p> <p>We would get there 1 hour before to set-up, we now go the day before to not feel stressed/rushed. Visibility you need to have a vertical display.</p> <p>Tried Little York, Southern Adirondack, liked all of them but we too have a limit at what we can do. We applied a couple of years ago to Rhinebeck and I have to say, it is worthwhile. This year was stellar year (perfect weather). BUT it is a ton of work. If you can imagine, if</p> |

Fall 2018 Quarterly Meeting, Saturday 10/28 11-2 at 4H Acres, Ithaca NY

| | |
|--|---|
| | <p>you want to sell x# of Dollars then must create at least that and fit it into your vehicle and make it look pretty... People come to spend.</p> <p>I have raw fleeces, locks, yarn, the more you touch something the more expensive it becomes, roving, hand carded batts, handspun yarn, scarves. I started wet-felting lock scarves (it makes sense for the breeds I have).</p> <p>I have another festival this weekend and now I must build up my inventory for that again, a lot of work.</p> <p>We do Rhinebeck and Maryland, if you get accepted to one or the other then the other is easier to get into. All the festivals have turn-over, they change over time... You must be willing to apply more than once (it took us 3 times to get into Rhinebeck). Getting into some of the more competitive festivals they are always looking for something different or something new. Excellence and aesthetic make things easy for someone.</p> <p>I think a lot about my displays and pricing, after every festival I always think about what sold and what didn't and make appropriate changes.</p> <p>Each market is different.</p> <p>I do soft introductions, I display something before selling to get feedback or change price/display to figure out if it is worth the effort and if so, what is the best price. It takes a while before we home in on 'the right thing' for any given product.</p> <p>Shopify powers our website now, \$30/month, you must plan to sell BUT it is designed for selling. (e.g. I sold some sheep skins and got an email from typify that they were sold, then went and printed out the label that Shopify had ready for me and sent it off).</p> <p>I should be using social media better by integrating SM with where we are going to be.</p> <p>Additional notes from Karen:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Farmers market<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Diverse crowd at IFM: regulars (meat, jams & produce) vs. shoppers (wool & sheepskins)- Takes a lot of time: prepare for, set up, attend, take down- Meet customers!2. Fiber Festivals<ul style="list-style-type: none">- All farmers markets and fiber festivals have turnover, if you don't get in first time, try again (consider improving application - pictures, samples, offer to teach a workshop, |
|--|---|

Fall 2018 Quarterly Meeting, Saturday 10/28 11-2 at 4H Acres, Ithaca NY

| | |
|------------------|--|
| | <p>bring animals etc.). Evaluate the new booths at festivals to see how you might fit in.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ton of work to prepare (need lots of inventory!), travel, set up etc., - Booth tells a story of farm. If something doesn't sell evaluate display, packaging, pricing, quality etc. - Meet new and repeat customers- including serious fiber fans!!! You can learn about what they are looking for. Exhausting. Different customers at different festivals (i.e. folks looking for raw materials vs finished goods) |
| Carol Haff | What is CNY? |
| Margaret Flowers | It is a fiber festival in Bouckville, NY in June |
| Lisa Ferguson | How many women in this room are doing this alone? (several hands go up) That is amazing, I think that should somehow be highlighted. I don't know how you do this alone. |
| Sherry (?) | Most of what you do with your fiber you do yourself, wash etc.... Chris said that she sends something to a mill, how long does it take for you to get your stuff back? |
| Chris | Forever, 9-12 month turn around. |
| Lisa | Here is my solution, Kreamer yarns in PA. They can turn it around in 1 month. If I push them, I can get it faster. They are wonderful, they are family owned, it is just bigger. |
| Sherry (?) | How far away are you mills? |
| Lisa | Kraemer is in Nazareth PA which is about 3 hours, I drive my stuff there. If there are a bunch of farmers who want to drive stuff down there, we can rent a panel truck and make it cheap. The other thing is that the price is what the mini-mills are. I took 82 lbs., it must be washed first, they don't do any scouring so you either hire someone to scour it or you get yourself a top-loader and do it yourself. |
| Carol | Do you think there would be interest in this area in having a pre-process mill, like washing etc.... |
| Margaret | There are mini-mills in the area that do that, Windy Meadows , Acorn Fiber Works |
| Carol | how far away are they from here... |
| Margaret | Acorn is just the far side of Rochester, and I'm not sure about Windy Meadows. |
| Carol | So, you're still talking about a couple of hours? |
| Margaret | Yes, but one thing to consider is that if you go to these festivals, they are there so you can give them fiber there. There was one time that Zeilinger was at Finger lakes (2 nd weekend in September) they had roving for me at Rhinebeck (later tat fall) It is going to depend on what you want. With yarn it is a lot more processing to get it. Roving you can get back quickly, yarn is going to take long. 9 months to 1 year is standard, because they are not just working with yours there is a long list of folks besides you. |
| Nancy | Some place will not accept your wash and they will wash it again. |
| Nancy | Washing fleece before will result in a lower weight for shipping |

