PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Dear ABLA Members:

The Border Leicester breed is on the move and I am proud to be a part of it! I've had the opportunity to see some very outstanding Border Leicesters at a few state fairs and at The Big E recently and can assure you there are plenty of good genetics around to move our breed ahead.

November 17th will be a special day for our breed as we get to rub elbows with the “big boys” at the North American International Livestock Exposition in Louisville, Kentucky. We are hosting our first ever National Show in conjunction with the North American Border Leicester Association, which will make our National one of 12 different national shows competing in Louisville. On Saturday, November 13th, we’ll have the first-ever National Junior Show in Louisville judged by Doris Powell of Rome, Pennsylvania. Both these events are stepping stones for our breed.

Coast-to-coast and world-wide media follow the results at the North American International Livestock Exposition. A delegation of breeders

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The American
Border Leicester Association
Quarterly News

Fall 2004

Member Profile . . .

Greta Dise • Persimmon Tree Farm
Glen Rock, PA

My husband and I have lived on an 87 acre farm in south central Pennsylvania since 1989 where we raise both white and natural colored Border Leicester sheep and Angora goats. We presently have about 35 breeding ewes and 40 breeding does. I recently purchased all of Ramsden Farm’s breeding stock. They decided to change their priorities and get some driving horses.

My friend and I have been traveling the east coast and Midwest doing fiber-related shows for about 12 years now. We show our animals and sell our fiber-related products at our vendor booth. We start out the season with the Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival in May and finish up in October at SAFF in North Carolina, attending at least 7 different events in those 6 months. I have also been to the Black Sheep Gathering in Oregon twice now, and 2 years ago traveled with animals and booth products to Estes Park Wool Market in Colorado. I am thinking about traveling to the Oregon Flock and Fiber Festival next September for the National Colored Angora Goat show. I may bring along some of my Border Leicesters as well.

I specialize in hand dyed, blended roving and handspun yarn, which is approximately 50% wool and 50% mohair. Along with selling my animals and fiber products at the fiber shows, I also sell mail order to customers throughout the country. I also sell wholesale to yarn shops and fiber studios. I have sold animals to breeders in at least 16 states.

Raising my animals for the fiber does not supply me with enough for what I process in a year’s time. I often buy wholesale from breeders who do not have an outlet for their fiber. I buy mohair as well as yarn. I will never forget the time a friend and I went to a fellow Border Leicester breeder to buy some of her beautiful wool. We left with a truck and a Blazer packed like sardines. The breeder was happy and so were we! Selling wholesale is something maybe some of you would like to think about. My friend and I are not the only ones that need to buy fiber.

I am involved with the local 4-H club as a leader in the newly formed fiber club. I am on the board of directors of the VAGMA (Virginia Angora Goat and Mohair Association) as well as the CAGBA (Colored Angora Goat Breeders). I am a certified inspector and inspection trainer for CAGBA. I served on the board of directors for ABLA and am now Vice President. I have also judged many Angora goat and sheep shows along with several fiber shows.

I am also a member of a sheep to shawl team, the Yorktowne Spinners. We compete in the Sheep to Shawl contest at the PA Farm Show in Harrisburg each January. We always use a Border Leicester wool. We are allowed to use goat fiber (mohair or cashmere) in the warp. We have won first place 6 of the 8 times we have competed and came in second the other two years. The shawls are auctioned off after the placing and our shawl brought $1,650.00 a few years back. It was a record breaker! We always donate part of the winnings to the local 4-H.
Well, we’ve done our best to put together an interesting and informative newsletter. We hope you find it to be so. We appreciate those of you who have contributed towards it. We’ve dug up a couple of good articles from past issues. Old and new members alike will benefit from reading or rereading them.

The focus for this issue is wool - both the production and marketing of it. Since Border Leicesters have such great wool, it is no surprise that many ABLA members raise their sheep primarily for their wool. In this issue’s Member Profile, Vice President Greta Dise shares just some of what she does with her wool. A group in Oregon has created an exciting and duplicatable way to market their fiber products. And eleven ABLA members sent some of their wool to Prince Edward Island as part of the Wool Blanket Co-op organized by Sherry Stahl Wellborn.

The topic of colored Border Leicesters is present both historically and scientifically in this issue. We recognize that there are many of us who only want pure white Border Leicesters and wish the registry could thoroughly delineate this on the registration papers. Then there are those of us who like black sheep and only want “pure” lines of blacks. And then there are many of us who fall somewhere in-between and don’t care or haven’t thought about the ramifications of black and white genes mixed up in this breed and not clearly shown on the registration papers. We invite you to consider the issue and to share your comments. This is only one of the many items to be discussed at the Annual Meeting on November 17th in Louisville. If you’re not able to attend, please contact one of the Board Members beforehand to share your thoughts. The Board needs your input!

How do you feel about the newsletter? Is it meeting your needs? Would you like to read the minutes from the Board meetings? Would you like to see a Treasurer’s Report? Do you like reading show results from different parts of the country? Would you, as members, be willing to pay higher dues in order to keep receiving 18-22 page newsletters that cost a lot to print and mail out? We, as editors (and Sue as a board member), need to know how you feel. We are here to serve both you and the organization - not just to do our own thing.

In the upcoming winter issue, we hope to include articles about lambing and sheep health. Do you have insight into something you have succeeded with in the past that could help others? We’d love to hear about it. Our addresses and phone numbers are listed just to the left. Please take a minute and share with us…

And have a great fall!

~ Sue Johnson and Nancy Smith, Editors

The ABLA Newsletter is published quarterly. It is a compilation of submissions from members. We value your contributions.

The submission deadline for the next issue is December 15, 2004. Please send lots of good stuff to Nancy Smith, Editor. smithfamily@gmavt.net
“Every sheep has colored genes back there somewhere, since it is a given fact that that’s where they came from in the beginning. In some breeds it just pops up more often.” That remark was once made by renowned judge and all-around black sheep connoisseur, the late Glen Eidman, in a conversation with ABLA Secretary, Di Waibel. We know that some Canadians started breeding natural colored Border Leicesters as early as 1971, and possibly earlier than that. Prince Edward Island, in particular, is well known for its black beauties. We have seen those genetics slowly seep into the ABLA registry, giving us a broad genetic base and a rich natural color history. Of the nearly 8,000 animals now recorded in the ABLA Flock Books, about one fourth are black or black-factored sheep.

The first Border Leicesters registered by ABLA – all of them white – were a group of 22 Canadian importers brought into the U.S. by Dennis Olson of Dawson, Minnesota in late 1972. The Olson shipment had been assembled by Murray Harvey of Enfield, Nova Scotia, from a half dozen flocks – 5 of them in Nova Scotia and 1 on Prince Edward Island. That original flock of 22 consisted of 17 bred ewes and 5 rams, all of them white and carrying Canadian registration papers (ABLA files contain the original Canadian papers for all 22).

These 22 rams and bred ewes traveled by rail from Nova Scotia to Winnipeg, where Olson picked them up. Dennis says that, “….it was very, very cold, in December. As they opened the rail card we saw several white “fluffs” standing in bright yellow straw. And as they puffed, each had a little cloud of air above them. Wish we had taken a picture.” Unbeknown to him at the time, one of the ewes was carrying a black ram lamb. When ‘Black Sambo’ was born in the spring of 1973, the sheep appeared to be as taken aback as were Dennis and his wife, Joan. Based on the reaction of the flock, it was clear to the Olsons that black lambs were not a common occurrence in this group of sheep. While the dam did care for her single black lamb, the others snubbed him. Having no interest in black sheep, the Olsons sold ‘Sambo’ without papers to the Jones Sheep Farm in Peabody, Kansas.

