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2026 WEST CENTRAL STATES

Wool Growers CONVENTION

November 5-7th | Cody, Wyoming

WELCOME!



WELCOME TO THE 2026

West Central States Wool Growers Convention!

Welcome to Cody! We'd like to take the opportunity to welcome each of you to the 2026 West Central States Wool Growers Convention. This convention commemorates over a century of sheep production in the west, while also looking towards the future of our industry.

The goal of this convention is to provide you with cutting edge, high quality information to advance and improve lamb and sheep production in the west. It's our hope that you find value in each of the sessions, tours, and trade show. We look forward to interacting with you throughout the event!

Welcome to the Cowboy State!

SHEEPMEN GAMES

Friday Supper Skillathon

Put your skills to the test in this multistation contest hosted by the University of Wyoming Friday night during the Supper.

Winners will be recognized on stage Saturday afternoon during lunch!

WIN A WeatherWool BLANKET!

Thank you to Ralph DiMeo of WeatherWool for donating a beautiful Wyoming (Innes Ranch) wool blanket to West Central States. We will have a special game set-up to win this fantastic blanket.

HARDCORE LUXURY® WeatherWool® 100% USA | 100% WEATHERWOOL CERTIFIED FINE WOOL

Sheepman game for multiple prizes:

1. Purchase a ticket for a guess ($2/guess).
2. Guess how many sheep pellets are in the jar and turn in your guess.
3. Closest guess wins prize.

THANK YOU TO OUR BREAK SPONSORS!

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Kassie Camino
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Silveus Crop Insurance	Wyoming Water Rights Consulting
Utah Women's Auxiliary	USDA FSA- WY State Office
The Sheep Shoppe	KB INSURANCE
CKP Insurance	Farm Credit Services of America
Northern Ag Network	UW Skillathon
UW Sheep Task Force	USSES Poster Session

Thank you to all of our vendors!

WIN A PENDLETON BLANKET!

A long-standing tradition with a time honored product: Pendleton Blanket Door Prizes. All registered convention participants are entered into the daily drawings for a chance to win one of eight blankets. Must be present to win. Limit 1 blanket per individual.

Thank you to the following sponsors:

Farm Credit Services of America | Silveus Insurance
UT Wool Marketing | Wyoming Livestock Roundup
Western Range Association | Aaron Orr
CKP Insurance | Mountain Plains Ag Services

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The Weekly News Source for Wyoming's Ranchers, Farmers and AgriBusiness Community

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CONVENTION AGENDA

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5

12:30-6:30 pm	Registration Open Holiday Inn– Cody | LOBBY
1:30-3:30 pm	Mountain Plains Agricultural Service Board Meeting | TAGGARTS 1
2:00-3:00 pm	Wyoming Wool Growers Association Board Meeting | TAGGARTS 2
3:00-4:00 pm	Idaho Wool Growers Association State Meeting | TAGGARTS 3
5:00 pm	Vendor Set-Up TAGGARTS 1 & 2
5:30pm	Welcome to Cody Social & Strolling Supper BANDANA ROOM & TENTS **Watering Hole Sponsored by Aaron Orr** **Strolling Supper & Shearing Calcutta Sponsored by CKP Insurance**
6:00-8:30pm	Shearing Calcutta Outdoor Tents & Shearing Trailer

Shearing Calcutta Breakdown:

1st Place Shearer- $500 to McWilliams Shearing & Supplies
2nd Place Shearer- $250 Wool Shearing Sweatshirt
3rd Place Shearer- Comb/Cutter Travel Pouch

Calcutta Payout– 40% to first team, 30% to WCSWG, 20% to 2nd place team, 10% to 3rd place team.

Each shearer gets a WCSWG singlet. Pick your teams wisely!

MEET THE SPEAKERS

MACEY HAMMERSTROM, SR. ASSOCIATE, CORNERSTONE GOV. AFFAIRS



Macey Hammerstrom joined Cornerstone in March of 2023 to support the federal government relations team in D.C. As a Senior Associate, she primarily services clients in the food and agriculture space by providing agriculture issue monitoring, facilitating legislative advocacy and outreach and conducting policy research and analysis. Macey previously served as a Graduate Research Assistant at the Texas A&M Agricultural and Food Policy Center (AFPC). Prior to her time at AFPC, Macey was a Congressional Intern for the U.S. House Committee on Agriculture.

