



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

Hardin County Extension News Release

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Sheep Producers Tour UK and Ireland

by Mark Badertscher, OSU Extension Educator

Hardin County – Five Hardin County people joined an OSU Extension and Ohio Sheep Improvement Association International Sheep Tour of the United Kingdom and Ireland. Local sheep producers Dave Burkhart, Nancy Wilcox, Steve Lowery, Madelyn Lowery, and OSU Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources Educator Mark Badertscher joined a group of 23 sheep producers, sheep industry personnel, and OSU Extension Educators on a two week trip to Scotland, England, Wales, and Ireland to study sheep production methods and marketing techniques. Included in the group were also individuals from West Virginia, Oregon, and Washington. The trip left the Columbus airport on September 26 and returned on October 10.

The sheep industry is a major part of agriculture in both the United Kingdom and Ireland, were in some areas the number of sheep outnumber the population with five sheep for every person. Lamb is commonly served on menus as a main entre and widely consumed in this part of the world. The per capita consumption of lamb in the United Kingdom and Ireland is about five pounds per year, compared with about ½ pound per year in the United States. Several days of the tour included at least two farm tours along with seeing traditional tourist sites in each country.

Cities visited on the tour included Edinburgh, Scotland; Cumbria, England; Coventry, England; London, England; Bath, England; Powys, Wales; Welshpool, Wales; Waterford, Ireland; Cork, Ireland; and Dublin, Ireland. Tourist sites visited in Scotland included a city sightseeing tour of Edinburgh, Edinburgh Castle, and “The World’s Most Famous Scottish Show.” Coventry Cathedral, Coombe Abbey, Tower of London, city sightseeing tour of London, Stonehenge, walking tour of Bath, England to see the historic public Roman baths, and the National Wool Museum were all sites visited in England. The group took a ferry across the Irish Sea and visited the Blarney Castle, Rock of Cashel, city sightseeing tour of Dublin, Ireland, and the “Merry Ploughboys Show” while in Ireland.

Sheep Industry visits on the tour included Moredun Research Institute at Petlands Science Park (Scotland) to learn about infectious diseases of farm livestock and promotion of animal health and welfare. The group also toured the Moffat Woolen Mills for an opportunity to shop the very finest of Scottish knitwear. Tour participants toured Shearwell Data (Scotland) to get a presentation and demonstration of animal identification products, both visual and electronic identification tags, which are used by farmers to keep records on their flocks. The group also toured the largest and most modern livestock market in the United Kingdom, the Welshpool Livestock Sales (Wales). This livestock marketing center is capable of holding 1200 cattle and 15,000 sheep.

Breeds of sheep that were raised at the farms visited included, but were not limited to Scottish Blackface, Greyface, Texels, Border Lester, Suffolk, Charollais, Cheviots, Castlemilk Moorits, Herdwick, Lleyn, Comeragh Mountain Lamb, Ile De France sheep, and various commercial crossbreds. Several farms that were visited raised beef cattle in addition to the sheep enterprises. Small grains such as wheat, oats, and barley were raised along with some canola and fodder beets for grazing and cattle feed. Pastures were divided into lowlands, midlands, and highlands, with both stone fences and hedgerows with woven wire fences to allow for pasture rotation.

Pastures were green and lush because of the frequent rains and cool temperatures. Although the United Kingdom and Ireland receive frequent rains, they are not as nearly as heavy as rains received in Ohio. Pastures were mainly seeded with ryegrass and white clover. Wool was of the long and medium staple, which is courser than some wool found in the western United States. The International Sheep Tour organizers were Roger High and Emily Buck, both of The Ohio State University and the Ohio Sheep Improvement Association. The tour company was AgroTours, out of Virginia.

The Hardin County Sheep Improvement Association is planning their annual Hardin County Sheep Management Tour. This year the tour will visit sheep farms in the Cleveland area, as well as Ashland and Wyandot Counties. This local sheep tour will be October 31-November 1, 2015. For more information about this tour, contact the OSU Extension office in Hardin County.

Photo caption: While touring the United Kingdom and Ireland, members of the International Sheep Tour group learned about sheep production methods, management, and marketing in a culture that consumes five pound of lamb per person per year.