

A PLAN FOR THE MERINOS

To the President of the United States

(JAMES MADISON)

Monticello, May 13, 1810

DEAR SIR,—I thank you for your promised attention to my portion of the Merinos, and if there be any expenses of transportation, &c., and you will be so good as to advance my portion of them with yours and notify the amount, it shall be promptly remitted. What shall we do with them? I have been so disgusted with the scandalous extortions lately practised in the sale of these animals, and with the description of patriotism and praise to the sellers, as if the thousands of dollars apiece they have not been ashamed to receive were not reward enough, that I am disposed to consider as right, whatever is the reverse of what they have done. Since fortune has put the occasion upon us, is it not incumbent upon us so to dispense this benefit to the farmers of our country, as to put to shame those who, forgetting their own wealth and the honest simplicity of the farmers, have thought them fit objects of the shaving art, and to excite, by a better example, the condemnation due to theirs? No sentiment is more acknowledged in the family of Agriculturists than that the few who can afford it should incur the risk and expense of all new improvements, and give the benefit freely to the many of more restricted circumstances. The question then recurs, What are we to do with them? I shall be willing to concur with you in any plan you shall approve, and in order that we may have some proposition to begin upon, I will throw out a first idea, to be modified or postponed to whatever you shall think better.

Give all the full-blooded males we can raise to the different counties of our State, one to each, as fast as we can furnish them. And as there must be some rule of priority for the distribution, let us begin with our own counties, which are contiguous and nearly central to the State, and proceed, circle after circle, till we have given a ram to every county. . . .