In the summer of 1973, Henry Swayze of Tunbridge, Vermont, visited the Olsons and purchased 11 ewes and 4 rams from the original group of 22 imports. Swayze then had 450 ewes of several different breed and used the Leicesters in a cross-breeding program. By that time, Dennis Olson had begun the American Border Leicester Association in order to preserve the breeding records of his own Leicesters as well as those from the flock of Canadian imports overseen by the late Merle Light of North Dakota State University. The Olsons at one time sold a group of 30 pure-bred but unregistered white Border Leicester ewe lambs to Kansas State University for a research project. Dr. Clifford Spaeth of KSU, who at that time was the shepherd for the University flock, recalls that the Olson ewes were evaluated to see how they might fit into an accelerated lambing program….they didn’t.

When Dennis and Joan Olson were forced to disperse their entire flock in 1975 due to a severe drought, the remainder of the Border Leicesters, including all of the original animals not sold to Swayze, were purchased by a large commercial producer, Merlyn Tiede, of Parkston, South Dakota…and the ABLA registry went along with the sheep sold to Tiede.

In 1977, Beverly Tiffany showed up in the ABLA registration records after having purchased several of the original Canadian sheep from Merlyn Tiede. At that time, Merlyn transferred the ABLA registry over to Beverly along with the ewes. She later purchased two more of the original Canadian ewes from Henry Swayze, as well as several Border Leicesters from Merle Light at NDSU. Beverly did not learn of the black ram lamb that had been born into the Olson flock until several years later. So in 1979, when one of the Canadian-bred ewes produced a black ram lamb, she was as surprised as the Olson’s had been when ‘Sambo’ arrived. She named the ram ‘Midnight’ and a few years later, after having followed a strict breeding program, was able to produce two more black lambs. After that it wasn’t long before breeders who wanted colored Border Leicesters could buy breeding stock to get colored lambs, and Beverly began to register black and black-factored Border Leicesters in addition to the whites.

Then followed decades of selection for quality traits in addition to color. Any serious breeder can tell you that the perfect animal doesn’t just pop up every day…sometimes never in an entire lifetime. As Don Grant pointed out in a previous article for the newsletter, natural colored Border Leicesters have seen tremendous improvement over the past 20 years. As colored Border Leicesters continue to increase in popularity, we hope that all breeders will continue strict culling practices so that we can produce animals that take our breath away, whether raised as show stock, market lambs, or for handspinning fleeces.

~ This article was originally printed in the ABLA Winter 1999-2000 Newsletter. We thought it was time to read it again.
Border Leicester sheep are an interesting breed resource that is widely used throughout the world in both purebreeding and crossbreeding systems. Most of this activity is geared towards the production of lamb and mutton, but the wool of Border Leicesters has become an important component of the international specialty wool market. The wool is especially highly regarded by handspinners, who appreciate colors as much as they do white wool.

Border Leicester color is determined mainly by two separate genetic mechanisms, with another two that are common enough to warrant some attention. Color genetics of the Border Leicester is consistent with the genetics of most other Longwool breeds. The genetic mechanisms interact to give a fairly wide range of colors.

The main color control in the breed is the result of the instructions at two genetic sites: Agouti and Brown.

One mechanism for color is the Agouti locus (locus is Greek for address, and just means a specific site), which controls the distribution of white and dark fibers over the body of the animal. What this means, in practice, is that the darker patterns can pop up as surprises following mating of the paler patterns, but the paler patterns do not pop up out of the darker ones.

The Agouti patterns in the Border Leicester are most likely limited to about three choices. The first of these is the familiar white, which is white all over and has pigmented skin. White sheep, obviously are the palest of the Agouti patterns, and so can mask the other choices. This masking phenomenon is the reason that the darker patterns can occur as surprises.

A second reasonably common Agouti pattern in the Border Leicester, is the blue pattern, sometimes called English blue. This pattern is very common in all longwool breeds. The blue pattern consists of subtle gradations of pale and dark areas, so that the fleece has a variety of shades of grey in it. Most blue sheep have distinctive pale areas under the eyes (tear drops) and pale areas on the muzzle. Blues vary from light and nearly white, to very dark and nearly black.

A third option at Agouti is the “no pattern” or black choice. This is reasonably rare in most Longwools, and results in black lambs without the distinctive pale areas of the blue pattern. In most situations the black sheep are born black, but then fade to some shade of grey with age. This fading is controlled by other, poorly characterized, genetic factors.

A second locus, Brown, interacts with the Agouti locus to give the final color of the sheep. Options at Brown include black, which is dominant, and brown, which is recessive and can therefore occur as a surprise among black-based matings. The combination of the black choice here with the various Agouti patterns includes white, blue, and black. With the brown choice at this locus, the Agouti patterns become white, pale beige, and darker brown. The browns are usually called moorit in wool parlance. Moorits vary from a dark chocolate brown through fairly warm honey colors, to beige.

It is important to note that with white sheep it is difficult to tell if they are black-based or brown-based. A few hints can help, though. One is that the skin of black-based sheep is usually dark, while the sheep of brown-based sheep is usually much lighter. This detail can be important to breeders specifically aiming for certain colors of lambs.

A third mechanism for color variation is more rare, and this is called “dark brown.” It is a dominant modification of black. The lambs with one copy of this gene are born nearly black, and then lighten a little to a distinctive dark brown. The brown carries all the way to the skin, and the hair on the face and ears is also brown rather than black. When dark brown sheep are mated together a few of the lambs can come out black, some dark brown, and some are a pale silvery brown. These pale lambs are the result of two doses of the gene – and are pale rather than dark brown.

To slightly confuse the issue even further, on some occasions colored x colored matings give white lambs. This happens in Romney and Coopworth flocks more commonly than in Border Leicesters, and the most likely culprit is the Extension locus with two choices: dominant black, and “normal” or “wild” type. This genetic variant is not usually associated with Longwools, and it could have arrived in them either by mutation or by some crossing in the past. Regardless of how it came into the breeds, it is in them, and the animals with the variant appear to be typical purebreds with no obvious outside breeding.

The dominant black is just that – completely black unless modified to be brown by the genetic mechanisms for moorit or dark brown. The “wild type” alternative allows the Agouti instructions to come through, leading to the familiar white, English blue, or black at that locus. The trick here is that it is impossible to distinguish the blacks that have dominant black from the blacks that have recessive Agouti black, and this can create unusual lambs popping out in some breeding programs. A dominant black sheep can carry white, so that when mated to a blue or recessive black mate it is possible to get white lambs back again. On the other hand, colored sheep from white parents are certain to have missed the dominant black gene, as white cannot cover it up.

Breeders interested in colored wool production can use genetics to their advantage, and can make previously rare colors relatively common in their own flocks. Throughout the entire world, colored lambs are relatively common in Border Leicester and other longwool flocks. The fate of these depends on the breeder’s goals. In commercial sheep production, especially in Australia and New Zealand, it is critically important to keep colored sheep out of white flocks. Even a few colored sheep can contaminate the whiteness of the clip of an entire flock. In those countries, colored lambs are culled early.

Breeders interested in the colored wool market can use these colored lambs to
good advantage. When mated to one another, color is going to always produce color in most Longwool breeds. The only exception is those flocks which have the dominant black. While colored to colored matings generally assure the production of colored lambs, it can be important to introduce fresh genetics into a colored flock. One way to do this is to introduce a white sheep that has been highly selected for traits that need to be strengthened in the colored flock. This white sheep will likely produce only white lambs, but each of them is assured of carrying color from the colored parent. These lambs can then be used with colored mates to produce white lambs about half of the time, and colored lambs half of the time. An alternative is to mate these “color carriers” to one another, and produce colored lambs in about one fourth of the lamb crop.

Another strategy is to try to locate sheep in white flocks that have previously produced colored lambs. These are assured of carrying color, and can be used to more rapidly introduce desired traits into a colored flock.