Originally from a production agriculture background in the Central Valley of California, Macey graduated from Texas A&M University with her bachelor's degree in agricultural economics and minor in business administration in May of 2021. She is currently finishing up her Master of Science in agricultural economics from Texas A&M University, where her thesis research focuses on agriculture disaster assistance and the role of the farm safety net.

PRODUCER TOURS

CARMELITE MONKS OF WYOMING MONASTERY



The Monks of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel is a monastic, cloistered Roman Catholic community founded in the Rocky Mountains in the Diocese of Cheyenne, WY. In the solitude and silence of the mountain wilderness, the Carmelite monks of Wyoming seek to perpetuate the charism of the Blessed Virgin Mary by living the hidden Marian life in vows to the primitive Carmelite Rule and monastic observance for Carmelite men. This monastic charism includes both ancient and ever new elements such as strict monastic enclosure, two hours of contemplative prayer daily, study and spiritual reading, manual labor, and a strong community life lived in mountain solitude. You will meet with Brother Joseph who will discuss day-to-day life at the monastery, running cattle (and now sheep!) at the monastery and on the Shoshone National Forest, and much more.

MEETEETSE MEAT COMPANY



Meeteetse Meat Co., is a damily owned, local butcher shop processing Wild Game and domestic livestock. The Company was established in 2025.

MEET THE SPEAKERS

MIKE BURRELL, DISTRICT SUPERVISOR, USDA-APHIS WILDLIFE SERVICES



Mike Burrell is a Wildlife Biologist for the USDA Wildlife Services, where he specializes in predator management. Mike has a deep passion for everything outdoors. He enjoys hunting moose to game birds. Mike lives to be outside and is passionate about sharing it with his wife, three children, two grandchildren, and friends.

JARED ZIERENBERG, STATE DIRECTOR, USDA-APHIS WILDLIFE SERVICES



Jared is the State Director for Wyoming, USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services. Jared enjpys hunting and fishing. Jared and his wife are based out of Western WY.

WHIT STEWART, PHD, UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING



Dr. Whit Stewart is an Associate Professor and Extension Sheep Specialist in the Department of Animal Science at the University of Wyoming. His academic appointment encompasses research, teaching, and extension/outreach, with each area synergistically informing and enhancing the others. Dr. Stewart leads an interdisciplinary, systemsbased program focused on advancing the sustainability, productivity, and resilience of the U.S. sheep industry.

DR. LISA HERICKHOFF, PRESIDENT-MEMBRANE PROTECTIVE TECHNOLOGIES



Dr. Herickhoff is a scientist with 10 years of industrial science expertise including antioxidant and andrology technologies. Her expertise in antioxidant technology includes having scaled up the application of antioxidant treatments for produce from the laboratory to an industrial application for the corn industry (Pioneer Corn) and the mushroom industry (Monterey Mushroom; Clean N Ready™ technology) at EPL Technologies, Inc.
In addition, she has significant IP development and protection experience having participated as an inventor or author on over 19 patents and trademark applications. She is the inventor on 13 patents including those relating to antioxidants and many others relating to sperm, some via her employment with XY, Inc., the pioneer in sperm sexing technology. Scientific sales and small-business development experience helps to round out her suite of skills.

