



www.MaineAgintheClassroom.org

Level: Grades 3-5

Subjects: English Language Arts, Social Studies

Skills: Collecting data, communication, concluding, internet researching, map reading, recording, explaining, drawing conclusions

Lesson 8 Maine Fiber Today

Activity: Discovering Maine's Fiber Producers, Processors, and Artists

Mary Dickinson Bird, PhD, author - Created through the MAITC Ag Literacy Grant made possible by the Ag License Plate



Maine's landscape and climate are well suited to production of fiber. Sheep, goats, alpacas, and llamas are hardy animals who can safely and successfully graze on our state's rocky, hilly terrain. These animals also are well adapted for our harsh winters. Maine fiber farmers don't just leave their flocks to nature, however. Many farmers carefully enrich their soils to insure that their animals are grazing on nutritious plant material.

You can see and feel the quality of Maine fiber when you visit one of our state's many agricultural fairs, including county fairs, the Maine Fiber Frolic, and the Common Ground Fair. At these events, you will observe a wide variety of fiber animals on display, and see and touch beautiful fleeces, spun yarns, and finished products. Through these fairs, through many Maine galleries and shops, and through real and online markets across the nation and around the world, Maine's fiber industry is contributing millions of dollars each year to Maine's economy.

It's easy to discover the number and variety of Maine's fiber producers, and to learn also about many of the artisans working with fiber in Maine. Perhaps one day, you too will contribute to Maine's fiber art, industry, and economy!

For this activity you will need:

a computer with internet access

a map of Maine

some map pins or flags, or markers, if you don't mind marking your map

What to do:

1. Spread out the map of Maine and log onto your browser.
2. Visit the Maine-based websites listed below to find out about farms producing fiber and where they are located.



3. Place a pin, flag, or mark on the map at each fiber farm's or artisan's location. You might consider using different color pins to distinguish fiber farms from fiber artisan locations, or to indicate different types of animals – alpaca, sheep, etc. You might find that some spots have quite a lot of variety!
4. Once you have pinpointed all the locations, study your map and see if you can figure out why some areas have many farms, while other areas have few.

Maine Fiber Websites

As you visit these sites, please be aware that there might be fiber farms or artists who are not included, possibly because they haven't joined an association, because they began operating a business after the list was posted to the internet, or for some other reason. It's a good reason to keep your eyes open in search of new additions to your map!

www.mainesheepbreeders.com

Maine Sheep Breeders Association

<http://www.mainealpacaassociation.com/>

Maine Alpaca Association

stonebrookfarm.com/farmllama.htm

a list of Maine Llama and alpaca farms

www.emrba.org/members.html

Eastern Maine Rabbit Breeders Association

(Not all are fiber rabbits; check member listings to find the farms that raise Angoras)

www.wmrba.org/members.html

Western Maine Rabbit Breeders Association

www.getrealmaine.com/index.cfm

Listings of some fiber farms that have registered with the "Get Real Maine" program sponsored by the Maine Department of Agriculture

www.maineiberarts.org

Listings of Maine fiber artists who have joined this prestigious organization; a tour map with details about the members is accessible online.

