

News from Augusta Expo

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July 2024

Events Updates

Four private parties, three sponsored Dog Shows, an Augusta County Cornhole Regional tournament, and a Derby Dames Roller Derby were part of many events happening during the month of June, demonstrating the variety of opportunities that Augusta Expo makes available to our surrounding communities. Private parties that are frequently held at Augusta Expo include weddings, receptions, birthday parties, quinceaneras, and business meetings and trainings.

In previous years during June, the Skyline Kennel Club and Shenandoah Valley Kennel Club each have sponsored Dog Shows. But this year there was an additional show, the Tibetan Spaniel Club Of America's National Specialty Week. What an exciting week!

Other events in June included an 80's Prom Night Benefit for The Neighbor Bridge, Jeepin' for a Reason fundraiser for local Nonprofits, the Exoticon Reptile Show, and the New Vision Church Car Show, a Joe Drega Memorial.

Additionally, our facilities provided space for a private celebration of life.

Facilities Updates

There have been continued repairs to the restrooms in the main hall, as well as a restocking first aid kits and the AED pads. Additionally, screening was added to the office windows to allow access to fresh cool air when the fresh cool air is available! 😊



Click on our website address in the header for information about upcoming events!



Valley Wool Pool

Augusta Expo has been donating space for the Valley Wool Pool since 2023. The Augusta Sheep and Wool Producers have usage of the Multi-Purpose Building and the Augusta Petroleum Cooperative Pavillion, if needed, for this Pool.

What is the Valley Wool Pool? We asked John Benner, Extension Agent-Animal Science, Unit Coordinator for Augusta County with the Virginia Cooperative Extension, about the Wool Pool. You can read his article on page 2.

Valley Wool Pool, Continued

Article By John Benner, Extension Agent – Animal Science, Unit Coordinator, Augusta County

Augusta County has long history of being a leader in sheep production in Virginia. According to the most recent USDA Census of Agriculture Augusta County ranks second in the state in total sheep production and has often been the number one county for sheep production in Virginia. The Augusta County Sheep and Wool Producers Association has organized the Shenandoah Valley Wool Pool for nearly 80 years. Most sheep producers have their flocks' wool sheared in the spring. The wool is then stuffed and bagged for marketing. A "wool pool" is where sheep producers bring their flock's wool after shearing to sell to a buyer. The local sheep producer association works with wool merchants to sell the association member wool collectively, in order to achieve the best price and marketability. With a large population of sheep and sheep farmers, the Augusta Wool Pool was and is one of the largest in the state. In the 1960's and early 70's, the pool was held at Augusta Cooperative Farm Bureau near the railroad. Veteran association members who were then in the teenage years stated that the pool was able to fill three railroad cars with wool from the pool. At that time, wool had perhaps reached its zenith within the textile market, with wool being found in many garments, and was a staple of the American wardrobe.

Many of the sheep breeds common in the Shenandoah Valley (Dorsets, Suffolks, Hampshires) produce coarser grade wool, that in the 1950's-60's was still used often in the textile industry. Over the years, cotton, synthetic fabrics and polyesters became more and more economical and user friendly, displacing much of the demand and utility for coarser wool. Additionally, American consumption of lamb declined in favor of beef and particularly chicken. These changes did reduce the amount of sheep produced in the valley and accordingly the wool produced in the valley as well. However, the wool pool continued, with Augusta and Rockingham Counties combining pools in 2008. In the years from 2012 to 2022 the Valley Wool Pool has steadily marketed over 10,000 lbs. of wool each year, although the number of lbs. has declined over that time. In 2012 the pool marketed over 23,494 lbs. In 2022 the wool pool totaled 13,481 lbs. An already incredibly weak wool market tanked in 2020 with US-China trade troubles and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Today, wool is no longer used extensively in the textile industry, and accordingly the value of wool is virtually negligible, bringing only around \$0.10-\$0.15/lb. However, sheep still need to be sheared and the wool still needs to be marketed. Currently there is a wool subsidy of \$0.40/lb. offered by the USDA Farm Service Agency for producers who turn in their wool weights. The Augusta Sheep and Wool Producer Association still works to contact a buyer to secure a wool pick up and to weigh the wool for its producers to get the wool subsidy. For many years, the Valley Wool Pool was held in the Verona Community Food Pantry on the 2nd Friday of July. In 2023 the Valley Wool Pool was moved to Augusta Expo as the new wool buyer needing a different day to pick up wool other than Friday, which was one day in which the food pantry was closed. In 2023 and 2024 the Wool Pool collected on average 11,000 lbs. of wool from nearly 30 sheep producers. In future years, Augusta, Rockbridge, Highland/Bath and Orange and Madison Counties will look to collaboratively market wool in order to have sufficient volume to make the pool worthwhile. The Augusta Sheep and Wool producers plan to remain at Augusta Expo as long as there is a pool! The Augusta Sheep and Wool Producers appreciate the opportunity to hold the pool at Augusta Expo.