

Draft Minutes
Virginia Sheep Industry Board
January 13, 2026 - 1:00 PM
Augusta County Government Center
Verona, VA

Presiding: Mac Swortzel

Roll Call:

Members Present

Jason Shiflet
Mandy Fletcher
Lisa Chambers
Larry Weeks
Clinton Bell
Jason Geesamen
Mac Swortzel
Lee Wright
James Mumaw
Jon Donaldson
Jack Schutte

Members Absent

Tim Mize

Staff Present

Matthew Sponaugle, Program Manager, VDACS, Harrisonburg
Melissa Ball, VDACS

Others Presents

John Benner, VCE Augusta Co.
Scott Greiner, Virginia Tech
Tom Stanley, VCE

Kari Sponaugle, VCE
Daniel May

This meeting was held in conjunction with the Virginia Sheep Producer Association Board Meeting.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the June 24, 2025 meeting were approved as written.

Financial Report

Matthew Sponaugle reviewed the FY 24-25 report, which showed an ending balance of \$74,445.21. Income for the FY 24-25 was \$23,674.93 up \$2,661.87 from the FY 23-24 and up \$7,897.90 from the FY 21-22. Total expenditures for the FY 24-25 were \$6,930.83.

OLD BUSINESS

Program Reports:

Carcass Educational Support

John Benner, Augusta County Extension addressed the Board pertaining Virginia's youth market lamb show's carcass contest. The Augusta Market Animal Show ultra-sounded 69 lambs in May

2025 and the Rockingham County Fair ultra-sounded 31 lambs in August 2025. All information was put into an excel sheet, ranked, and distributed to the showers and families at their annual awards banquet along with the recognition of the winners. The carcass contest allows exhibitors to receive carcass data on their live show animals, giving them an indication of how they would rank from a commercial standpoint.

NRV Sheep & Goat Club – GOAT Festival

Mandy Fletcher and Tom Stanley both gave a review of the New River Valley Sheep & Goat Club's G.O.A.T (Greatest of All Time) Festival held at the New River Valley Fair Grounds in Dublin, VA. The festival took place in September 2025 and drew an expected crowd over 2,000 spectators. Events included multiple different sheep breed displays, lamb products for sale, and lamb samples to festival goers. Nick Forest presented 4 different lamb cooking sessions, that were well received by attendees.

Website

The VSIB works with the Virginia Sheep Producers Association (VSPA) to host a website. Larry Weeks reported that the website was doing well and providing year-round updated information for Virginia's Sheep producers. The site contains 5 pages including a Sheep Industry Board page. The VSIB has meeting minutes, Annual Reports, and a list of Board members on their page. In the future, the Board plans to list upcoming meeting notices as well as grant announcements. The website has been very well received and Larry has much excitement for the plans of growth to the site.

Virginia State Fair Carcass Contest

Scott Greiner addressed the Virginia State Fair Carcass Contest which has provided carcass evaluation on nearly 4,000 head of market lambs going through the youth market lamb show for the past 27 years. Lambs carcasses continue to get heavier and fattier increasing the yield grades while muscle has failed to keep up with the additional size.

NEW BUSINESS:

Action on Spending Requests

VSPA Website

The VSIB supports the VSPA in their website hosting and maintenance. In doing so, the VSPA has agreed to provide a page to the VSIB to post documents and information pertaining to the VSIB business.

VA 4-H All Star Livestock Judging Team

The Board budgeted \$1,000 for the Virginia State winning 4-H Livestock Judging team to practice and travel to competitions. Each year the top kids at the Virginia State 4-H Youth Livestock Judging contest are invited to compete in the National Contest held at the NAILE in Louisville, KY.

Carcass Educational Support

The carcass educational support line item is to help support local clubs and organizations looking to promote lamb carcass education, most often through ultra-sounding county fair lambs and

using the data to organize a carcass contest. The board voted to continue funding proposed projects at the rate of \$10 per animal with a maximum of 100 animals. In order to receive funding, local clubs need to submit a request letter along with an invoice to the VSPA program manager and chairperson.

