

He Started Successful Metal Roof Repair Business

Before Luke Schweitzer started his roof-coating business 3 years ago, he did a lot of research. The owner of Schweitzer Rubber Roof Coatings in West Bend, Wis., believes solvent-based products are the best so he uses only a line of rubberized coatings from Inland Coatings (www.inlandcoatings.com). The Iowa-based manufacturer has been in business since 1978 selling its products direct to contractors like Schweitzer. Their fluid-applied roof restoration systems provide a waterproof membrane that repairs leaks and dramatically extends the life of metal roofs.

Schweitzer learned about Inland Coatings products from a friend at a roofing seminar and recognized a need and opportunity in his area.

“Metal roofs all develop leaks and corrosion problems from exposure to the elements and years of heat-related

expansion and contraction.” With Inland’s two-layer system, he can add decades of roof life for customers at about half the cost and no inconvenience compared to removing the metal roof and installing a new one.

“Our coatings also help keep buildings cooler because they’re white,” he says. The rubber surface also holds up better against hail damage.

With experience coating roofs on everything from pole barns to a 95,000-sq. ft. storage complex, Schweitzer continues to be impressed by the products. After proper preparation, including cleaning the surface with a 4,000-psi oscillating hot water power washer, Schweitzer makes sure seams are intact before spraying the coatings. He is currently testing the coating’s cooling ability on calf hutches and plans to coat grain bins in the future. The product also works well on concrete, he notes, so it can be used around



Luke Schweitzer uses rubberized coatings in his roof-coating business, providing a waterproof membrane that repairs leaks and greatly extends roof life. These are before and after photos.

bin bases. Other customers are interested in coating feed bunks and silo roofs.

As an installer throughout Wisconsin and beyond, Schweitzer says he chose the right product for his business.

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The Kitzan family of Nisland, S. Dak., sells purebred South African Mutton Merino sheep, a breed known for its hardiness.

South African Sheep Catch On In U.S.

A sheep breed that produces a slaughter lamb at an early age and sports a coat of fine wool attracted the attention of the Kitzan family of Nisland, S. Dak., who traveled more than 9,000 miles to buy breeding stock in 1999 and 2012. They now sell purebred rams to producers with white-face sheep to increase lamb weights and improve wool quality.

Gwendolyn Kitzan co-owns Kitzan Sheep with her husband, Dwight, and their son and his wife, Joshua and Heather Kitzan. They’ve built their business around the South African Mutton Merino (SAMM) breed.

The first meat Merinos were developed in Germany and imported into South Africa in 1932 for a breeding program. Through selection and breeding for better wool quality and conformation, the uniqueness of the South African breed was recognized in 1971 when the breed name was changed to the South African Mutton Merino. The first SAMM sheep were imported into Australia in 1995. Since then the breed has been widely adopted across Australia.

“The breeders made the sheep earn a living. They aren’t pampered, so they’re non-select grazers. They eat everything, and they spread out when they graze. Another advantage is they have higher udder attachments so they are less likely to be injured by thorns and brush. The udders last longer and the teats never get big so it’s easy for lambs to pick up,” Kitzan says.

The South Dakota sheep producers recognized the breed’s hardiness immediately.

“Our vet bill dropped drastically by 80 to 85 percent,” Kitzan says. “They’re also prolific. If we don’t wean a 185 percent lamb crop we’re disappointed.”

About 75 to 80 percent of the ewe lambs lamb at 14 months, raising an average of a 150 percent lamb crop.

The Kitzans kept meticulous data as they crossbred SAMM stock with their Rambouillets for 4 years. Other sheep producers saw the results and purebred SAMM genetics.

SAMM sheep can breed year round, Kitzan adds. That means the opportunity for three lamb crops in two years. But it also means it’s important to have good management and fencing to avoid unplanned out-of-season lambs.

The Kitzans currently raise SAMM and Suffolk sheep and sell stock with the price based on a ram’s index and Estimated Breeding Values (EBV) using the National Sheep Improvement Program (NSIP). Each animal has detailed records about its parents, birth weight, weight gain, loin eye size, etc. The Kitzans’ website contains information about SAMM wool and meat details.

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Rare Breed Produces Great Wool, Meat

Marie Minnich sells her best quality Romeldale CVM wool roving (ready for spinning) for nearly \$7/oz. Her flock produces a nearly 200 percent lamb crop, and in addition to in-demand wool, produces a tasty meat. With around 300 head on the farm, that is a lot of wool and a lot of lamb.

“I think Romeldale CVM’s are an ideal small flock breed,” says Minnich, who especially likes their gentle nature. “I can bring visitors, including children, into the field where we keep rams from yearlings to 9 years of age. They just come up to be touched and petted. The girls are easy to work with as well and even learn their names. Our oldest ewe is 15, and she will come running from the other side of the barn when she hears her name.”

Classified as one of the most endangered rare breeds, Romeldales are a cross of Romney sheep from New Zealand and Rambouillets. The breed was started in California in the early 1900’s for meat and fine white wool production. In the early 1960’s, a Romeldale breeder noticed mutants with colored wool and began selecting for it and badger face markings. The new breed was known as Romeldale CVM (California Variegated Mutant). Colors include gray, black, brown and moorit (reddish brown) and get darker as the animal ages.

“Each new lamb has a unique set of markings,” says Minnich, who also serves as secretary for the National CVM Conservancy.

Minnich says Romeldales are easy keepers and can be raised primarily on grass. She feeds a little grain only at lambing and early lactation. Minnich expects 30 percent of first time ewes to produce twins or triplets, with most doing so there after.

“I’ve heard of ewes lambing up to age 14,” says Minnich. “They are good mothers, and we seldom remove a triplet. We had one ewe deliver triplets on her first lambing and take care of all 3 with weight gains of 1/2 to 3/4 lbs. per day.”

Even after a ewe stops lambing, Minnich keeps her in the flock for the wool she produces. A mature ewe will produce 5 to 6 lbs. of prime wool (8 to 15 lbs. total) ready for hand spinners. A ram will produce



One of the more endangered rare breeds, Romeldales are a cross of Romney sheep from New Zealand and Rambouillets.

another pound or two. She defines prime wool as having been blanketed all year and completely free of any manure or other material. Skirted wool, including neck wool, is processed and may be used for felt or a rug-type yarn. The poorest quality wool gets used over shredded paper as mulch under trees and bushes.

“Lambs are coated at birth, and other sheep are coated soon after shearing,” says Minnich. “Romeldale wool is called ‘next to the skin’ wool because it is so soft.”

Mature rams reach about 225 to 250 lbs. There are 2 groups of ewes, 140 to 160 lbs. or 180 to 190 lbs. Lambs are considered ready for market at 100 to 120 lbs., normally between 9 and 12 months.

Romeldale lamb is noted for its very mild taste, notes Minnich. However, she has had ewes from 4 to 9 years old butchered for her own use.

“It has more flavor than the lamb meat, but not a strong muttony taste,” she says.

Minnich sells ewes for \$600 each and rams for \$500 with discounts for groups. “I prefer to sell several bred ewes as a starter flock,” she says.

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