The range and depth of color in the wool is subject to age-related changes as well as to genetic factors. In most flocks producing colored wool it is an advantage to have a variety of colors available. It appears that the darker shades are generally recessive, and so some selection for the darker end of the spectrum is going to be necessary if dark, black lambs are going to be produced.

The moorit colors are also interesting, and generally more rare than the black based colors. These moorits can be used with one another to produce only moorits, but their rarity usually assures that they will also be mated to other color types. If moorits are mated to white sheep, white lambs are the usual result. If these white lambs are mated back to a moorit, the usual ratio is going to be 50% white lambs, 25% black based lambs, and 25% moorits. When moorits are mated to black-based colors the usual result is black based lambs. When these lambs are mated back to moorits, they produce 50% black based and 50% moorit lambs. Moorit colors are therefore more difficult to produce from most other colors, but will consistently produce moorit when mated to one another.

Moorit colors present another challenge to the breeder, which is that the moorit color is generally somewhat “weaker” than the corresponding black-based color. So, a “moorit-blue” combination is likely to be very pale. A “moorit-no pattern” combination is going to be darker, but still might fade considerably from a rich chocolate brown birth coat.

One strategy to darken the moorits is to use very, very black sheep as the outcross to these. In most flocks the darker end of the spectrum is more difficult to secure, so put pressure on this end rather than the lighter end which usually takes care of itself. If pale moorits are mated to dark blacks, the result should be blues and blacks that tend to grey with age. If these are mated to one another, or to dark moorits, the result is going to be a low percentage of moorits that are dark and remain that way. Once these are produced, they can be mated again to dark blacks, and using the resulting lambs in a breeding program will increase the percentage of darker moorits.

Color genetics is intricate and complicated. Considering the different components of the final color makes it possible to understand how the color arises. The basic components are pattern (Agouti locus), black-based or brown-based (Brown locus), or rarely dark brown and Extension, and then the relative depth of the color (control of this is unknown). It is fascinating that a few controls can result in the incredible wealth of colors and shades available in Border Leicester wool.

~ D. Phillip Sponenberg received his DVM from Texas A&M University, and his PhD from Cornell University. He is Professor of Pathology and Genetics at the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine. He teaches pathology, reproduction, genetic resource issues, and small ruminant medicine. His interest in coat color genetics includes horses, donkeys, sheep, goats, dogs, and other species, and has resulted in publications in peer-reviewed journals, book chapters, and books. He is active in rare breed conservation, and serves as the technical coordinator for the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy. He maintains a herd of Tennessee Myotonic Goats in a wide variety of colors and also owns a Choctaw stallion.

Our thanks to Dr. Sponenberg for reworking this article just for us!
Few things are more pleasant than tossing raw fiber onto the skirting table and admiring its qualities. It might be sheep’s wool, alpaca, angora rabbit, cashmere, mohair, or one of the rarer fibers; they are all inviting to the hand and pleasing to the eye.

Those farms that raise livestock primarily for their fiber often offer goods directly to the public. The reason for this is that every middleman involved means less money for the farm, and often, any middleman at all means no profit. The struggle to direct-market varies somewhat with the personality of the farm, the locale, and the products, but every farm must deal with one basic hurdle, and that is exposure.

How can small farms let people know what they have to sell? Advertising in newspapers and periodicals is expensive. And though the quality of the farm’s products may be high, the variety may be limited. Americans are accustomed to shopping in stores with great variety.

Many farms have developed websites. The internet is a potentially powerful tool for exposure, but the cost of an attractive website can be high, as is the probability of being lost in the global sea of websites. What would happen if farms began to organize internet marketplaces?

Internet marketplaces are not a new idea. Many groups use this tool. Fly-fisher guides and vineyard/wineries are two examples in my state of Oregon. There are a number of marketplace sites for farms selling food, such as the tri-county site for farms near Portland, Oregon, and another for farms in Lane County, Oregon. What about fiber, garments, sheep and other fiber animal skins, yarn, etc.? What about organizing farms regionally to promote these special local products?

This idea could be developed on a national basis. However, I feel there is an argument for development of regional marketplaces. We all must deal with the negative aspects of competing globally. Let's capitalize on regional differences and create some unique marketplaces that intrigue consumers with their local charms. So although I am working on an Oregon marketplace, I challenge you fiber growers throughout the continent to work on developing other marketplaces where you are.

My idea is to join Oregon fiber farmers together. A number of such farms in this state have come together to create an organization called Oregon Wool Growers Association. OWGA's mission is to create and maintain a marketplace website called OregonWool.com.

OregonWool.com is a website for any Oregon fiber farm direct marketing its products to the public. These farms include those who raise sheep, fiber goats, alpacas, llamas, and angora rabbits. Fiber artists who live in Oregon and use fiber from animals raised here may also be able to subscribe to the website and sell their products in the future.

The home page contains a calendar of members’ farm events and fiber animal activities statewide, a rotating feature farm, and a sign in button for member farms so they can access and edit their farm information. The navigational sidebar is visible on every page. Products are organized by categories. When a viewer goes to the Product page some product thumbnail photos and text are always displayed and done so rotationally so no farm's products are favored over another's. The viewer can choose whichever category interests him or her, and the page rebuilds to show those products. By clicking on a specific product a window opens with a larger photo and ordering information. The Farm List page shows our member farms by date of subscription; so the oldest members are at the top. However, the viewer can sort the list by farm name or town. Also on this page is a state map with flags at farm member locations. Each farm also has its own page where all of its products appear and additional photos of the farm, as well as a link to any website that farm maintains separately. Other pages feature breed descriptions, information about OWGA, and links to resources of interest.

A potential customer might peruse the home page then select yarn from the list of products. The yarn from all the farms will appear on the screen. The customer can then choose to read in further detail about each yarn before selecting which yarn to buy. Each farm is responsible for its own sales and customers contact individual farms to arrange those sales.

The key detail about the website overall is that editing of farm information, addition of products, editing of product categories, loading photos, and adding farms will be done by the farmers themselves in the browser. This is an unusual feature. The farm members need only go to the website, and sign-in with a password. The farmer then edits his or her material and it is automatically loaded into the proper locations. No webmaster is needed meaning that the farmer has precise and fast control over information about the farm.

One exciting feature of our website is the Sample Farm. If you raise fiber animals in Oregon and want to join us, email me at sherry@dancingsheepfarm.com. I can create a Sample Farm for you that only you and the administrator can see. You can load real information and photos to see how the site works. If you decide to subscribe I can upgrade your farm to full membership and your farm information and products will then be public.

Annual membership to OWGA is $30. In addition, there is a one-time set up fee of $70 to help us build and maintain OregonWool.com.

OWGA is fortunate to know an innovative web designer with business savvy, creativity, and sensitivity to individual design. He has created several websites that are user friendly for the owners. The

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The Border Leicester Breed Show held at the North East Youth Sheep Show in West Springfield, MA in July was a huge success - due partly to the kids who brought and exhibited their quality animals, and partly due to the people listed below who donated money towards the trophies and premiums. A local woman who paints on glass, crystal, etc. painted white and black “wooly” sheep on vases and candy jars, which we gave out as winning trophies and mementos to all the Border Leicester exhibitors. I also purchased some Association patches which we handed out as well. I would like to personally thank the following people for helping to make our Border Leicester Youth Show a success:

Noreen Atkins
Ginlip Farm
Groton, NY

Greg and Deb Deakin
Deakin Family Farms
Cuba, IL

Nancy Hall and Kim Roberts
Wool Haven
Fort Ann, NY

Linda and Bill Koeppel
Cape House Farm
Ann Arbor, MI

Kris Schrom
Silver Mountain Farm
Amenia, NY

JoAnne Tuncy
Twin Birches
Millerton, NY

Christopher Hopkins’s junior ram lamb won Champion Ram at the NEYSS in July. In September, at the Northeast Regional Border Leicester Show, the same ram won Reserve Champion Ram.