CONVENTION AGENDA

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6

7:00 am-8:00 pm	Registration Open Holiday Inn– Cody | LOBBY
7:00-9:00 am	Mountain Plains Agricultural Service Membership Meeting Bandana Room Join MPAS to hear from special guests and membership business.
7:15 am	Association Executive Officers Team Breakfast Taggarts 3
8:30 am	Convention Welcome Main Ballroom
8:35 am	Public Lands Council Update- Robbie LeValley (PLC Secretary) Main Ballroom
9:00 am	USSES Research TED Talk Series- USSES Scientists Main Ballroom
9:30 am -Tradeshow Break with Refreshments- Taggarts 1 & 2 Sponsored by Blattner Suffolks & Blue Gate Solutions	
9:45 am	Lamb Market Outlook & ALB Update- Rae Villa & Garrett Julian Main Ballroom
10:30 am	Grit & Grace Film Show- Jordan Carroll Main Ballroom
11:45 am	Lamb- It's What's For Lunch Main Ballroom
12:00 pm	Keynote: Karen Budd-Falen, DOI Associate Deputy Director Main Ballroom
12:45 pm	Load Cody Trolleys for Afternoon Tours Hotel Entrance
12:55-5:15 pm	Depart for Meeteetse Tours Cody Trolleys

CONVENTION AGENDA

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6

5:15-8:00 pm — **Skillathon Contest & USSES Poster Session**
Taggart 1 & 2

5:30 pm — **Get to Know Ewe Reception**
Main Ballroom

6:15-8:00 pm — **Buffet Dinner & Live Auction, Silent Auction Kick-Off**
Main Ballroom

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7

7:00 am — **Ram Sale Round Table- sposnored by National Ram Sale**
Taggart 3

8:15 am — **ASI Update- Ben Lehfeldt, ASI President**
Main Ballroom

8:30 am — **Predatory Animals & Deterrence Session**
Main Ballroom

8:30 am — **Large Carnivore Management & Deterrence**
Main Ballroom
Join NW WY USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services regional manager, Mike Burrell for lesson on large carnivore management and deterrence options.

9:00 am — **Golden Eagles as Predators- History & Management Options**
WY State Director of USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services, Jared Zierneberg, will share a history of Golden Eagles in the West, protections, and management strategies for these large birds of prey.

9:30 am — **UW Guard Animal Research**
UW Sheep Extension Specialist, Dr. Whit Stewart will provide an overview of recent research on effective use of differing species of guard animals across livestock operations in the West.

10:00 am- Trade Show Break & Refreshments- Taggarts 1 & 2
Sposnored by Western Landowner's Alliance & Altitude Appraisals with Kassie Camino

MEET THE SPEAKERS

ROBBIE ALEXANDER, FARM CREDIT SERVICES OF AMERICA



Robbie Alexander is the Young & Beginning Relationship Loan Officer with FCSA nased out of Casper, WY. In this role he serves Wyoming and the panhandle of Nebraska, seeking ways to help both generational and first time farmers and ranchers reach their dreams of being involved in agriculture.
Robbie and his wife Annie are also first generation agriculturalist who moved to Wyoming in 2022. Originally from Hopkinsville Kentucky, Robbie has worked in agriculture education and agriculture finance for the past 15 years. Robbie holds Bachelor's and Master's degrees in agricultural science from Murray state University. While working off the farm, Robbie and his wife are working to build their own cattle operation so that the next generation can expand to meet their needs.

TAIT BERLIER, SILVEUS CROP INSURANCE



Growing up on a cattle ranch in western Kansas, Tait Berlier always knew he someday wanted to join the family business of ranching, which has spanned four generations out West on ranches in five states. Nearing graduation at Kansas State University in 2002, Tait took stock of his options and decided against starting out fresh in the cattle business, which seemed too risky at the time.
Tait moved instead to Denver, CO to work as associate editor of the Western Livestock Journal. During his time at WLJ, Tait developed an extensive list of industry contacts which allowed him to gain insights on the cattle industry which he had not previously realized. At the same time, Tait began following the example set by his forebears and became active in cattlemen's organizations and issues, a passion he continues today.
It was luck that Tait called Aaron Tattersall on the advice of a friend, as shortly after being introduced to the world of agriculture risk management, he was hooked. It was kismet, however, which brought Tait to AgRisk Advisors and the Silveus family. Tait's own personal and family experiences reflect a deep-seated need for products and advice like he eventually found himself providing, the significance of which Tait won't soon forget.Tait advises clients from Louisiana to California, but he and his family call the Sheridan, WY area home.

