

SHORELINES

SCOTT SUCHMAN



a furry investment

ACCORDING TO A *WALL STREET JOURNAL* article this past fall, some investors are dumping stocks for alpacas. The newspaper cited the animals' breeding potential and pointed to returns that could beat the market going forward.

But that's not why Angel Forbes Simmons started raising the animals thirteen years ago. Simmons was looking for a way to save the family's two-hundred-year-old farm. After exploring alternative crops and other livestock options, she settled on alpacas and has since become the largest alpaca operation in Southern Maryland. "Alpacas don't eat much, you can have five to seven of them on just one acre of good pasture, and they're great around kids," she says.

Simmons cares for ninety animals on forty-six acres in St. Mary's County. She breeds them and sells mature alpacas for anywhere from \$2,000 for males to \$15,000 to \$25,000 for top females. She's also started a clothing line featuring alpaca fleece. "It's the finest fleece you can buy—better than cashmere," she says, "and 30 percent warmer than sheep's wool per weight—without the prickle factor."

Simmons also points to new favorable tax breaks for raising alpacas—yet another reason why the animals might make a better investment than your sagging stock portfolio. 301-888-CRIA, marylandalpaca.com.—J.S.