

2024 KHSI Youth Scholarship Winners



Hannah Book – Knoxville, IA

Katahdin sheep have been a part of our family farm, Crooked Gap Farm, for many years. In 2010, we got our first flock of unregistered Katahdin sheep, and 4 years ago we switched to a registered flock. I enjoy our Katahdin sheep and have done a lot of work with them.

When I first started showing sheep at the county fair in 4th grade, my brother and I showed hair cross breeds from a neighbor. We were the only ones showing hair sheep. A couple years into showing sheep, the superintendents decided to start a hair sheep class since I had a ewe from the neighbor that exhibited a lot of hair sheep qualities. After the hair sheep class opened, we started taking our own Katahdin ewes to fair.

I started working with our Katahdin bottle lambs in 6th grade. I started with a bottle lamb I named Diamond. Raising her started my love for the Katahdins. I raised Diamond and showed her at our county fair as a bottle lamb. After raising Diamond, I continued to raise bottle lambs each year for fair. As a teenager, I was put in charge of the bottle lambs on our farm. Every year, I have learned more about how to take care of them and how to watch their health.

Not only did I raise our bottle lambs, I have also helped a lot with lambing season. I have helped with keeping track of the lambs and their mothers. That included taking photos, weighing the lambs, keeping track of tag numbers, and checking on the lambs. Through working the lambing season, I learned about keeping the mothers in good health and monitoring the lambs.

In addition, I have also worked with our Katahdins throughout the year. This has included training them to come when called and working with them with our dog. I spent many hours in junior high out with the sheep feeding them alfalfa, sitting with them, and training them to be comfortable around us. In high school, I started training my dog to herd our Katahdins.

Taking care of our Katahdin sheep has taught me many life skills. Raising bottle lambs taught me the value of perseverance, as it is a task that requires lots of time and can have many challenges. Working with our sheep has taught me how to keep good records through lambing season and with bottle lambs. I also have gained leadership skills. These past couple years, I have started to train my younger brothers to care for the bottle lambs as I am now working off the farm and am preparing to start college. I truly enjoy working with our Katahdins. I will continue to use the skills I gained working with our Katahdins throughout my life.



Naomi Evans – Rossburg, OH

I have owned Katahdin sheep for six years. I bought my first sheep when I was 12 years old, though I had already helped my older sister take care of her herd of sheep for three years before I bought my first sheep. My sister started out with two bottle lambs in 2016.

I helped my sister when I could and learned all I could from bottle feeding lambs to trimming hooves and pulling lambs. I have had experience caring for sheep from cleaning out their pens, stacking hay and straw, treating a ewe with pregnancy toxemia, helping nurture a sick lamb back to health and teaching a lamb to drink from the bottle. I am certified in FAMACHA, which is a method of checking the sheep's lower eyelids to see if they have a heavy load of barbabole worms.

My sisters and I are very involved with our sheep, on some days we spend the whole day in the barn. I quickly learned to make logical decisions with my herd and have strived to improve the genetics of our herd. We breed for fast growth, good parasite resistance, structurally correct lambs, along with excellent mothers that produce lots of milk and fast maturing ram lambs that add good muscling to their lambs. I believe that our herd has come a long way, we buy a new ram every two years to always be improving our herd.

I have learned so much with owning sheep, but the journey is never over. This year I learned how to take care of a lamb that was born normal, but refused to drink off of his mother. I milked some from his mother and then syringed the colostrum down him every hour, after about a day he learned to nurse off of his mother. I had never had this happen before, but now he is a very health normal lamb.

I have really enjoyed being able to have the experience of raising Katahdin sheep. I will have been showing Katahdin sheep at my county fair for four years. When me and my siblings start showing Katahdin sheep at the fair, no one was familiar with the Katahdin breed. Throughout the years of being in 4-H we have been able to educate our club about Katahdin sheep, and about why they do not need to be sheared or their tails docked. Last year another 4-H member actually brought a Katahdin to the Fair!