Fall 2018 Quarterly Meeting, Saturday 10/28 11-2 at 4H Acres, Ithaca NY

| | |
|----------|--|
| Dana | On farm vs. festivals what are characteristics that you have that make that opportunity more suitable |
| Barb | For us it is the animals, we can promote the alpacas and bring people to our farm and they can shop at the farm store. I have done vending in the past and if I can take the alpacas with me, I always do, because I have people constantly surrounding the alpacas and then buying stuff. So not as much here, since we have been back, but I'd like to do that it is fun. The animal is a reason to have a farm store |
| Chris | It draws people in and we have been toying with the idea of charging for ours as well, because it does take a lot of time, especially if we are going to do Alpaca 101. I have had people buy certain items because they met that alpaca, and then they come in the shop and buy the skein of yarn because it is Katie's... |
| Lisa | That is something you lose when you leave the mini-mills and go to the bigger mills, you don't have that. |
| Barb | Even with the mini-mill I must blend |
| Chris | It depends on how much fiber I have, but sometimes I will for example have two different animals of 'blacks' I actually write on the label, I will put pictures of the animals themselves. |
| Margaret | What I gave Zeilinger, I had 2 different year fleeces from the same animal and they were able to process them. If it is important for you to have that animal, you can save up the fiber for a couple of years. |
| Barb | Do you find it ever difficult to offset the costs? You are talking about travel, lodging, fees. |
| Karen | I take what ever venue fee, for me to make it worth my while I must make a certain percentage of that. |
| Margaret | I have never had a problem, the shows that I do are medium sized... I take sheep to the ones that I can take them to. Animals are a draw. I didn't ever have anyone ask me for the fiber. One of the craft type show that I did, Liberty Ridge were there "we have to make \$500 to make any of these shows worthwhile", and I have used that as kind of my gauge/ minimum. If I don't make that in sales, (note these markets are low cost compared to Rhinebeck and Maryland) |
| Barb | Karen, you do most of the processing yourself? |
| Karen | I am trying to more and more inhouse, because it financially makes sense. As soon as I send it out, I always calculate process based on the weight of what I send out... yarn costs anywhere from \$2-4 an oz. to have made and so then what can I sell it for? I depend, Cotswold yarns are not that valuable, it is coarse heavy yarn... I take it into account. If I have a good part of the fleece in front of me then that might be best for locks, I charge \$6-7 and oz... That is a good profit for an oz. there will be part of that fleece that is not suitable for lock so that might go into roving or yarn or maybe I will hand spin it. So, a given fleece there are a variety of values and uses. I do try to do as much in house a possible. |
| Barb | The cost for alpaca is so high that we can't sell our stuff. I just got offered to take my yarns to a store and figured out how much I would |

Fall 2018 Quarterly Meeting, Saturday 10/28 11-2 at 4H Acres, Ithaca NY

| | |
|----------|--|
| | have to sell just to have a little shelf and there is no way. It is too bad because it is such a great opportunity. So maybe the hand doing more stuff is an answer. |
| Margaret | Karen just said something that is important, using the good and the less good parts for different purposes. Icelandic's you shear them in the fall to get the good clean fiber and the spring clip is covered in VM and not fleece you'd sell to a spinner. For years I would shear them in the spring and compost fleece. A couple of years ago I thought I wonder if a mill that big equipment has let's see what could happen and I got back beautiful roving, didn't like, it as much for spinning... dryer balls! Played with the price and sold quite a few of them. I figured out what it cost me for the roving, and I was more than doubling my cost from roving. |
| Nikki | Do you ladies think that there is a need, or use a facility that you could go and wash your fibers, or would you pay someone just to wash? |
| Lisa | I tried that, I took my mohair to green fleece over near Albany, and I just asked to ash it (~\$10/lb.) finish weight. Then I take it down to Kraemer and I end up with the same price as if I was taking it down to the mini-mill. So now I do my own washing, but yeah, if there was a facility where I could do more than 1-2 batches at a time, I would use it, and drying! |
| Barb | I have a dying/fiber room |
| Dana | What is the value of having working examples of fiber use at markets etc....? |
| Margaret | It is very valuable. People come buy and Linda is needle felting and people want lessons, they want kits that are for sale. |
| Linda | That is a factor and because I produce finished goods that are bright and colorful it is nice to work with someone else. I also have to say that at festivals if you are a solo farmer and can team-up then you might be able to go the bathroom and stuff. So, all of this is good. People have a lot of interest because a lot of children are getting some exposure and if the children are sticking around the parents are sticking around. There are times people end up spending quite some time with me while I'm demonstrating and simply keeping people around the booth is important for business (feeding frenzy) |
| Barb | I just started weaving and on farm days I had the weaving out. I do a lot of hands on talking, showing etc.... people enjoyed the demonstration then want something I made, the ones I wove I sold immediately! People as specifically 'did you weave this' and then they buy. |
| Cheryl | People love to feel connected, people are hungry to feel connected. |
| Chris | For farm days this year we had a festival. We had a classic car show mixed in with the alpacas, we had a bunch of demonstrations, weavers, hand spinner, etc. We brought the people to use and it was successful. |
| Margaret | The distance of all that we do is amazing, Hearing people have such inaccurate ideas of what we are doing. If I am at a festival and a kid comes by, I try to get them aware of what I am doing to make yarn... The physics and the mechanics. |

Fall 2018 Quarterly Meeting, Saturday 10/28 11-2 at 4H Acres, Ithaca NY

| | |
|--------|---|
| Sherry | The farm bureau and the ag society are working together to engage the school kids (Chemung County) That has helped us too, they have the ag city day and Old McDonalds farm, several events throughout the year. Even CCE has classes in the schools. Elmira is as inner city as you're going to get in this region. This idea of separation of knowledge between farm and produces, where stuff comes from so divorced one of the main things, we can do is educate with other community organizations... Sometimes we don't have the resources to get into the school, so we can work with groups like farm bureau and ag societies to do this. Not just trying to sell but also the education. |
| Chris | Schools use to have future farmers of America (FFA) They just had the national FFA convention and they had over 50, 000 kids. They are getting FFA chapters started in Groton, BOCES. |

Note: much of our current work is funded in support by SARE grant ONE18-312