



NAME AND BUSINESS:

Jess and Stefanie Leach, Leach Ranch

LOCATION: Ledger, MT

BREED OF SHEEP:

Rambouillet. Jordan and Alyson each have a small registered flock of Columbia sheep that they were gifted through the Montana Columbia Sheep Breeders Association Starter Flock Program.

PRODUCTION SCHEME:

Our sheep graze in small pastures beginning in late May or early June. We rotate pastures as needed throughout the summer and fall months in order to best utilize the native range and introduced grasses in each pasture. In late fall, the sheep return home and graze as long as the weather holds or their nutritional needs change due to gestational period, when we begin supplementing with hay and grain. We also use protein tubs and grain to flush the ewes prior to bucking.



LAMBING METHOD:

All of our ewes are shed lambed. When we purchased our ranch in 2007, there was very little in terms of barns and corrals. We built a lambing barn in 2009 and utilized two old grainaries to create more space for jugs, later turning one of them into the shearing shack. We are able to bring

most of the ewes into the lambing barn at night and as more ewes lamb, we turn the night drop into small mixing pens. In 2010, Jess designed and built our outdoor mixing pens. Each small pen holds 8-10 ewes with lambs. After 3-4 days in the small mixing pens, the ewes and lambs are moved to larger pens that hold up to 50 ewes with lambs. The larger pens are where they will stay until they are moved to summer grass.

BUSINESS STRATEGIES:

We shear our sheep approximately 30 days before lambing and rely on the sale of the wool to help cash flow our operation. The past few years, we have been able to regularly weigh lambs in the late summer, pulling anything that has hit the 80-pound mark and hauling them to PAYS in Billings. We make three to four trips to Billings with lambs which helps us to increase the length of time that we can graze on summer pasture. We also mouth and bag everything in the fall when Jess and I, with the help of our two daughters, eye and tag each sheep, culling anything that doesn't meet our standards. Stefanie and Jordan have hopes of attending the Texas A&M ultrasound school so that they could ultrasound the ewes for single and multiple births. This would allow us to feed the ewes accordingly instead of feeding all of the sheep for twins. We feel that this would cut down our annual feed costs and also alleviate birthing difficulties with ewes carrying singles.

HISTORY OF OUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE SHEEP INDUSTRY:

Jess was recently nominated to serve on the MWGA Predator Resolution Committee and attended the annual convention in 2019 and attended virtually in 2020. We hope to expand our involvement in the coming years as our daughters graduate high school.

WHAT ARE A FEW OF YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGES ON YOUR OPERATION?

The biggest challenge in our operation is feed costs. We are a smaller operation and have to purchase much of our feed. This is one reason why we would like to be able to ultrasound each ewe for pregnancy. We also struggle to find lambing help. We rely on our daughters a lot but they also have other commitments that time of year including FFA and 4-H.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE A NEW SHEEP PRODUCER?

I would advise anyone that is new to raising sheep to reach out to veteran producers, wool growers association, and the MSU Sheep Department regularly. Sheep producers love to talk about what has and hasn't worked for them and how they make their operation function efficiently. The wealth of knowledge available through these avenues is outstanding.



WHAT BENEFITS DOES YOUR MWGA MEMBERSHIP BRING YOU?

Our membership in MWGA allows us to the opportunity to network with likeminded people and rest easy knowing that we have a voice at the state and federal levels. MWGA keeps us informed of important legislation that we may not hear about without them, and how we can help keep our industry going strong.

THANK YOU TO THE LEACH FAMILY FOR BEING THE FEATURED FLOCK!
NOMINATE THE NEXT FEATURED FLOCK: EMAIL LEAH@MTSHEEP.ORG

JONES RANCH RAMBOUILLET



Since the early 1900s, Jones Ranch has been in operation breeding quality Rambouillet Sheep producing fine wool from 16-20 microns.

We are excited to be offering some of our Rams and Ewes in the upcoming Montana Ram Sale, for the first time!

**Jones Ranch
Conrad, MT**

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