Caitlyn Kleffner – Rolla, MO

My journey in the sheep industry started in 2014 when I purchased my first Katahdin market ewe lamb. Coming from a history of beef producers, I knew absolutely nothing about sheep or the industry, and every single experience with my lamb was a learning one for my family. Early in the morning, I would get up and work on haltering break my reluctant little ewe, who unquestionably refused to stay on four hooves. In the beginning, I planned to simply show and sell my market ewe lamb at my local county fair, however, due to some unfortunate circumstances out of our control my lamb was not allowed to be sold. This resulted in the development plan of my future Katahdin sheep herd, and the unknown effect it would have on my life.

Not long after my adventure in the sheep world began, I decided I wanted to continue showing sheep at more exhibitions than just my county fair. After doing some research, I discovered the difference between registered and unregistered stock and learned the registered stock was going to be a better fit for my producer goals. During my second year in the sheep industry, I bought my first registered ram and ewe, and I was excited to explore this new opportunity. With my registered stock on the halter, I began showing at the Missouri State Fair, something I had always wanted to do. Exhibiting my Katahdin sheep at not only the state fair but at other shows as well helped me gain important connections I never would have gotten any other way. As my sheep industry odyssey progressed I was able to eventually become someone new sheep owners could make connections with and look to for advice. By being a mentor for other producers there have been questions asked me I do not know the answer to, such as questions about the proper nutritional needs of sheep because producers only have each other to consult with. Most nutritionists I have worked with do not specialize in sheep nutrition, making this part of the reason on, making this part of the reason I want to go into the animal science/forage nutrition field.

One day I want to be able to help better answer producers' questions about their sheep's nutritional/grazing needs and help spread knowledge of the importance the sheep industry holds. Along with the shortage of working industry information for the producer, there is also a scarcity of public knowledge about lamb meat and how to prepare it. After being involved in the sheep industry for ten years, I will continue to work on spreading the knowledge of lamb meat and its delicious presence at the dinner table. If I were selected for the Katahdin Hair Sheep International scholarship, it would be an investment in me as a student, but also in me as an upcoming advocate and forage nutritionist for the industry.



Emily Ritze – Central City, IA

Hello! My name is Emily Ritze and I am from Prairieburg, Iowa. I will be attending Iowa State University majoring in Animal Science following the Pre-Vet track. With the intent of completing my undergrad in three years, I plan to attend Iowa State University's Veterinary School with a focus on large animals. I believe I should receive this scholarship because of the impact that the Katahdin breed has had on my family and I, and the impact that my family and I have had on the Katahdin breed.

My family purchased our first Katahdin ewe lambs about eight years ago with the plan to have them help clean up our old cattle lot and sell them once they had finished their job. Long story short, three ewe lambs turned into thirty registered ewes. My family and I fell in love with the breed and became members of KHSI shortly after. My siblings and I were over the moon when we each received our own copy of the new quarterly newsletter that had come in the mail. However, it was not until a couple years ago that my family and I started to get more involved with the organization. In 2021, we bit the bullet and took a vacation to the KHSI Exposition in Mexico, Missouri. My family would split up to get to as many sessions as possible and then we would each share what we had learned. I also fell in love with the community that the Katahdin breed has. Everyone was incredibly kind and welcoming to our family. To top off our experience in Mexico with the unforgettable lamb ribs we had on the last night of the expo, we knew we would be coming back. From then on, my family has made the annual commute to the LeRoy Boyd Memorial Show in Sedalia, Missouri and have had a blast not only showing but meeting new people!

Not only has the Katahdin breed had a positive impact on my family, I believe that we have had a positive impact on the breed. I started showing Katahdins at our county fair about five years ago. On weigh in day, the first comments we received included; "Oh it's so small" and "Why does it have a tail?". After that, my family and I went to the first fair feeling a little out of place, however, members on the sheep committee were curious about the breed. A lightbulb went off in my head along with my parents. These people are simply uneducated. So our mission began. We made posters all about the Katahdin breed that year, and year after year we spread the word more. The next year, we were invited to bring our lambs into the petting zoo and educate families on the breed. My siblings and I did presentations in front of our 4-H and FFA clubs. While we were unable to create our own class at the county level, we competed with the other show lambs. Soon we had offers to buy our lambs rather than selling them at auction. We offered mentoring to those who bought our lambs and ewes. While all herds might not be registered, I believe that my family and I have had an impact on the spread of Katahdin hair sheep across Eastern Iowa.