White & Black
Border Leicester Show Results

Senior Showmanship
1 - Emily Mombourquette, Harmony, RI

Yearling Ram
1 - Chris Hopkins, Chepachet, RI

Junior Ram Lamb
1 - Chris Hopkins, Chepachet, RI
2 - Chris Hopkins, Chepachet, RI
3 - Erin Atkins, Groton, NY

Pair of Ram Lambs
1 - Chris Hopkins, Chepachet, RI

Champion Ram
Junior Ram Lamb, Chris Hopkins, Chepachet, RI

Reserve Champion Ram
2nd place Junior Ram Lamb, Chris Hopkins, Chepachet, RI

Yearling Ewe
1 - Emily Mombourquette, Harmony, RI
2 - Chris Hopkins, Chepachet, RI
3 - Chris Hopkins, Chepachet, RI
4 - Emily Mombourquette, Harmony, RI

Pair of Yearling Ewes
1 - Chris Hopkins, Chepachet, RI
2 - Emily Mombourquette, Harmony, RI

Senior Ewe Lamb
1 - Chris Hopkins, Chepachet, RI

Junior Ewe Lamb
1 - Erin Atkins, Groton, NY
2 - Emily Mombourquette, Harmony, RI
3 - Chris Hopkins, Chepachet, RI
4 - Chris Hopkins, Chepachet, RI

Pair of Ewe Lambs
1 - Chris Hopkins, Chepachet, RI

Champion Ewe
Yearling Ewe, Emily Mombourquette, Harmony, RI

Reserve Champion Ewe
Jr. Ewe Lamb, Erin Atkins, Groton, NY

Exhibitors Flock
1 - Chris Hopkins, Chepachet, RI

Best Fleece
1 - Chris Hopkins, Chepachet, RI

2004 North East Youth Sheep Show
By Polly Hopkins
Production of Handspinning Fleece

By Judy Lewman

Spring Creek Farm

Though creative and efficient marketing is clearly the most important factor in selling to handspinners, one must obviously have a desirable product to sell. The following suggestions are offered for your consideration. These ideas and methods have worked for us and others, but are certainly not to be taken as hard-and-fast rules - each of us must find our own "best way."

SELECTION OF BREEDING STOCK

Purebreds are not necessary. Most spinners, most of the time, prefer a multi-purpose medium grade wool, neither fine nor coarse, with a minimum 4-5" staple length, defined crimp and luster, and a soft hand. This type of fleece can certainly be produced on a crossbred ewe.

There is demand for many different types of fleece, but you may have to work harder (create a larger customer base) in order to market some of the speciality wools. An average hobby spinner can easily go through 20 pounds of the above mentioned medium grade wool in a year. In contrast, fine wool is time consuming to process - 2 pounds would be a large purchase.

If you decide to specialize, be prepared to market only those fleeces characteristic of your selected breed. This may seem obvious, but is often overlooked. There are good and bad fleeces in any breed. Don't give your breed, and your reputation, a bum rap by selling an off-type fleece.

Natural colored sheep are available in all breed types and many colors. Spinners will sometimes dye the colored wools for heather effects, but there are limits as to how much a handspinner will use in relation to white wool. A general rule-of-thumb is 20% dark/80% white.

Consideration must be given to production/performance records, correct body type, and meat flavor (most who sell to handspinners also direct market freezer lamb.) If you already have good ewes you are happy with, the right ram can produce prime handspinning fleece on the first generation of lambs, regardless of the dams' wool type.

NUTRITION

Ewes selected for their potential to grow prime wool, while also producing a fast growing set of lambs, must be fed well - but not allowed to get too fat. If inadequately fed during late gestation and lactation, wool quality can suffer dramatically. If raising your own replacement stock, this is doubly important since wool follicle development of the lamb (a primary determining factor of future fleece weight) occurs during the last weeks of gestation and the first 30 days of the lamb's life.

A good vitamin/mineral mix can boost fleece weights and must be available to the handspinning flock year 'round. Compare ingredient labels to ensure that you get what you pay for. Palatability is important, too - a vitamin/mineral mix won't do your sheep any good if they don't eat it. Some prefer to force feed the vitamin/mineral mix (by mixing it with grain) during late gestation and lactation.

Clean, fresh water is the cheapest "nutrient" there is.

MANAGEMENT

The barn door can be your most important management tool - keep it shut! Wool must be kept clean or it will be worthless to the handspinner. The cleanest fleeces come from flocks that spend most of the time outdoors. If you have no choice but to confine your sheep, coats will keep the wool free of contaminants.

Vegetable contamination can occur from:

Burdock, Canadian Thistle, etc. - These must be controlled by mowing pastures before seed heads form, or eliminated by physical removal or spot use of an herbicide.

Seed heads on other pasture plants - Even desirable grasses can form seed heads that may contaminate fleece. If your sheep can't keep up, mow pastures before grasses go to seed.

Leafy hay - If you have a choice, grassy hay for roughage (with grain for added protein and energy when necessary) it may be preferable to high-quality alfalfa during months when pasture is not available.

Other Contaminants:

- Branding Paint/Marking Sticks - If you must use branding paint, put numbers low on the britch (less desirable wool). Even "scourable" branding paint is unacceptable in handspinning wool. For temporary marking, use stickers on faces rather than on fleece.

Canary Staining/Banding - Yellow discoloration often unnoticed until after scouring. Keep sheep out of barns during hot, humid weather. Some individuals seem more susceptible. You're at the mercy of the weather on this one.

"Barnyard Grit" - Common in flocks kept in confinement, also pastured ewes that bed down on bare dirt, especially in dry, dusty conditions. Wind makes it worse. If you can't keep sheep with grass underfoot, coats will help prevent it.

Abrasion/rubbing will cause wool to tangle and felt together in lumps. These "cotted" areas of the fleece must be skirted out. Some causes of coting:

External Parasites - Ticks are easy to see and easy to eliminate. Lice are another story! Most often found on longwool sheep and angora goats. Twice-a-year shearing will help to control, as will treating with a pour-on insecticide immediately after shearing and then again 2 weeks later. Note that some oil-based pour-ons leave a residue that will help to control, as will treating with a pour-on insecticide immediately after shearing and then again 2 weeks later. Note that some oil-based pour-ons leave a residue that migrates down from the sheep's backbone into the prime parts of the fleece. This attracts and holds dirt particles like glue. Affected areas must be skirted out.

Crowded feeding conditions - Handspinning flocks may need more than the "minimum requirement" of feeder space. And, having provided ample space, you may need to train your sheep to spread themselves out and use it!
Narrow doorways/creep panel openings - An easy creep "panel" consists of a horizontal at 6" from the barn floor with another at 18" and no vertical dividers. This stops squirmy yearlings but leaves ample space for lambs up to 50 pounds.

Weak fibers can be caused by excessive weathering, internal parasites, starvation, fever, or stress. This will appear as an overall weakness ("tender" wool), a definite "break" (wool breaks, as if cut, when snapped between fingers), or "tippy" wool (tips pull off easily) - all are serious defects in a hand-spinning fleece. Healthy sheep, fed well and managed properly, will usually produce healthy wool. But illness and weather are not always possible to control. It's good practice to check fleece strength while skirting.

SHEARING

Work with your shearer, explaining your objectives. Second cuts are unacceptable. If possible, bellies, tags, and head and leg wool (if any) should be thrown off to the side. Hair on legs and heads should not be clipped and allowed to fall into the fleece. And don't expect your shearer to slow down while you skirt. Have adequate help available or skirt later.

