

People & Places

Farm opens doors to guests

Leaping Lamb Farm proprietors offer visitors taste of country living

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

ALSEA, Ore. — The inception of Leaping Lamb Farm was far from auspicious for novice sheep producer Scottie Jones.

Upon moving to damp rural Oregon from dry metropolitan Arizona in 2003 with her husband, Greg, Jones seemed to encounter disaster at every turn.

“Things just fell apart,” she said.

Fences, irrigation equipment and farm machinery constantly broke down while the sheep had trouble birthing lambs, leading Jones to question whether they’d gotten in over their heads when buying the 44-acre farm near Alsea, Ore.

“Quite honestly, it was a mid-life crisis,” she said. “We were naive and idealistic. If we’d known a lot more, we probably wouldn’t have done it.”

Knowing full well that the couple’s friends in Phoenix were taking bets on how soon they’d give up and move back, Jones vowed not to quit.

With the help of neighbors and Oregon State University Extension agents, Leaping Lamb Farm gradually found its legs.

Much like the pioneers who traversed the Oregon Trail, Jones said she may have underestimated the challenges lying ahead, but she does not regret the venture.

The couple bought more land, expanding to 67 acres, and sold lambs both directly to consumers and to larger sheep producers in Oregon’s Willamette Valley.

Due to the paltry wool market, Jones also switched to raising hair sheep — specifically a cross between Katahdin and Dorper breeds — which had fewer birthing problems and better resistance to parasites, she said.

Even as she fine-tuned the operation, though, the farm was just breaking even financially.



Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press

Scottie Jones visits with two goats at her Leaping Lamb Farm near Alsea, Ore., where she offers farm stays to visitors interested in agriculture.

Added income

Since farm chores kept her tied to the property, Jones decided to make the operation more profitable by starting a side business on-site.

“If I’m not going to leave the farm, what can I do?” she said.

Since she’d never been shy about socializing with strangers and was familiar with the concept of on-farm lodgings in Europe, Jones decided to open her property to overnight visitors.

Jones admits that her business plan for offering “farm stays” amounted to little more than “build it and they will come.”

Although her strategy was rather vague, that’s exactly what happened.

After Jones obtained a conditional use permit from the county government and launched a website in 2006, Leaping Lamb Farm was mentioned in four paragraphs of a Sunset magazine story on agritourism.

Despite the brevity of the reference, it nonetheless spurred public interest and further media attention.

An article mentioning Leaping Lamb Farm in a “foodie” magazine caught the

Western Innovator

Leaping Lamb Farm

Owners: Scottie and Greg Jones
Hometown: Alsea, Ore.

Purpose: Raising lambs while providing lodgings to agritourists

Family: The couple has two grown daughters

Ages: Scottie is 63, Greg is 66

Education: Scottie earned a master’s degree in medieval archeology from the University of Missouri-Columbia in 1980 and a master’s degree in business administration from the University of Phoenix in 2003. Greg obtained a doctorate in psychology from the University of Missouri-Columbia in 1978.



attention of Kim Hall, a resident of Portland, Ore., who wanted to teach her four-year-old daughter about agriculture.

“I will probably never own a farm myself, so it was an opportunity to see what that’s like,” Hall said.

Over the past six years, Hall and her daughter, now 10, have repeatedly returned to Leaping Lamb Farm during different seasons.

The experience has changed as her daughter has grown older and become interested in new things, she said. “It’s always a different adventure.”

‘Magical’ experience

Lisa Peters, another Port-

land resident, has been coming back to the farm for three years with her two sons, now 13 and 15.

“It was magical,” she said, noting that they’ve pitched in with feeding the animals and distributing hay. “I don’t know how well we did at any of the tasks.”

Leaping Lamb Farms appeals mostly to families, as well as people who are thinking of leaving behind other careers to start farms, said Jones.

Visitors commonly help with chores such as collecting eggs and cleaning stalls, but some even assist with tail docking, ear tagging and castration duties.

“If you want to help, that’s

great,” she said. “If you don’t want to help, that’s fine, you’re paying to be here.” Roughly 60 percent of the farm’s guests come from the Portland area, while the rest generally live along the West Coast.

Online directory

The “farm stays” eventually became so popular that Jones had to turn away guests, steering them to other farms that also offer overnight lodgings.

Those references led her to another project, the U.S. Farm Stay Association, which provides information about roughly 900 other farms that offer overnight lodgings across the country.

Jones created a website for the nonprofit association, also known as Farm Stay U.S., which is sustained by about 133 paying members who are allowed to display additional information and photos.

Farm stays appeal to consumers because the property is an attraction, not just a place to sleep, like a hotel, Jones said.

“A lot of people think they’re going to go places, but they don’t go anywhere because there’s enough to do here,” she said.

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To submit an event go to the Community Events calendar on the home page of our website at www.capitalpress.com and click on “Submit an Event.” Calendar items can also be mailed to Capital Press, 1400 Broadway St. NE, Salem, OR 97301.

Saturday, Jan. 21
13th Annual Cattlemen’s Workshop, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Blue Mountain Conference Center, 404 12th St., La Grande, Ore. http://oregonstate.edu/dept/earcunion

Tuesday-Wednesday Jan. 24-25
Western Idaho Ag Expo, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Caldwell Events Center, 2207 Blaine St., Caldwell, Idaho. http://www.spectraproductions.com

Tuesday-Thursday Jan. 24-26
Northwest Agricultural Show, Portland Expo Center, 2060 N. Marine Drive, Portland, Ore. The hours are 9 a.m.-6 p.m. on Tuesday, 9 a.m.-8 p.m. on Wednesday and 9 a.m.-3 p.m. on Thursday. www.nwagshow.com

Washington-Oregon Potato Conference 2017, Three Rivers Convention Center, 7016 Grandridge Blvd., Kennewick, Wash. www.potatoconference.com

Wednesday, Jan. 25
Central Oregon Forage Seminar, 7:45 a.m.-5 p.m. 4-H Clover Club Building, 502 SE Lynn Blvd., Prineville, Ore. Annual forage seminar with registration at 7:45 a.m. Sponsored by Central Oregon Hay Growers’ Association, area agribusinesses in cooperation with Oregon State University Extension Service. Cost: Free, including lunch.

