



Western SARE

Phil Rasmussen, Coordinator
 Utah State University
 Agricultural Sciences Building
 Room 115
 4865 Old Main Hill
 Logan, Utah 84322-4865
 phone: (435) 797-2257
 fax: (435) 797-3344

Professional Development Program

Jim Freeburn
 Coordinator
 2753 State Hwy 157
 Lingle, Wyoming 82223
 phone: (307) 837-2674
 fax: (307) 837-2963

Find Western SARE online at:
www.westernsare.org

Western SARE Grant Categories

- Research & Education
- Professional Development
- Farmer/Rancher
- Professional + Producer
- Graduate Student

Western SARE is supported by the National Institute for Food and Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Western Region SARE program is hosted at Utah State University, and the Western Region SARE PDP program is hosted by the University of Wyoming.



MARKETING LAMB AND FIBER

Situation

In the late 1990s, inexpensive imports and limited processing facilities cramped markets for American lamb and wool. To counter these trends, Jeanne and Dan Carver decided to try direct marketing the lamb and wool produced from their 140-year-old Oregon ranch. They raise Columbia sheep and 800 Angus-based mother cows on 32,000 deeded acres, along with 4,000 acres of no-till grains and hay.

Given the ranch's heritage raising Columbia sheep, the Carvers wanted to secure their own markets, set their



STRENGTHENING AGRICULTURE'S INFRASTRUCTURE

ADDING VALUE, BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS, INCREASING PROFITS

own prices and assure that the sheep remained profitable and sustainable.

Objectives

- Search out and develop relationships with small custom processors
- Develop retail products and relationships with outlets for those products
- Serve as a model for other producers who wish to move from selling commodities to selling value-added products.

Actions

To secure markets for their lamb, the Carvers:

- Found a processor who could deliver the kind of uniformity and portion cuts required for direct sales to restaurants.
- Worked with chefs to determine the best cuts and pricing to benefit both the producer and the restaurant, while providing customers with a quality and well priced product.
- Developed branding materials "to tell their ranch's story," and helped train managers and servers to effectively sell their lamb.

Update

For 12 years, Imperial Stock Ranch lamb (and beef) has been part of menus developed by discriminating chefs committed to local sourcing. All Imperial Stock Ranch lambs sell directly to



Imperial Yarn's Sunburst Dress Shirt as seen in *Vogue Knitting* fall 2012.

chefs, and Imperial lamb has been featured at the James Beard House in New York four times.

For their wool, the Carvers:

- Researched wool processors and established relationships for cleaning raw wool and spinning yarns.
- Researched the yarn market and determined demand for natural wool yarns.
- Developed designs to sell as patterns to hand knitters. Developed three products: yarn, pattern or kit (pattern and yarn together to make a garment).
- Developed ready-to-wear designs in response to growing demand, utilizing

Farmer/Rancher Grant

Title: Imperial Stock Ranch Heritage Lamb/Fiber Marketing

Project Number: FW02-206

Project Coordinator:

Jeanne Carver
 Imperial Stock Ranch
 92462 Hinton Road
 Maupin, OR 97037
 (541) 395-2507
jeanne@imperialstockranch.com

Technical Advisor:

Brian Tuck
 Oregon State University
 Wasco County Extension Agent
 400 E. Scenic Dr., Suite 2.278
 The Dalles, OR 97058
 (541) 296-5494
Brian.Tuck@orst.edu

Cooperators:

Dan Carver
 Imperial Stock Ranch
Stephen Riese
 Natural Resources Conservation Service

Amount Funded: \$7,000



The goal of Western SARE is to foster sustainability through grants that enable cutting-edge research and education to open windows of sustainability across the West.

*SARE's **vision** is an enduring American agriculture of the highest quality. This agriculture is profitable, protects the nation's land and water and is a force for a rewarding way of life for farmers and ranchers whose quality products and operations sustain their communities and society.*

*SARE's **mission** is to advance — to the whole of American agriculture — innovations that improve profitability, stewardship and quality of life by investing in groundbreaking research and education.*

www.westernsare.org

MARKETING LAMB AND FIBER

wool fibers and the lambskins harvested from the market lambs.

- Developed product photography, packaging and marketing materials and a “brand.”

Update

Today, Imperial Yarn utilizes two different mills for processing raw wool to yarns. Imperial Yarn has trademarked “The American Wool Tradition” and is the American story at the national needle arts trade shows.

Imperial Yarn is experiencing rapid growth, and is receiving numerous requests from additional textile markets for a traceable American yarn.

Imperial has a new partner for its lambskins who takes the skin to finished products in an accessory market.

Results

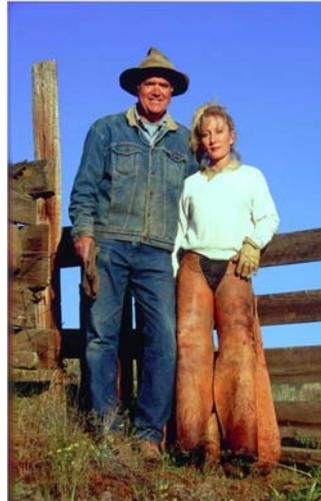
In both lamb meat and fiber, everything produced on Imperial Stock Ranch is now being sold by retail customers.

Impacts or Benefits

The marketing efforts have led to more predictable, stable markets, increasing ranch profitability and growing jobs in a remote rural location. Satisfying demand for Imperial Stock Ranch apparel products has provided Employment for up to 20 women in the region who work from their homes doing all phases of fabric and garment production. In 2008, the ranch added four new positions in its textile marketing segment.



Well guarded sheep grazing at Imperial Stock Ranch.



Jeanne and Dan Carver of Imperial Stock Ranch in Maupin, OR.

Imperial Yarn became its own separate division in January 2011. The historic Hinton House at the ranch headquarters (vacant for more than 45 years) was prepared and Imperial Yarn operations moved in. Four new employees were added in 2011 at Imperial Yarn who work from the ranch headquarters. In 2011, sales in yarn were up 240% over 2010, and growth continues in 2012.

Imperial Stock Ranch is also experiencing an explosion in meat sales. The ranch is currently sourcing lambs from neighboring producers who purchase its breeding stock. And the success of the lamb marketing program has spurred demand for Imperial Stock Ranch beef, driving growth in the meat marketing segment.

Many producers have contacted the Carvers seeking counsel on direct marketing and what it involves. Some have become part of the Imperial Stock Ranch program.

Jeanne and Dan Carver are frequently invited as speakers at such diverse venues as:

- Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board Convention
- Eco Farm - Ecological Farming Conference in California
- Oregon Women for Agriculture State Convention
- Portland Fashion Week
- Oregon Arts Summit (Nike Campus)

They also host tours for many diverse groups including:

- Polo Ralph Lauren
- Vogue Knitting Events
- Yvon Chouinard - Patagonia
- National Marine Fisheries
- Bureau of Land Management
- Slow Food Convivium
- Northwest Regional Spinners Association

Recommendations

For producers considering a similar marketing path, Jeanne Carver offers these points to ponder:

- Clearly define what you want your life to look like – take a holistic approach.
- Make sure you love what you are doing – passion will be your greatest asset.
- Be adaptable without compromising your values; changing conditions, circumstances and consumer needs and interests will require creativity and adaptability.