BEN LEHFELDT, ASI PRESIDENT



A fifth generation sheep rancher from Montana, Lehfeldt's family has been involved in the sheep industry for 135 years. Lehfeldt has served on ASI's Wool Council and is a director for the Montana Wool Growers Association. In addition, he served on the American Lamb Board and has been the sheep industry representative to the National Grazing Lands Coalition.

MEET THE KEYNOTE



KAREN BUDD-FALEN, Associate Deputy Director- DOI

Karen has returned to Washington D.C. from her home in Wyoming to work in the Trump Administration at the Department of the Interior. Her work under the first Trump Administration was a two year appointment under the Trump Administration at the Department of the Interior, as the Deputy Solicitor for Wildlife and Parks. Karen first stint in Washington D.C. was for three years in the Reagan Administration at the U.S. Department of the Interior. Her prior work in Wyoming was as the owner of a law firm primarily working on issues relating to property rights and protecting the ranching community in the West. Most recently, she was awarded her Honorary State Degree from the Wyoming Future Farmers of America (FFA) for her support of the local and state agricultural issues forum contests. Karen is an active volunteer for FFA, coaching the "Ag Issues Teams" for the Cheyenne, Wyoming high schools. She has coached her teams to numerous state and national titles for that contest. She grew up as a 5th generation rancher on a family owned ranch in Big Piney, Wyoming. and still owns the ranch with her sister. She and her husband Frank Falen also own a ranch north of Cheyenne; they have two grown children and two grandsons. She received her undergraduate degrees and her law degree from the University of Wyoming.

THANK YOU to CKP Insurance for sponsoring the Thursday nights Shearing Calcutta & Strolling Supper!

WESTERN RANGE ASSOCIATION

international shepherd resource

CONVENTION AGENDA

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7

10:15 am	**Industry Issues Session- Recommendations for Priorities for the Western State Associaitons & ASI** Main Ballroom This is a moderated listening session in which attendees can outline and prioritize sheep industry issues for the state associations and national leaders for policy and lobbying efforts. The session will be led by WWGA Vice President, Shaun Sims & IWGA Past President, Jack Blattner.
	11:00 am- Tradeshow Break & Refreshments **Sposnored by Center of the Nation Wool**
11:15 am	**New! AI Tech in Sheep with Dr. Lisa Herickhoff** Main Ballroom Join Dr. Herickhoff for an exciting presentation of new and promising technological development in artificial insemination for the commercial sheep industry.
12:00-1:30 pm	**President's Banquet & Good Shepherd Memorial Program** Main Ballroom For the conclusion of the 2026 convention, we will honor some of the excellent shepherds in our lives while memorializing those we lost this past year. To conclude, Macey Hammerstrom, Senior Associate with Cornertsone Government Affairs, will provide an overview of the 2026 midterm election results and tell us what we can expect moving forward.
2:15-3:30 pm	**WWGA Membership Business Meeting** Main Ballroom

THANK YOU to Aaron Orr for sponsoring the Thursday night Watering Hole!

PROPERTY MAP



MEET THE SPEAKERS

DR. JONATHAN SPIESS, USDA ARS, USSES



Dr. Jonathan Spiess is a Research Rangeland Management Specialist at the US Sheep Experiment Station's USDAARS Range Sheep Production Efficiency Research Unit in Dubois, Idaho. Jonathan is originally from Brenham, Texas and grew up very active in 4H and FFA. He got a BS in Range Conservation from Texas Tech University before completing his MS in Range Science and PhD in Natural Resource Management at North Dakota State University. During his PhD project, Jonathan studied how using sheep and cattle grazing with prescribed fire influenced ecosystem goods and services for livestock and wildlife. Prior to working at the US Sheep Experiment Station, Jonathan taught several range management courses at Chadron State College in western Nebraska. Some of his current research interests include: how diversity in the plant community translates to shifts in forage nutritive value over the growing season along elevation gradients; longterm effects of grazing, fire, and other management actions on ecosystem goods and services in sagebrush steppe and higher elevation rangelands; and implications for limiting rangeland sheep operations from grazing higher elevation rangelands.

RAE VILLA, ALB INDUSTRY RELATIONS & GARRETT JULIAN, ALB BOARD

Rae Villa serves the American Lamb Board as the Industry Relations Director. Garrett Julian is a 5th generation rancher in Southwest Wyoming where him and his family run commercial white face ewes under Julian Land & Livestock.