Wednesday-Friday Jan. 25-27
FSPCA Preventive Controls for Human Food Course, Idaho Department of Labor, 600 N. Thorn-

ton St., Post Falls, Idaho. The new Food Safety Modernization Act regulation requires every processing facility to have a trained resource person or “Preventive Controls Qualified Individual” who has completed a specialized training course (such as this one) developed by the Food Safety Preventive Controls Alliance that is recognized by the FDA. This person will oversee the implementation of the facility’s food safety plan and other key tasks. http://bit.ly/2f6cogT

Wednesday-Saturday Jan. 25-28
American Sheep Industry Association Convention, Denver Marriott City Center, 1701 California St., Denver, Colo. www.sheepusa.org/About_Events_Convention

Thursday, Jan. 26
EcoFarm Conference, Asilomar Conference Grounds, 800 Asilomar Ave., Pacific Grove, Calif. The theme of this year’s meeting is “Cultivating Diversity.” https://eco-farm.org/conference

Thursday, Jan. 26
Tree Seedling Availability Meeting, 6:30-8:30 p.m. Clackamas Community College, Clairmont Hall Room 117, 19600 S. Molalla Ave., Oregon City, Ore. Glenn Ahrens and Jen Gorski, OSU Extension Forestry and Natural Resources, will provide local background information. Mike Taylor of IFA Nurseries will demonstrate a new online system for ordering trees. Stan Beyer from the Clackamas County Farm Forestry Association will provide information about sourcing seedlings. There is no fee but advance registration is required. Call OSU Extension Service 503-655-8631 or email jean.bremer@oregonstate.edu.

Rice Grower Meeting, 8:30 a.m.-noon. Evangelical Church, 5219 Church St., Richvale, Calif.

http://cecolusa.ucanr.edu

Rice Grower Meeting, 1:30-5 p.m. Glenn County Office of Education, 311 S. Villa Ave., Willows, Calif. http://cecolusa.ucanr.edu

Friday, Jan. 27
Rice Grower Meeting, 8:30 a.m.-noon. Colusa Casino Resort, 3770 Highway 45, Colusa, Calif. http://cecolusa.ucanr.edu

Rice Grower Meeting, 1:30-5 p.m. Veterans Hall, 1425 Veterans Memorial Circle, Yuba City, Calif. http://cecolusa.ucanr.edu

Wednesday, Feb. 1
California Prune Industry Summit, Orchard Creek Lodge, Lincoln, Calif. www.californiadriedplums.org

Thursday-Friday Feb. 2-3
Farm Size and Productivity: A Global Look, 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. First Floor Auditorium of Patriot’s Plaza III, 355 E. Street SW, Washington, D.C. A collaboration of USDA’s Economic Research Service and the Farm Foundation. Researchers and economists from Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia and the U.S. will discuss new research findings on agricultural development. http://bit.ly/2jkc0eH

Thursday-Saturday Feb. 2-4
Organicology 2017, Hilton Portland and Executive Tower, 921 SW Sixth Ave., Portland, Ore. Topics range from FDA down on the farm to farmworker shortages, regulatory updates and seed selection. www.organicology.org

Saturday, Feb. 4
Ties to the Land workshop, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Bayview Community Center, 20298 E. Perimeter Road, Bayview, Idaho. This award-winning workshop uses presentations, video clips and interactive exercises to help families who own farm, forest or other rural land learn more

about planning for an orderly transition to the next generation.

Cost: \$35. www.uidaho.edu/extension/forestry

Tuesday, Feb. 7
Pesticide Short Course-IPM, 8 a.m.-4:10 p.m. Lane Community College, Center for Meeting and Learning, Bldg. 19, 4000 E. 30th Ave., Eugene, Ore. \$85 if registered by Jan. 23; \$95 after. http://extension.oregonstae.edu/lane/farms

Alfalfa U. Canyon Crest Dining and Event Center, 330 Canyon Crest Drive, Twin Falls, Idaho. Learn how alfalfa can contribute to a farm’s profitability. alfalfaU.com

Tuesday-Thursday Feb. 7-9
Spokane Ag Expo and Pacific Northwest Farm Forum, Spokane Convention Center, 334 W. Spokane Falls Blvd., Spokane, Wash. Spokane Ag Expo is the largest farm machinery show in the Inland Northwest. https://greater-spokane.org/ag-expo/

Washington Association of Wine Grape Growers 2017 Convention, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Three Rivers Convention Center, 7016 Grandridge Blvd., Kennewick, Wash. This annual event includes the second largest industry trade show in the nation and a welcome breakfast. wawgg.org

Wednesday-Feb. 8
Oregon Clover Growers Annual Meeting, Noon-1 p.m. Holiday Inn, Wilsonville. www.oregonclover.org

Wednesday-Thursday Feb. 8-9
The 8th Annual Organic Farming Conference, Canyon Crest Event Center, 330 Canyon Crest Drive, Twin Falls, Idaho. The event is organized by the Northwest Center for Alternatives to Pesticides. www.pesticide.org events

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