Thoughts of a Fiber Farmer

North American Cashmere Goats
Types of Animal Fiber Raised on Farms/Ranches

- Alpaca
- Angora Goats – produce mohair
- Angora Rabbits – produce angora
- Bison/Buffalo
- Cashmere Goats
- Llamas
- Musk Ox/Qiviut (only in Alaska)
- Sheep
- Yaks

Most fiber farmers are “family farms.” Our venues for selling our product are often fairs, farmer’s markets, and on our own farms. The ranches tend to sell their product on different venues, such as wholesale. As you can imagine, we have all been hit hard by the pandemic.
What happened to us at Springtide?

- Our primary venues for sales were at the Common Ground Country Fair in Maine and the New York Sheep and Wool Festival in Rhinebeck, New York. We would sell cashmere, patterns, pelts, and some finished products. These two fairs cancelled.
- We had several years previously set up a web site (springtidefarm.com) with the opportunity to buy our products online. We signed up to sell virtually through the two fairs, which produced some sales, still not enough.
- Folks always came to visit the farm, to buy cashmere and often breeding stock. The visits stopped, and we sold fewer breeding stock.
- We wondered what would happen next.
What have we done?

- We kept dyeing yarn to always have a variety of colors available.
- We broadened the choices online including more roving for hand spinners as well as more yarn.
- We put all of our patterns into our inventory online.
- We broadened our advertising.
- We developed our Facebook page, and are exploring other social media.
- We are discussing options around wholesaling some yarn.
- We are considering selling more finished product.
- We tightened our expenses.
Thoughts

- Times have been hard on everyone. I think those of us that are fiber farming at least have our families, our animals, our fiber, and our land to offer us comfort.
- Things are getting better, with a few farm visits and sales beginning to increase.
- Interest in knitting is growing – on our local NBC channel the weather people (men and women) have demonstrated their inability and tenacity in figuring out how to cast the yarn onto the needles, much to my delight.
- Social media offers endless opportunities to show people who you are and what you have to offer.
- The Bernie meme from the inauguration has led to thousands of requests to the knitter to make mittens for them; she appreciates the interest..........
- I’m trying to figure out how we could work together and support each other, such as creating cooperatives and finding niche markets.
- I also am confident that things will improve.
STC Isadora and I thank you for your time!

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