JORDAN CARROLL, SR. RANGELAND MGT, SHERIDAN COLLEGE



Just ask Jordan Carroll – sometimes, all we need is a fresh start. Jordan came to Sheridan at the urging of his mother after some unfortunate circumstances derailed his life in Colorado. Ultimately, this decision changed the course of his life. Unhappy with his career in retail, Jordan discovered a passion for gardening, rangeland management and horticulture. However, when he applied for positions in those fields, he was consistently turned down because did not have any related higher education or degrees. When Jordan moved to Sheridan, he applied to the Ag program at Sheridan College, was accepted and a new chapter was born. Deciding to pursue double majors in Rangeland Management and Plant Sciences, Jordan received multiple scholarships as well as internship positions through the Scott Internship program run by the Sheridan College Foundation. "Sheridan College's donors and educational partners have taken care of me from day one. I will be walking away from Sheridan College without owing a single penny for my two Associates of Science degrees. And I cannot say thank you enough for that freedom."

MEET THE SPEAKERS



DR. CARRIE WILSON, USDA ARS, USSES

Dr. Carrie Wilson has been a Research Geneticist at the USDA, ARS, U.S. Sheep Experiment Station since July 2022. She completed her Ph.D. at Colorado State University in Animal Breeding and Genetics. Her research aims to improve the efficiency of sheep production in a Western range setting. Her interests are in improving economically important maternal traits, including lamb survival and ewe longevity by measuring novel traits (e.g., tracking animal interactions) and exploring new methodologies for estimating breeding values. Her training as a population geneticist has instilled the need to capture as much genetic diversity as possible within existing breeds for use in national genetic evaluations and genomic selection.

