

# Ag Salute

## Wool growers president encourages activism

Bartmann's goal is to improve sheep markets

By Jan Murawski Evans,  
Regional Correspondent

SEVERENCE, Colo. — Colorado Wool Growers President John Bartmann's 4H misadventures in 1976 led him to a successful sheep operation today. The ewe lamb that didn't make market weight became the first of his breeding herd. His herd slowly grew as he attended high school and up to 300 animals by the time he finished his Animal Science degree at CSU.

Bartmann managed a cattle feed lot for three years after college while he tended his flock. Then he jumped full time into sheep production in Severance, Colo., near Greeley and hasn't looked back.

As with most sheep ranches,

his ewes lamb April to May. He moves the flock to ranges owned by the Nature Conservancy in the Phantom Canyon area near Fort Collins for larkspur control. As the larkspur is poisonous to cattle, the sheep are moved into the pasture as the plant flowers, so the sheep minimize the number of seeds that replant, thus eventually eradicating the toxic plant. After about 45 days, the sheep are removed and the range is opened to cattle grazing.

In addition to the larkspur control plots, sheep are being used in experimentation plots to control cheat grass and Dalmatian toadflax.

In early July the flock is moved to the northwestern Colorado high country to feed

until mid-September. The heavy lambs are sold to feedlots while the lighter ones stay with the flock until they fatten on alfalfa fields.

Sheep grazing harvested hay fields is mutually beneficial to both farmer and sheepman. Alfalfa weevil pesticides cost farmers about \$18 acre. The sheep walking through the fields disturbs the insects' eggs to destroy about 90 percent. If the farmer irrigates in September, mustard weed seedlings will sprout and the sheep will feed on the young plants, eliminating the need for herbicides.

Bartmann constructs 65 miles of temporary fencing each year to contain his flock on the hay fields. The ewes get a positive plan of nutrition due to the

good grazing without the stress of herding. When the bucks are introduced in November the ewes are flush and ready to produce twins or triplets. Eliminating stress is the big goal so the ewes settle and their babies can grow.

Like other agriculture products that are market driven, Bartmann is concerned with improving the markets for sheep products. Four years ago, a pilot project was started to create a niche market for milk fat lambs sold right off the summer mountain pastures, like the grass fat beef that is becoming more popular.

Another concept that the CWGA is promoting is Fresh

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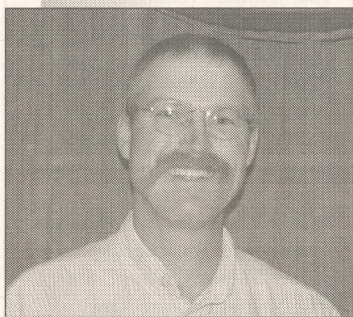


Photo by Jan Murawski Evans

**John Bartmann, President,  
Colorado Wool Growers**

## President encourages direct marketing

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American Lamb™. Unfortunately, because the lamb harvests are seasonal some distributors would freeze the unsold lamb shortly before it spoiled and sell the less than optimum product creating consumers' distaste for lamb meat.

Through the ACF Culinarians of Colorado chefs are being educated about the benefits of lamb on restaurants' menus. Keeping the quality of the lamb product high is essential for

there are only three distributors that service all Colorado restaurants for all their food and non-food needs, a supply bottleneck has been a stumbling block for Colorado producers. If distributors won't properly handle lamb products the chefs can't offer lamb on their menus and demand plummets.

There are local projects in the Grand Junction area to serve high quality lamb in restaurants to increase consumption and

Bartmann encourages producers to explore direct marketing as a niche market and develop a client base for their product. Membership and involvement in the Colorado Wool Growers Association are key ingredients to successful sheep operations in order to institute change and growth of the industry. Membership in organizations gives the individual more clout when approaching state and federal government representatives and offi-

cials.

The Colorado Wool Growers were essential in the formation of the WLDP, Wool Loan Deficiency Payment program, the Ewe/Lamb Drought Assistance program as well as the formation of the FSA, Farm Service Agency.

Bartmann lives in rural Weld County with his wife, Sheryl, and son, Shane. He is serving as president of the CWGA until 2006. He can be reached at 970-686-1226.

## Auction Calendar

◆ Third Saturday of each month

**High Plains Livestock Exchange, Hay Sale,**  
866-842-5115.

◆ July 29,  
**The Auction Company,**