

Virginia Sheep Industry Board (Draft) Annual Report 2024 - 2025

I. NARRATIVE

A. Creation of the Board

The Virginia Sheep Industry Board was brought about by producers seeking more funds for predator control. Members of the General Assembly asked to appropriate additional funding for predator control above the level of \$35,000.00 annually. Legislators advised producers that if they could show means of self-funding, the General Assembly would look more favorably upon their request. Predator problems have been one of the greatest causes of declining sheep numbers in Virginia. The Virginia Cooperative Wildlife Damage Management Program (CWDMP), initiated in 1990, provides direct management services on farms as well as technical information to groups and individuals concerned about livestock predation. According to the 2015 USDA – Sheep & Lamb Predator & Non Predator Death Loss in U.S. report, Virginia farmers lost 4,090 head of sheep and lambs to coyotes in 2014, an estimated market value of \$661,000.

In 1995, members of the Virginia Sheep Federation petitioned legislators and the Virginia Sheep Industry Board Act passed. The Act called for 50 cents per head check-off on all lambs and sheep sold beginning July 1, 1996. The Act provided for a Sheep Industry Referendum for producers to vote on the Act. This was completed on October 31, 1995 and 54% of eligible ballots favored "additional market development, predator control, research, education and promotion of the Virginia sheep industry, the creation of the Virginia Sheep Industry Board, and the levy of an assessment of fifty cents per head, with the Board retaining the authority to increase the assessment no more than ten cents per year, up to a maximum assessment of one dollar per head, for all sheep and lambs sold within the Commonwealth of Virginia."

The twelve-member board includes nine sheep producers and three other appointees; one represents the packing/processing/retail segment of the industry, one represents the Virginia Livestock Markets Association, and one represents the purebred segment of the industry. In addition, the extension sheep specialist from Virginia Tech and the Commissioner of VDACS, or his designee, serves as a nonvoting member. The Board held its first organizational meeting on August 28, 1996 and the first business meeting December 2, 1996.

B. Production Information:

The USDA-NASS 2022 Census of Agriculture showed sheep and lamb numbers in Virginia totaled 82,208 head. Sheep and lambs sold totaled 44,473 head, with the majority of production lying on the western side of the state.

II. Budget and Finances

July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025		
	<i>Budgeted</i>	<i>Actual</i>
Meeting Expense	\$2,000.00	\$0.00
Agency Service Charge	\$250.00	\$106.74
Lamb Board Promotional Items	\$500.00	\$0.00
State Fair Lamb Carcass Contest	\$1,500.00	\$0.00
USDA Wildlife Services	\$10,000.00	\$3,149.09*
Virginia FFA Foundation	\$500.00	\$500.00
Virginia 4-H All Star Livestock Judging Team	\$1,000.00	\$0.00
Carcass Educational Support	\$1,500.00	\$1,015.00*
4-H/FFA Youth Development Sponsorship	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
NRV Sheep & Goat Club (Goat Festival)	\$2,000.00	\$2,000.00
VSPA (Website/logo)	\$600.00	\$350.00
Coalfield Sheep Association	\$500.00	\$0.00
Total	\$21,350.00	\$8,120.83

*denotes actual payment (full or part) made in FY25-26

III. Board Funding Projects:

1. \$1,015.00 to help support local youth lamb carcass contest and other carcass educational events.
2. \$1,000.00 to support state winning teams travel expenses. \$500 to Fort Defiance FFA Meats Judging Team travel to the National Contest at the American Royal and \$500 to Fort Defiance FFA Livestock Judging team to travel to the National Contest at their National Convention.
3. \$2,000.00 to help support the New River Valley Sheep and Goat Club host the GOAT Festival which promoted lamb production and consumption.
4. \$3,149.09 to support the USDA Wildlife services in insuring predator control for sheep producers around the state of Virginia.
5. \$350.00 to support the Virginia Sheep Producers Association in designing and developing a logo.
6. 500 to sponsor the Virginia State FFA Sheep Proficiency Award.

IV. Year End Funding Level

**Actual
Expenditures**

1	Cash Balance, June 30, 2024	\$54,959.09
2	Assessment Receipts 7/1/24 – 6/30/25 (+)	\$23,674.93
3	Interest Receipts 7/1/24 – 6/30/25	\$1,996.55
4	Total Balance & Receipts (=)	\$80,630.57
5	Deduct Total Act. Expenditures from VDACS Fin. Analysis (-)	(\$6,930.83)
6	Cash Balance, July 1, 2025 (=)	\$73,699.74

V. Board Meetings & Attendance Roster

June 24, 2025 – Staunton, VA

Members Present:

Jason Shiflet, Mandy Fletcher, Larry Weeks, Clinton Bell, Tim Mize, Mac Swortzel, James Mumaw, Jack Shutte

Members Absent:

Lawson Roberts, Rosalea Potter, Jason Geesaman, Lee Wright

VI. Summary

Sheep producers have been active in securing more State and Federal funding for predator control. In FY 2022, the State allocated \$192,525 (matched by USDA Wildlife Services). These funds provide USDA personnel who assist livestock producers with predator problems. In FY 2022, Wildlife Services conducted 13 educational programs, reaching 348 people, and 134 Virginia livestock producers received direct control services.

With fewer numbers of sheep and changes in marketing patterns, (more sheep sold out of state) Board income experienced a decline in the years leading up to 2018. As the sheep markets in Virginia have started to strengthen and re-establish themselves, more producers are marketing their lambs through local avenues that collect the VSIB tax. Board income has gradually rebounded over the past 5 years with revenues totaling \$19,352.88 for FY23-24 compared to only \$11,301 in FY15-16. The Board is pleased that the industry is seeing a new growth.

X

Mac Swortzel, Chairman