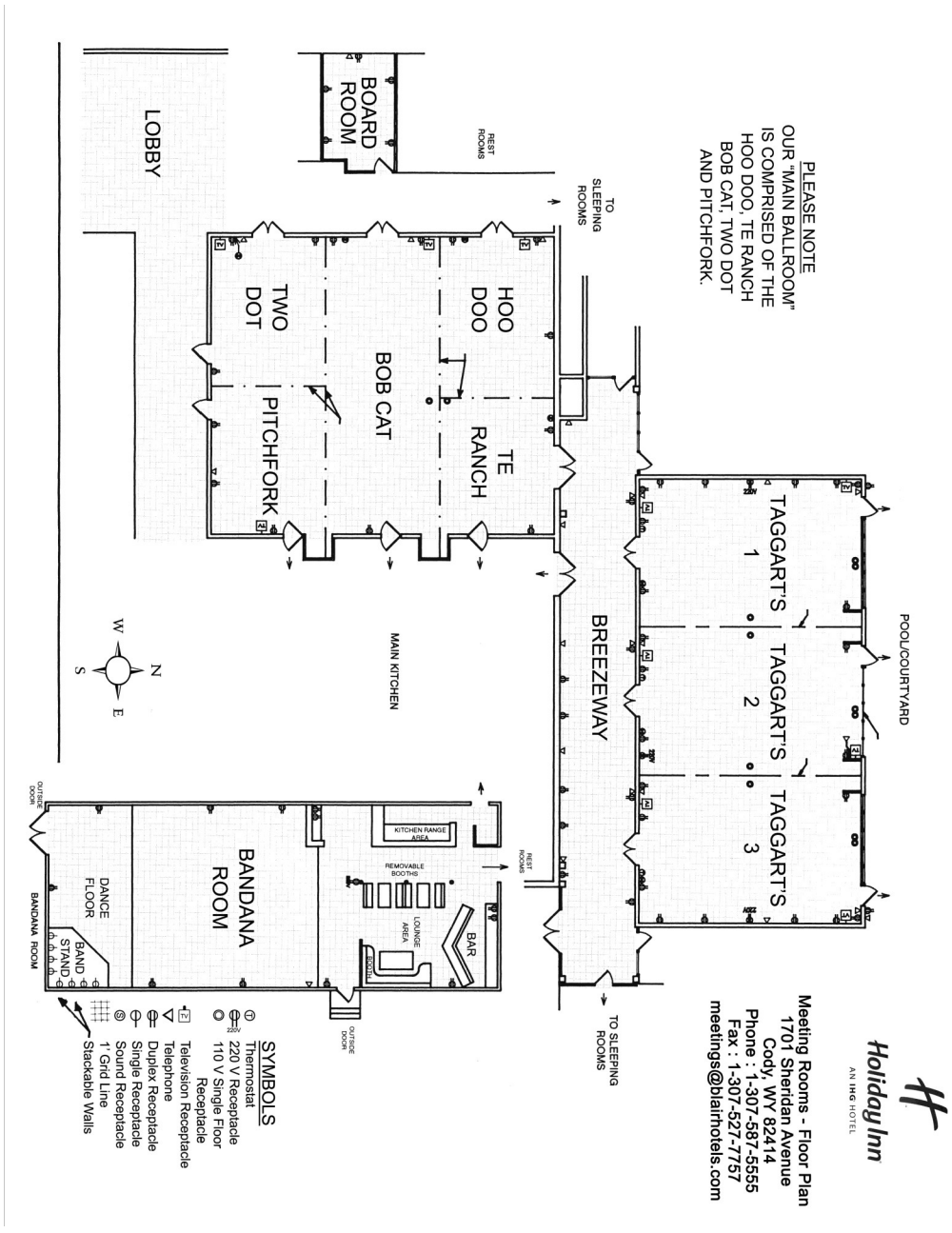


DR. HAILEY WILMER, USDA ARS, USSES

Dr. Hailey Wilmer is a Research Rangeland Management Specialist at the USDA ARS Range Sheep Production Efficiency Research Unit in Dubois, Idaho. Originally from southwest Montana, Hailey is a former high school agriculture teacher and completed her MS and PhD in rangeland ecosystem science at Colorado State University in 2016. Prior to joining the US Sheep Experiment Station staff in 2021, Hailey worked at the USDA ARS in Fort Collins and as a social scientist with the US Forest Service in Juneau. Her current research questions include: What are the longterm effects of grazing, climate, and other disturbances on high elevation rangeland plant communities? How can researchers and managers work together to conduct useful and useable science? How do ranchers and managers make sense of the complex systems they manage? Can mainstream science integrate local knowledge to support ranching livelihoods, biodiversity, and food production?

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MEETING ROOM MAP



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TAIT BERLIER,
Ag Risk Advisor

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307.285.9898

MEET THE SPEAKERS

ROBBIE LEVALLEY, PUBLIC LANDS COUNCIL



Robbie LeValley is the 20242026 PLC Secretary and is an active advocate for the beef industry and public lands and runs a cowcalf operation in Hotchkiss, Colorado. As a fourth generation rancher, LeValley has set the standard for Colorado ranching. When she's not working on the ranch, she is volunteering her time with several different beef industry organizations. She is very active in the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, Colorado Cattlemen's Association (serving as president in 2010), Society for Range Management (serving as president in 2008), Club 20, Colorado Beef Council (currently serving as a Board Member), and the Public Lands Council as well as numerous other boards. Robbie continues to ranch in western Colorado on the multigenerational LeValley Ranch, which was awarded the Sand County Foundation's Leopold Conservation Award in 2023.

DR. BRET TAYLOR, USDA ARS, USSES



Dr. J. Bret Taylor is the Research Leader and Supervisory Research Scientist at the USDA, Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Sheep Experiment Station near Dubois, ID. His research programs are focused on keeping profitable and responsible sheep enterprises on the range.

Specifically, his research addresses the livestock production wildlife interface, alternatives to antibiotics, improving lifetime production yield of range sheep, managing shrublands, and improving sheep breeds for range based systems. He has authored/coauthored over 85 peer reviewed journal articles and book chapters in the areas of sheep production, health, and genetics and rangeland management. Bret serves on a variety of national and international boards, committees, and working groups that are focused on sustainable and responsible food production from livestock.

Ram Sale Round Table Sponsor:

NATIONAL RAM SALE