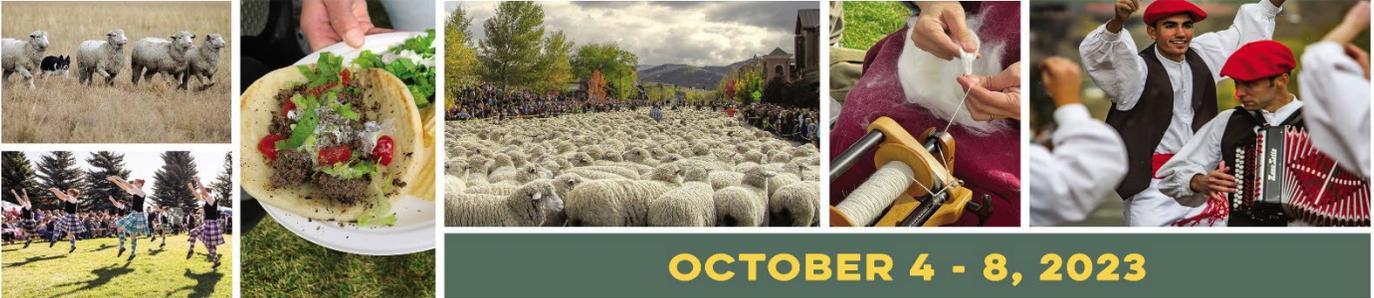


Trailing of the Sheep Festival



OCTOBER 4 - 8, 2023

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – JUNE 7, 2023

SHEEP BEGIN THEIR SPRING TRAILING THROUGH THE WOOD RIVER VALLEY Celebrate Spring Sheep Trailing with special museum exhibits and local lamb specials

Be alert and use caution around sheep guard dogs

It is early summer in the Wood River Valley and that means many people are heading for the hills to camp, hike, and bike. But it's not just outdoor lovers who are heading to higher altitudes. Currently, Idaho ranchers are 'trailing' their sheep herds across valleys and streams in the lower elevations of Southern Idaho, through the Wood River Valley, over Galena summit and into the Sawtooth Mountains for summer grazing.

Over the next few weeks, residents and visitors may encounter bands of sheep being moved by shepherders and their sheep dogs along the roads, bike path and various trails in the Valley as they make their way north, offering a glimpse into a tradition that has existed here for over 150 years. Local residents know that being caught in a 'sheep jam' on the road or on the trail is quite a unique experience.

In the fall, the sheep trail south through the Valley, and that fall migration is celebrated with the annual Trailing of the Sheep Festival, held each October. In 2023, the Festival will be held October 4-8, and will offer five days of special sheep-related events and activities. Learn more at www.trailingofthesheep.org

Shepherding Exhibit at Blaine County Historical Museum

The Blaine County Historical Museum, located on Main Street in Hailey, is highlighting this year's spring sheep migration with a window display of shepherding artifacts, and inside the museum are photographs and artifacts on Basque and shepherding history, including shepherder arborglyphs from the 1970s.

Lamb Specials at Local Restaurants

During this time, local area restaurants are offering up lamb specials such as Lamb Shank or Lamb Bolognese with Pappardelle Pasta at the Ketchum Grill, Lamb Lollipops at The Grill at Knob Hill, or the classic Rack of Lamb at CK's Fine Food. Various lamb specials are also available at Warfield Distillery & Brewery and KBs.

Sheep Guard Dog Encounter Caution

Many local sheep herders use both Border Collie herding dogs as well as Great Pyrenees dogs as their “livestock guard dogs” during this migration process. These large, white Great Pyrenees dogs have been bred for centuries to deter predators and serve as vigilant guardians of the sheep.

It is not uncommon for local outdoor enthusiasts to encounter these dogs, and the herds they protect, while recreating in the Wood River Valley and the Sawtooth Mountains, so awareness and caution are advised.

First, it is important for the public to understand that these dogs are raised with the herd of sheep. They create an emotional bond that is so strong that the dog will stay with the flock for its entire life. Their mission is to protect the sheep in every situation, day and night, all year long. The dogs create a protective zone, and if anyone enters this zone you can expect the dogs to start barking. This behavior is their way of saying, “Hey you, over there, I can see you. This is a protected area. You need to move away.”

If you find one of these dogs on its own, the dog is not lost. These dogs roam the same trails in the same territory, doing the same thing, year after year. Flat Top Sheep Co., rancher Cory Peavey advises anyone in this situation to leave the dog in place unless it is injured or looks like it really needs help. “They are more than likely in the process of catching up with the herd,” he says. Peavey also advises that you talk to the dog calmly. “Don’t try to pet, feed, or establish eye contact. It is best to stand still and let the dog assess you and understand that you are not a threat,” shared Peavey.

People who are recreating in Central Idaho can enjoy the beauty and uniqueness of the sheep and their guard dogs if they keep their distance and leave the dogs to do their job.

To learn where the sheep are on the trails, visit the BCRD’s summer trail link here:

<https://summertrailink.bcrd.org/>.

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About the Trailing of the Sheep Festival

The Trailing of the Sheep Festival has also garnered some well-deserved accolades over the years, including being recognized as one of the **Top Ten Fall Festivals in the World** by *msn.com travel*, **Top Ten US Fall Festivals** by *smartertravel.com*, **Top Animal Festivals in the World** and **Top Ten Fall Festivals** by *USA Today*, **Top 7 Fun Fall Festivals** by *AARP*, **One of the Greatest Cultural Events in the West** by *Northwest Travel*, and recipient of the Society of American Travel Writer’s **Phoenix Award** for best in cultural tourism, and the **Idaho Governor’s Award for Cultural Heritage**.

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