When to shear? Most spring lambing flocks are shorn in late gestation. Those who lamb in January and February sometimes shear in late fall before hay feeding begins. If your fleeces exceed 7" in length, twice-a-year may be best - with the summer interval about 2 weeks shorter than the winter growing period (wool grows faster during summer - your spring and fall clips should be as near the same length as possible).

STORAGE OF FLEECE

Immediately after shearing, fleece should be allowed to "cool out" (body heat allowed to dissipate) for 12-24 hours before being packed away for storage.

Don't be afraid to pack wool tightly for storage. Seal in heavy paper bags or cardboard boxes, not plastic.

Store in a cool, dry area. Do not allow wool packages to sit on concrete floors or touch concrete walls (or other walls on which condensation may form.)

Keep it moving! Try to sell all of one year's clip before the next shearing. Best to thoroughly sweep out storage area once a year, then mist with an aerosol insecticide for "flying insects" (moths).

~ This article was first presented at the 1994 Minnesota Lamb & Wool Producers’ Conference. Copyright 1994 by Judy Lewman

Part of our Breeding Flock
PJ (center) - Champion Ram in 2003 at Maryland
Gianna (left) and Hannah (right) - Champion and Reserve Champion Ewes in 2003 at Maryland

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Linda and Bill Koeppel
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Ann Arbor, Michigan 48105

Give us a call!
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ABLA Internet Discussion Group

You are cordially invited to join other ABLA members in an internet discussion group. You can find us at www.groups.yahoo.com. Search for “ABLASheep” and become a member!
Wool Blanket Co-op Summary
By Sherry Stahl Wellborn

Fourteen farmers (eleven ABLA members) sent wool cooperatively last spring to MacAusland’s Woollen Mill on Prince Edward Island, Canada to be woven into blankets. Those blankets arrived back at the farms at the beginning of September. Overall, the co-op was successful. The blankets are of good quality and the process of getting wool shipped from all over the country to the mill at about the same time worked with only minor difficulties. The mill experienced one major difficulty that we will have to overcome if we continue the project again in 2005.

I recently spoke to Elga (who runs the office) and Allan (an owner) at the mill. Elga warned me that they’d be losing carding machine operators if they had to deal with pure Border Leicester again. But the unflappable Allan only chuckled about the problem and suggested that it’s just part of the learning curve. Our particular problem boils down to Leicester staple length.

It turns out, just like dealing with the living sheep, making blankets isn’t a cut and dried process. You don’t dump six pounds of wool into a black box at one end and expect a blanket to pop out the other. Each machine performs a little differently for each operator and processes such as napping vary with the day’s humidity as well. The humidity affects the blankets final softness and durability. I appreciated the art of making a blanket even with commercial sized looms and electric carders and spinners a good deal more after a short conversation with Elga and Allan.

Commercial processors of all sorts have carders that cannot handle wool with a staple length over six inches. All of the white wool we sent was Border Leicester with various staple lengths, but mostly long. Allan said they needed two or three people on the carding machine instead of the normal one. The colored wool had some Romney and Coopworth mixed in and did not cause problems. Allan assured me that the quality of the Border Leicester was fine; it’s just too long. So in future years we must send pure Border Leicester with staples of five inches or less, or we must mix it with wool that is naturally shorter.

There are a few other problems to address, but that is the biggest. I don’t feel it is unsolvable and will be talking with 2004 contributors about this and other issues. A number of us have pictures of our blankets on the web. Mine are on www.oregonwool.com. Rolly Thompson and Susie Wilson were also co-op contributors and are members of the same website. I hope to see their blankets posted soon. In the meantime, organization for the 2005 co-op is starting immediately. To find out more email me at: sherry@dancingsheepfarm.com.

Lamb Burgundy
Submitted by Darlene Megli

This is one of our favorite ways to use lamb. It’s like Beef Burgundy, only better!

1 to 1½ lbs. of cubed lamb
1 red onion, sliced
½ cup chopped celery
1 can cream of mushroom soup
1 small can of mushroom bits and pieces
1-2 soup cans of red burgundy wine
salt and pepper to taste

Stir together the liquids. Put everything in a pot and put it in the oven. Stir occasionally and add more wine as needed as it cooks.

Or cook it in a crockpot. It usually doesn’t require more wine when cooked this way.

In the oven at 350 degrees, it will cook in about 2 hours. In the crockpot, it can simmer all day on low.

Serve over egg noodles or rice.

ABLA Annual Business Meeting
Louisville, KY
November 17, 2004

An official agenda will be available in Louisville, but here are just some of the items which will be discussed. Please give some thought to these issues and share your comments with a Board Member if you are unable to attend the Annual Meeting.

• Issues brought up at Maryland show – breed and show standards
• Non-profit application finished and being processed
• Pedigree completion – if holes found, send copies to ASR to complete
• Black factor information requested by ASR
• Education for judges
• Possible sheep sale in June 2005
• Wool pool formed by Sherry Stahl Wellborn for wool blankets
• Thoughts on who might be available to do both the newsletter and the secretarial work if the current individuals can no longer continue in the coming year
Feeding Sheep for a Clean Wool Clip  
By Sue Johnson

I have been raising sheep for nearly 25 years. I keep approximately 35 sheep over the winter here in northern Vermont. When I began with 4 sheep and knowing absolutely nothing about them, many colleagues thought it foolish for me to try and raise sheep with an emphasis on fleece. Experience has shown me over the years though, that keeping and marketing clean wool has made the difference between being in the red at the end of the year and making a sizable profit.

Looking back, in my first year of raising sheep, I found it difficult getting a few flakes of hay from where I stored it to the round 5 sided wooden feeder my husband had made me. The sheep were around me, pushing at my legs, trying to snatch more. Many farmers feed on the ground outdoors. There are pros and cons to this management. If you have lots of “clean” pastureland (ground that is not muddy or covered with manure), and cons to this management. If you have lots of “clean” pastureland (ground that is not muddy or covered with manure), and cons to this management. If you have lots of “clean” pastureland (ground that is not muddy or covered with manure), and cons to this management. If you have lots of “clean” pastureland (ground that is not muddy or covered with manure), and cons to this management. If you have lots of “clean” pastureland (ground that is not muddy or covered with manure), and cons to this management. 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This can be an asset to some farmers; but a drawback if much of the little green chaff doesn’t get eaten by the sheep, they are not getting all the nutrition you are counting on. Feeding on the ground inside your barn is never a good idea, as the floor will never be very sanitary and the feed can easily become contaminated.

Round feeders, either 5 or 6 sided with space for 10 or 12 sheep to eat, are my favorites. They take up a small amount of space for the number of sheep they serve and they are fairly easy to roll to another place. They have a bottom with sides that can double as a grain feeder; and the sheep, I find, like to eat from them. They come in metal versions and homemade versions from USDA plans. My sheep are social, and they like to look at each other when they eat. With all their heads in the feeder together, they don’t have to look around to see who has a better bite of food, dropping hay as they chew on their neighbor like when they eat from the long v-shaped feeders. Three or four flakes of hay fit easily in the bottom, it stays clean and the sheep eat every bit of the second cut that I feed them so there is little or no waste. If I am worried about getting chaff in their wool, especially when a neighbor volunteers to feed the sheep if we go away, I show them how to put the flakes designated for a particular feeder in an old sheet. Then I catch it at the corners, and carry it across the barn, over the sheep’s backs and put it into the feeder with the hay in it and then pull away the sheet carefully. Result: even inexperienced help can care for your sheep and not wreck your fleece and you can have a worry free vacation! When using these round feeders, I have found from experience that it is best to plan to have enough feeders so that the ratio of sheep to feeders is about six to one. I have had the ratio 10 to 1 but find that some sheep won’t eat as much if they feel they have to fight for a space. Also, more feed seems to get wasted and more hay has a chance to get into the neck area if the hay is piled up too high in the feeder. The sheep always dig into the bottom of the pile of flakes to get the tasty crumbs.

