

2012 Tennessee Sheep Shearing School Features Doug Rathke

The 2012 Tennessee Sheep Shearing School will be on April 27 and 28, 2012, at the Tennessee Livestock Center on the Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) campus in Murfreesboro. The school is sponsored by the Tennessee Sheep Producers Association, Tennessee Farmer=s Cooperative, the University of Tennessee Extension Service and the MTSU School of Agribusiness an Agriscience.

Doug Rathke, a seasoned shearer, knows what it takes to learn the art of shearing and he knows what it takes to teach it on a level so it can be understood and retained. That is why so many people have taken his sheep shearing course. Whether you are a beginner or a more advanced shearer, there is something for everyone to learn.

Doug Rathke has been honing his shearing skills for over 20 years. Most of his shearing has been with farm flocks in the Midwestern United States. However, he has had a variety of shearing experience throughout the US and abroad. In 1986, Doug and his wife Connie went on an extended trip to New Zealand where he took advanced training from the prestigious New Zealand Wools, an internationally acclaimed shearing organization. Then, during a return trip to New Zealand in 1988 for more training and work on shearing crews, Doug became the first American to achieve the coveted senior level Gold Seal of shearing excellence. From that point, he was selected as a USA instructor for the National Shearing School Program and has facilitated numerous schools in the United States.

Doug has shared his shearing techniques with people all across the US and abroad. In addition to the schools taught in various states such as New York's Cornell University, Minnesota Technical Colleges, University of Wisconsin, Michigan State University and Canada, he also teaches independently. He has educated over 1500 students in sheep shearing from Arkansas to Montana to Connecticut.

Throughout his years shearing, he has competed in many shearing contests. Doug likes the competition because he says it helps him keep his skills polished, helps him do bettering the barn for the farmers, and above all he enjoys the camaraderie among the other shearers.

Mr. Rathke will be assisted by Mark Powell, Wilson Farmer=s Co-op, Jim Neel, with UT Extension and Dr. Warren Gill, Director of the MTSU School of Agribusiness an Agriscience and Caleb Fritz, MTSU Student and local shearer..

The shearing school is designed for either beginner or experienced shearers who wish to improve their skills. Top sheep shearers will teach the most modern, up-to-date shearing methods. One of the most important aspects of the school is information about maintenance and care of sheep shearing equipment.

This shearing school is not designed for young children; in fact, we ask that participants be at senior 4-H (high school) level.

Partial Youth Scholarship: The Tennessee Sheep Producers Association does encourage participation by senior 4-H'ers and will pay 1/2 of the registration fee for the first six 4-H members who sign up.

The school will start at 10:00am on Friday, April 27, with registration. At 10:30 AM there will be a discussion of equipment care and maintenance and at 1:00 PM we will start shearing. On Saturday, April 28, at 8:00 am we will *continue until All Sheep Are Sheared*.

Meals and lodging are the responsibility of the participants. You can attend for one day only, but it is preferable to attend both sessions.

The location will be the Tennessee Livestock Center on the campus of Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Take I-24 to exit 81B, go to 2nd light, turn right onto Rutherford Blvd, go to the 7th light, turn left onto Greenland Dr., TLC will be 1/2 mile on left. Address is 1720 Greenland Drive. Website is <http://frank.mtsu.edu/~tlc/> . The phone number at TLC is 615-898-5575.

Tips For Participants:

1. **REQUIREMENT:** Bring a small, (4' x 4' or larger) piece of old carpet or plywood (preferred) for a shearing surface.
2. Wear "old clothes."
3. Exercise for a few weeks before coming to the school.
4. Bring your own shears, if possible. Some equipment will be for sale at the school.
5. Bring an oil can and some unused motor oil.
6. Bring heavy-duty extension cords, if available.

The cost for the Shearing School is **\$100 per person**. In order to make plans, pre-registration is required. Participation is limited to the first 20 paid applicants. Complete the form below and return to the address shown:

Pre-Registration

2012 TN Sheep Shearing School

Mark Powell

4233 A Poplar Hill Rd

Watertown, TN 37184

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

ZIP: _____ COUNTY: _____

PHONE: _____

Are you 4-H member seeking scholarship? _____

Amount Enclosed \$ _____

Make checks payable to: TN Sheep Producers Association