4-H / FFA Youth Development Sponsorship

The board designated a line item titled “4-H / FFA Youth Development Sponsorship” and funded it at \$1,000 for both the FY 25-26. These funds are intended to support Virginia youth who win state level competitions (related to the sheep industry) and receive invitation to travel to upper level competition as a result. These funds are designed for teams outside of the VA 4-H All Star Livestock Judging team. Grants submissions should be turned into VSPA program manager and chairperson for approval.

Master Shepherd Series

Kari Sponaule of the Virginia Cooperative Extension service requested that the Board sponsor the VCE’s Master Shepherds Series at \$1,000. The series consist of 6 different zoom presentations including topics of handling, facilities, reproduction, marketing, nutrition & health, and forages & feeding. Over 40 participants has registered for the event and will take place from January & February 2026. The funds will be used to purchase plaques presented to each participant that attends all 6 meetings, recognizing them as master shepherds. The VCE does hope to provide this program annually. Fletcher made a motion to sponsor the program at the requested \$1,000. Mumaw 2nd and motion passed.

Wool Pellet Project

Valley Career & Technical Center requested \$4,000 to purchase a wool pellet machine. The machine would be used at a regional technical school serving Augusta County and the surrounding area with the goal of providing hands-on, career-connected education while addressing the ongoing challenge of low-value and underutilized wool in the region. Use of the machine would be incorporated into agricultural and horticulture programs, giving students real-world experience in equipment operation, processing, product development, and agricultural entrepreneurship, while also serving as a regional demonstration and outreach tool for local producers and the broader community. Funding the project would support student learning, promote innovation within the sheep industry, and help turn a regional challenge into an educational opportunity. Larry Weeks made a motion to pass the grant request as submitted. Shifflet 2nd. After much discussion the vote was split 5 to 5 with Swortzel deciding to not break the tie. Discussion continued and the Board drafted 3 unanswered questions to send to Kristin Beery of Valley Vo-Tech. After receiving more information from Beery, Swortzel made a motion to pass the grant request at \$2,000. Bell 2nd and the vote passed at 8 to 2.

VA State 4-H/FFA Meat Judging Contest

Virginia Cooperative Extension requested \$500 to sponsor the 2026 State Meets Judging contest to be held on February 28, 2026 in Blacksburg, VA. The contest allows students from across the Commonwealth to test their knowledge of judging, identification, grading, general knowledge, and problem solving related to the industries of beef, pork, and lamb. The winning teams in their respective divisions will represent Virginia at the national level in the fall. The sponsorship funds will help cover the cost of awards and lunch. Shifflet moved to sponsor the event at the requested amount. Wright 2nd and motion passed.

Other items

The Board budgeted \$2,000 for the FY25-26 under the line item “General Marketing Promotion” to purchase a display unit for the Board.

FY 2025-2026

Meeting Expense	\$1,500.00
Agency Service Charge	\$ 250.00
Lamb Board Promotional Items	\$ 500.00
State Fair Lamb Carcass Contest	\$1,500.00
USDA Wildlife Services	\$12,000.00
Virginia FFA Foundation	\$ 500.00
VA 4-H All Star Livestock Judging team	\$ 1,000.00
Carcass Educational Support	\$ 1,500.00
4-H/FFA Youth Development Sponsorship	\$ 1,000.00
NRV Sheep & Goat Club (Goat Festival)	\$3,500.00
VSPA (Website project)	\$ 600.00
VSIB marketing	\$2,000.00
Master Shepherd’s Corse	\$1,000.00
VA State Meats Judging Contest	\$ 500.00
Valley Vo-tech Wool Pelletizer project	\$2,000.00

Bell made a motion to pass the FY25-26 budget as presented above. Shiflet 2nd and motion passed unanimously.

Other Business

The Board discussed adopting a policy to allow electronic meetings. After some discussion, Time Mize made a motion to adopt the drafted policy presented by Matthew Sponaule. Lee Wright seconded, and the motion passed. The new policy is to be updated to the Board handbook.

Public Comment: None

Nomination of Officers: Mac Swortzel will remain as Chairman and Lee Wright as Vice-Chairman.

Future Meeting Date

The next meeting was set tentatively for May 19, 2025.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Matthew Sponaule, VDACS Liaison