If you have access to large round bales, putting four metal gates around a bale so the sheep eat by putting their heads through the bars also is successful for keeping hay out of wool. You need to check that the gates are securely latched together and that they move in a parallelogram fashion as the sheep eat away the bale. There

Continued on page 16

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Buyer Beware!
By Kris Savage

I had my buyer's number clenched in my hand, ready to bid on everything, as the biggest farm auction got under way. The auctioneer sidled up to the mike and announced, "No Returns, No Refunds, No Exchanges, Buyer Beware!" This is the way it is at most auctions and a lot of other places, too. Is that how you want to buy sheep? Many of us don't buy sheep at auctions for several reasons. However, some breeders may offer no higher level of customer service than would a stock yard.

This article was going to be about business ethics, but that would be a very long article so I thought I would shorten it to a few Do's and Don'ts.

First, some business wisdom: I have bought and sold many sheep, for many years, as part of my business. (If it makes you feel any better, I have always bought high and sold low, just like everyone else. The problem is that any money you make by selling low, you spend on more expensive sheep. The trick is to just buy one sheep high and sell many low. You'll never get rich, but you'll make a ton of friends for a lifetime.) Word of mouth advertising and repeat customers are the golden rule in this business. And last, but not least, if you are in the sheep business you'd better love sheep!

When I mentioned ethics, I hope you realized that this is not only for the seller. The buyer also has some responsibilities. Let's talk about him first.

If you are the BUYER:

1. Before you even think of getting sheep, have a secure pen and shelter for the new purchase, or an isolation pen if you are adding to your flock.
2. Call the seller about a week in advance to discuss your needs (pets, breeding pair, lamb burgers, or?)
3. Don't show up in a new Cutlass Supreme and hope that the seller delivers. Transportation is the buyer's responsibility. If you must cancel, let the seller know immediately.
4. Leave kids (unless this happens to be their big idea) and dogs at home. Everyone enjoys a trip to the country. However, this is a business decision and requires your full attention.
5. Leave the manure on your own farm; wear clean shoes/boots and clothes.
6. Bring cash, get receipts. Sheep seem to load themselves when they see $100 bills.
7. Pick out your sheep by going into the pen and touching them for yourself. If they jump the 8 foot fence and run off, you may want to consider other bloodlines.
8. Be sure to examine the seller's records on immunizations, feed, growth, show placings, wool/lamb production records, and anything else that he has.

Now it's time to talk about the "purchase agreement." Some sellers agree that they have no agreement, others offer a vast array of money-back guarantees. As a buyer, what do you think is a fair demand if you run into problems?

If you are the SELLER:

1. Take the time to talk to your buyer. You must make sure that he is really prepared to purchase sheep.
2. If the buyer is looking for a breeding pair, be honest if you carry only one bloodline. Don't sell him a brother and sister and hope that he never looks at the registration papers. He usually does.
3. If the buyer wants a pet, make sure that any rams are banded/castrated before they leave the farm. Most buyers never do it later.
4. Decide who is for sale, and at what price, before the buyer shows up. And once you state the price, it cannot be raised (no matter how nice the ewe is beginning to look, or how much this buyer is beginning to annoy you).
5. Isolate in a small pen several "for sale only" possibilities so that the buyer doesn't have to look through your entire flock.
6. Have all your paperwork up to date and available. Keep all vet tests and results. If the buyer is a spinner, fleece samples or the fleece is a nice touch.

Now the seller has to come up with a realistic "purchase agreement." Whatever it is, it has to be the same for everyone. You want people to be happy with their sheep, but when they are not, how much of it is your fault?

We are now getting to the bottom line of this article. We all will be sellers and buyers at one time or another, so what is fair? Fair is finding out what kind of guarantee the seller offers before you go to the farm to look at sheep. Some farms are closed flocks so once a sheep leaves, it can't be returned. If your breeding pair doesn't breed, will the seller refund your money and let you keep the sheep? What about genetic faults? What if your bred ewe isn't bred? What if they overheat on the way home and die (after the seller said they would be fine)? Here are a few agreements that I have collected from breeders who have been in business for at least 10 years:

Breeder A: You have 3 days to bring the sheep back for a full refund, no questions asked. Only other refunds are for genetic faults, which a veterinarian must verify.

Breeder B: Must isolate new sheep for 30 days. Replace or refund price if animal dies within 30 days and an autopsy is done by a vet. Seller will pay half of vet fees for the first 14 days. Will refund or replace any ewe or ram that does not breed the first year.

Breeder C: No money is refunded. Animals will be replaced with current or next year's lamb crop. This excludes any injury or death while on buyer's farm.

Breeder D: Refund or replacement for any sheep up to a year. After a year, reduced lamb prices for additional sales.

Breeder E: You bought it, it's yours. No refunds and no returns.

There are some beautiful Border Leicesters out there. I have said many times, "I'd pay anything for that ram!" Since then, I have...
changed my tune. When you are a seller, you are selling a package: all your farm management skills, sheep knowledge, health guarantees, transportation, follow-up calls, even emergency visits to the buyer's farm. You are providing a service. If the buyer likes the service he gets from you, he will be back. This is what we all must do to get — and keep — more people in the sheep business. We need to teach people how to raise sheep (or at least tell them what books to read). Then they will be back for more.

Buyers need to be fair, too. Don't buy a slaughter ram (for cheap), and then decide to use it for breeding. Don't spend all day at one breeder's farm getting a private lesson in raising sheep, and then go to another breeder to buy. You will get what you pay for, one way or another. If you are just starting out, don't scrimp on the education; look for a breeder who will offer you honest help. It is not easy raising sheep, there are many obstacles in the way. But if you take the time to learn a few tricks of the trade, a small flock of Border Leicesters can be a wonderful hobby, or successful business.

The message that comes to the surface here is that you need to talk to different sellers to find out what they have to offer along with the sheep being sold. Will they be able — and are they willing — to give you honest, dependable advice or help when you need it? If you have just a few ewes, can they arrange for you to have them bred in the fall? Ask questions. Ask if they will put anything in writing; find out what their purchase agreement is. Then look at that ewe again. Is she worth it? If you are buying from the right breeder, you bet she is!

~ This article first appeared in the Fall 1999 ABLA Newsletter
Eastern States Exposition
Northeast Regional Border Leicester Show
Submitted by Greg Deakin

The Northeast Regional Border Leicester Show took place at the Big E in West Springfield, Massachusetts on Saturday, September 25th. The judge was John Mrozinski of Rolling Prairie, Indiana.

Yearling Rams
1) 243#, Deakin 03-30, Deakin Family Farms, Cuba, IL
2) 222#, TB27-03, JoAnne L. Tuncy, Millerton, NY
3) 207#, J&L Y203, Christopher Hopkins, Chepachet, RI
4) Deakin 03-37, Deakin Family Farms, Cuba, IL
5) CCH 335, Christopher Hopkins, Chepachet, RI

Senior Ram Lambs
1) 130#, Deakin 04-1000 Rolex, Deakin Family Farms, Cuba, IL
2) 139#, Deakin 04-1028 Mr. Big, Deakin Family Farms, Cuba, IL
3) 147#, TB29-04, JoAnne L. Tuncy, Millerton, NY
4) TB31-04, JoAnne L. Tuncy, Millerton, NY

Senior Champion Ram
1) Deakin Family Farms, Cuba, IL (Yearling)
2) JoAnne L. Tuncy, Millerton, NY (Yearling)

Junior Ram Lambs
1) 126#, CCH 439, Christopher Hopkins, Chepachet, RI
2) 132#, Deakin 04-1046, Deakin Family Farms, Cuba, IL
3) 121#, SSF 435, Barbara Thompson, Chepachet, RI
4) SSF 448, Barbara Thompson, Chepachet, RI
5) Deakin 04-1056, Deakin Family Farms, Cuba, IL
6) CCH 438, Christopher Hopkins, Chepachet, RI

Pair of Ram Lambs
1) Deakin Family Farms, Cuba, IL
2) Barbara Thompson, Chepachet, RI
3) JoAnne L. Tuncy, Millerton, NY
4) Christopher Hopkins, Chepachet, RI

Senior Ewe Lambs
1) 132#, SSF 408, Barbara Thompson, Chepachet, RI
2) 142#, TB32-04, JoAnne L. Tuncy, Millerton, NY
3) 124#, Thompson 409, Christopher Hopkins, Chepachet, RI
4) Deakin 04-1026, Deakin Family Farms, Cuba, IL
5) Deakin 04-1033, Deakin Family Farms, Cuba, IL
6) TB36-04, JoAnne L. Tuncy, Millerton, NY
7) Nebiker 0023, Irene Nebiker, North Smithfield, RI

Senior Champion Ewe
1) Deakin Family Farms, Cuba, IL (Yearling)
2) Barbara Thompson, Chepachet, RI (Senior Lamb)

Junior Ewe Lambs
1) 108#, Deakin 04-1048, Deakin Family Farms, Cuba, IL
2) 110#, SSF 431, Barbara Thompson, Chepachet, RI
3) 103#, Deakin 04-1059, Deakin Family Farms, Cuba, IL
4) Koeppel 184, Irene Nebiker, North Smithfield, RI

Pair of Ewe Lambs
1) Barbara Thompson, Chepachet, RI
2) Deakin Family Farms, Cuba, IL
3) JoAnne L. Tuncy, Millerton, NY
4) Christopher Hopkins, Chepachet, RI
5) Irene Nebiker, North Smithfield, RI

Junior Champion Ewes
1) Deakin Family Farms, Cuba, IL (Junior Lamb)
2) Barbara Thompson, Chepachet, RI (Junior Lamb)

Champion Ewe
1) Deakin Family Farms, Cuba, IL (Yearling)
2) Barbara Thompson, Chepachet, RI (Senior Lamb)

Exhibitor’s Flock
1) Deakin Family Farms, Cuba, IL
2) JoAnne L. Tuncy, Millerton, NY
3) Christopher Hopkins, Chepachet, RI
4) Barbara Thompson, Chepachet, RI

Breeder’s Flock
1) Deakin Family Farms, Cuba, IL
2) JoAnne L. Tuncy, Millerton, NY
3) Barbara Thompson, Chepachet, RI

Get of Sire
1) Deakin Family Farms, Cuba, IL
2) Christopher Hopkins, Chepachet, RI
3) JoAnne L. Tuncy, Millerton, NY
4) Barbara Thompson, Chepachet, RI

Best Fleece – JoAnne L. Tuncy, Millerton, NY

Premier Exhibitor – Deakin Family Farms, Cuba, IL.

Premier Breeder – Deakin Family Farms, Cuba, IL.
World Sheep & Wool Congress
Sale Report
By Greg Deakin

The World Sheep & Wool Congress sale was held over a two-day span of July 22 & 23 in Quebec City, Canada. A large crowd was on hand as sheep enthusiasts from around the world attended this most important part of the World Congress. Under the talented gavel of René Houde the crowd was enchanted to hear the bilingual auctioneer cry bids first in French and then in English. It took a few moments to get used to the rhythm, but René understood this audience and was patient with them. As a side bar, he also sells in Spanish and Italian!

We had a good group of Border Leicesters on hand. Jonassons of Washington had the Grand Champion White BL Ewe, while Mist O Morn Farm had the Grand Champion White BL Ram, who went on to win Reserve Champion in the overall White Wool class. The overall Grand Champion fleece in the handspinning division was won by a Border Leicester-Corriedale cross.

In each of the breeds the ewes were sold prior to the rams. Dorsets sold on July 22 and averaged $590.52 on 58 head.

On the second day of the auctions, Border Leicesters started out the day. Brian Atkinson sold his Grand Champion yearling ewe for $500 to Tiffany Deakin, IL. The Reserve Grand Champion was a yearling bred by Linda McDonald and she sold for $250 to Marcel Couture, QC. Brian Atkinson won the junior class and that ewe sold for $250 to Ferme Highlanders, QC.

The Grand Champion ram of the sale was a yearling bred by Linda McDonald. He sold for $275 to Marcel Couture, QC. The high selling ram was the Reserve Grand Champion junior ram lamb bred by Brian Atkinson. He sold for $500 to John Campbell & Linda McDonald, ON.

Oregon Flock and Fiber Festival
By Di Waibel

The Oregon Flock and Fiber Festival held their annual show the fourth weekend in September starting on Friday and running through Saturday and Sunday at Clackamas County Fairgrounds in Canby, Oregon. The weather was good for the sheep although a little cold for the participants on Saturday. There were lots of animals, lots of vendors, a new item - a parking lot two-hour sale - as well as great food and the annual lamb cook-off handled by Dan Wilson.

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President's Message

from England will be on hand to watch all 20 different breed shows in Louisville. Over 5,000 total sheep will be on display and our breed will be right there in the mix with the best of them.

The show begins at 11:00 a.m. on November 17th and will be judged by Matt Best of New Hampshire. About an hour after the show there will be a dinner for all exhibitors and Border Leicester friends. Dinner will be followed by our annual meeting. The meeting place will be in one of the nearby rooms, the location of which will be announced on show day.

If at all possible, do plan to attend the show and annual meeting. Your participation and attendance is invited and we want your input to help us promote our breed. An agenda will be posted at the meeting and we welcome your thoughts, ideas, and input. Your board works hard to promote the breed and we need to hear from you.

I am pleased to announce that our secretary, Di Waibel, has completed all the paperwork necessary for us to apply for not-for-profit status with the Internal Revenue Service. She made a comment to me that the Association has been working on it for nearly 15 years and the forms are all completed and sent off for approval.

Operating under not-for-profit status will give our board and Association insurable security which we did not have, plus more flexibility to operate in a professional, businesslike fashion. Good job, Di!

In eyeing the future, plans are underway for our breed to host its first-ever National Sale which will be held in Springfield, Illinois on Friday and Saturday, June 17 and 18, 2005. A collection of eight other national breed sales are held there every year and this will be a great opportunity for everyone to share new genetics with each other. More news and details on this exciting venture will follow.

Get active, get involved, and plan now to take advantage of just a few of some very exciting events ahead!

~ Greg Deakin

OregonWool.com

advantage of this is quick turn-around time when new information needs to be loaded onto the website, and very low website maintenance costs. You can visit other websites by this designer by visiting his own website at www.saxifages.org/public/stonebreaker/.

We are looking for a matching funds grant to help us pay for creating the website. This means that the more farms that join OWGA the lower the grant amount we'll need. OWGA has a board of directors of three and an annual meeting in June. Our first meeting was at the 2004 Black Sheep Gathering.

If you're interested in joining, please contact:
Sherry Stahl Wellborn
Oregon Wool Growers Association
82787 Marlow Road
Eugene, OR 97405
541-484-1440
sherry@dancingsheepfarm.com.

Feeding Sheep for a Clean Wool Clip

are special panels made for these large bales with slatted bars so the sheep can even eat along the ground, picking up what drops from the sides of the bale. It is important that the bale is placed in a well-drained spot to keep the area around the bale from getting muddy.

No matter how you feed out hay, it is a good idea to feed younger sheep separately from the larger sheep. One reason for this is that a larger sheep, when it eats, will drop more hay on smaller sheep. Another reason is that the older sheep will eat the feed faster than the lambs and the young animals will miss out on needed nutrition. One year, I made the mistake of feeding two ram lambs along with two large adult rams. When we sheared them in the spring, the older animals were very fat, and the lambs were walking skeletons. They had missed out on their share of the hay being slower eaters.

On another front, sheep love burdock! And burdock really ruins a wool clip. If your fields or barnyards have burdock in them, get rid of it. Cut and haul the plants away and with them as many of the burrs as you are willing to pick up off the ground. Once you have done this, the sheep will keep them mowed down to the ground and they will no longer be a problem, given that you check once in a while to see that the plants aren’t desperately trying to go to seed with new tiny burdock flowers. If you have to buy your hay, check that it doesn’t contain burdock. If it does, the sheep will fight for it and their cheeks will show it, wearing little round burdock ornaments. If you find your hay does have it, pull it out of the flakes before you feed it out, if possible, and tell your hay source you would rather not see it in the hay next year. It will be well worth the effort.

Presently, I use a combination of round feeders and feeding on the ground as weather and wind permits. I often decide on a daily basis what I do, though the feeders definitely save feed, especially during a wet, rainy period. I have a small barn and space is at a premium. I can roll the feeders inside or outside as weather conditions change. When I need to feed grain, it is easier to dump the grain over the heads of sheep into the feeders than to try and dump it along a trough with pushing and shoving sheep knocking me around. When the bottoms of the feeders get soiled, you can roll them out of the feeders. To do this, you will need to get rid of it. I also periodically scrub them with a Clorox solution. Many of my sheep stand with their heads in the feeder waiting for the feed to drop into it when they see me going to get the hay or grain.

Whatever your situation is, whether you have three sheep or 200, a little foresight and planning can go a long way to preserve your wool clip. It doesn’t take much longer to feed in such a manner to keep chaff out of the wool. A friend took a tour of a large yarn manufacturer in New England. While she was there, she asked why the mill uses wool primarily from other countries. The guide showed her bales of wool from the U.S. and from New Zealand. Much of the U.S. wool was yellow and uneven in color. He told her it didn’t take the dyes as well due to its condition and what it took to get it clean, often yielding an inferior product. As more of us make an effort to have “clean clips,” more wool markets I believe, will open up to us, whether to that mill, or to hand-spinners and felters or sweater and sock makers; bringing more income to our sheep operations. I encourage you to give it a try!
Winners of
PREMIER BREEDER & PREMIER EXHIBITOR
Northeast Regional Border Leicester Show held at The Big E

Special thanks to Richard & MaryAnn Johnson for all their help showing our sheep... plus the great help of Linda Schauwecker and Ed Julian.

Our goal is to breed Border Leicesters consistently with correct frame, excellent quality fleeces and sound structure.

“PHOENIX”, DEAKIN 030
Grand Champion Ram at The Big E, Wisconsin State Fair and Maryland Sheep & Wool Festival

Select stud rams available for sale!

Thanks to all our recent buyers at the farm and at the shows!

Now taking orders for 2005 ewe lambs.

Watch for our show flock at Louisville!

DEAKIN FAMILY FARMS
21632 N. Cameron Rd.
Cuba, IL 61427
309/785-5115
Email: ads.banner@sybertech.net

“JUMBO”, DEAKIN 03-02
Grand Champion Ewe at The Big E & Maryland Sheep & Wool Festival; Reserve Grand at the Wisconsin State Fair.

1st Place Longwool Flock, Wisconsin State Fair over 11 other flocks!

Special thanks to Larry & Dixie McDaniel, IN for their help with our sheep at Wisconsin!
Feel free to copy this page as many times as needed. The success of the fundraiser depends on folks selling tickets. Raffle proceeds will go to the Border Leicester Premium Fund at NAILE. Be sure to send all tickets and money collected to Nancy Weik. Her address is listed on the raffle ticket. Thanks to Deakin Family Farms for donating the ewe lamb!

PLEASE NOTE: This is not an ABLA sanctioned raffle. It is sponsored by the NAILE Border Leicester Premium Fund and is the sole responsibility of its organizers.
The International Livestock Exposition is just that. It is international in scope and phenomenal in quality of sheep. This is true for all breeds showing there. These animals are the “crème de la crème” of the sheep show world. Additionally, this year it is the combined ABLA-NABLA National show. Come see the Border Leicesters from California, Colorado, New York and Wisconsin, and all parts in between. We are keeping our fingers crossed that the restrictions on Canadian imports will be lifted in time for the show this year.

This year because of its National Border Leicester status, we are splitting the ewe lamb class to include fall, early, intermediate and late lambs. We will be awarding money in the leadline classes to exhibitors leading Border Leicester entries and for the first time ever, we are sponsoring a Junior Border Leicester show. NAILE was unable to provide funding for this show so it is up to us to come up with the premiums. We are doing this by selling raffle tickets on the ewe lamb donated by Deakin Family Farm.

Please help us have the best show ever by bringing your beautiful Border Leicesters and secondly by selling and buying raffle tickets on the donated lamb. There are usually plenty of transports leaving NAILE to all parts of the U.S. so transportation should not be a great obstacle. Additionally, if you prefer, you may request a payment of $300.00 instead of the ewe. We need entries and donations to keep our junior show going and I firmly believe the time has come for us as an association to support our junior exhibitors. If you have any questions about either show, please call Nancy Weik at 540-347-2569 or Greg Deakin at 309-785-5058. So far, Archie Murray is the top salesman, with the Jones from Tennessee close behind. The rest of us need to shake our tails and see if we can beat them. We will again have a silent auction, the proceeds of which have allowed us to increase premiums for the last three years. This means all exhibitors leave with ribbons and some money. Besides, it is great fun to watch the auction proceed during the week and see who wins up with the winning bid. The Border Leicesters will be judged November 17th, with the Junior Show judging taking place November 14th. Junior exhibitors will be released right after the show. We also need you to support the fleece show. For the first time, they are allowing the fleeces to arrive when the wool sheep arrive. Wool breed fleece must arrive by 6:00 p.m. on November 15th and will be judged by November 16th.

Plan to stay for dinner after the show and attend the exhibitors meeting and then the Annual Meeting of the American Border Leicester Association. See you in Louisville!
2004 Upcoming Events

October
16-17 New York State Sheep & Wool Festival
Dutchess County Fairgrounds
Rhinebeck, NY
www.sheepandwool.com

22-24 Southeast Animal Fiber Fair
Western NC Ag. Center
Asheville, NC
www.saff.org

November
6-19 N.A.I.L.E.
National Border Leicester Show
Kentucky Fair & Expo Center
Louisville, KY
www.livestockexpo.org
Info: Nancy Weik
(540) 347-2569

17 ABLA Annual Meeting
N.A.I.L.E.
Louisville, KY

December
15 Submission deadline
for the Winter Issue of the ABLA Quarterly News

30 Membership renewals due

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How to Register or Transfer Border Leicester Sheep with the ABLA

1. Fill out any ABLA application for registration which you already have. If you do not have such a form, you can get one from the ABLA website at www.ablasheep.org. You may also contact Associated Sheep Registry for a copy.

2. Make sure you have accurately provided all the required information on the application form. While we are still transitioning with ASR, please include a copy of the sire and dam’s registry papers with your application so that ASR can complete their database.

3. Double check your application for errors or deletions.

4. Include a check made out to “ABLA”. The cost for registrations and transfers is $4.00 per entry if you are a current member of the ABLA. If you are not a member, the fees will be double.

5. Be sure you mail it to the ASR address given below, no matter what address is printed on your application form.

Ms. Karey Claghorn is a great resource at ASR. Call her to find out just what Associated Sheep Registry can do for you – pedigree research, rush jobs, etc.

Associated Sheep Registry
15603 173rd Avenue
Milo, Iowa 50166

Telephone: (641) 942-6402
Fax: (641) 942-6502
Email: kclaghorn@earthlink.net