



Raising sheep the EASY way!

Barbados Blackbelly Sheep Association International

Blackbelly Banner

Trimming Blackbelly Hooves

By Jane Anderlini

Hoof trimming is another of those opportunities to spend quality time with every sheep while we're taking care of their needs. There are various tools out there that can do the job and various ways of restraining sheep while we trim. This article describes what we use and how we trim our American Blackbelly hooves.

Tools

A good pair of sheep hoof shears is our basic tool, and most trims can be done just with these. We also use a horse hoof pick, most often if we trim after a rain—it's a quick way to remove packed mud. A leather carpenter's pouch around the waist

is handy to carry tools in, along with a pencil and paper or electronic recording device to make note of any hooves requiring follow-up or to record health concerns that we notice during the trim.

When to Trim

In rainy weather, hooves will be muddy, but the walls of the hoof will be softer to cut. In dry weather, those hoof walls can be more brittle, but the hooves are usually cleaner to work with. How often to trim depends on your weather, what you feed your sheep, and the kind of ground your sheep are walking on. Living in Canada, with clay soil in our area in the summer and snow in the winter,

we find the best times for routine trims of our herd are in the spring after the snow melt and in the fall after they come off pasture. There may be some sheep needing an individualized trimming plan as frequently as every two months or more if they've had an injury (following a leg injury, sheep often favour the sore leg and the hoof of that leg won't wear down as fast as the others; it's then difficult for them to walk when they do try to put full pressure on it again). Of course, any time we notice a cracked hoof or a limping sheep, we check and trim their hooves.

Restraining

We've used four different methods of restraining our sheep for trims. The best way we've found for our American Blackbellies, although it requires two people, is to sit them on their rumps and let them rest back against our kneeling legs. They seem to like this way best and feet can be trimmed quickly by the second person. Having the sheep standing either on the ground or on a

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Trimming Hooves

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platform can work, although I've personally found it awkward to trim at this angle. The sheep tilt table is exceptional for larger sheep but is a bit too roomy for our Blackbellies.

A sheep "deck chair" is a net lounge that the sheep are tipped



back into and essentially keep the sheep immobile while they're in the chair, making hoof trimming quite manageable for one person.

Trimming

The sole of the hoof is the guide for how much of the hoof wall needs to be trimmed off. Basically, the hard wall of the hoof should be trimmed to become flush with the hoof sole. The rubbery heel should also be trimmed down.



If the shears are always held sideways with the blades parallel to the sole, accidental cutting into the quick won't occur and the edge of the hard wall will remain flat to the ground after cutting. If the hoof wall has grown and folded under the hoof, it can be pried up with the shears or a hoof pick until there is space to slip the blade of the shears between the growth and the sole of the hoof. Then keeping the shears parallel to the sole, the growth can be trimmed to the outer edge of the hoof.



Long growth at the toes can be tricky—the safest method is to start by trimming the sides to

clearly define where the hoof sole is before cutting off the excess growth at the tip.



What Else to Look For

When the trim is finished, be sure all bits of hoof are removed from between the hooves to avoid irritation (also check the skin in between for any sores and treat if necessary). Investigate any odors or swellings. Sheep have oil glands/ducts at the base of their legs just above where the hooves split. If a sheep is "walking" on her knees, check these oil ducts for redness or swelling.

Having each sheep captive for hoof trimming provides an excellent opportunity to check udders on ewes for lumps or irregularities, to check lymph gland areas for swellings, and to look for any other health issues such as runny eyes, stuffy noses, cuts, abscesses, etc. We always keep gentian violet wound spray nearby when we trim and apply it to any cuts we notice. Disposable gloves and paper towels can come in handy, and a camera is always useful to document problems. I have my cell phone with me all the time and use the camera and memo features when we work with the sheep.

Sheep seem to appreciate hoof trims and bounce away with enthusiasm after their trim! ✨

Using a Spreadsheet for Flock Recordkeeping

By Carol Elkins

In the January 2013 Blackbelly Banner (<http://www.blackbellysheep.org/newsletter/2013/2013jan.pdf>), we reviewed several software programs to use for keeping track of your sheep. Even the most affordable one was \$50. When you have only a few sheep, you can use Excel (which comes free with Windows operating systems in the Microsoft Office program) or Numbers (which is bundled as part of Apple's iWord software).

Since I work in Windows, I'll use Excel for my example. To begin with, set up an Excel spreadsheet to hold your Flock Records with the following column headings:

These are the MINIMUM fields that you should record. The more the better.

- Eartag
- Name
- Registration No.
- Gender
- Date of Birth
- Notes
- Sire
- Dam
- Paternal Grandsire
- Paternal Granddam
- Maternal Grandsire
- Maternal Granddam
- Disposition
- Date of Disposition

In another page in the same spreadsheet, set up an Event Record to track everything that happens to your sheep. Set up these column headings:

- Event Date
- Eartag
- Event (Birth, Breeding, Medical Disposition, Weaning, Other) Description

A spreadsheet program will get you started, but be careful that you don't wait too long to get a better way to manage your data. The more data you accumulate, the more you will have to transfer to the new program and it will quickly grow into a nightmare. However, some programs, such as FlockFiler, can import your sheep records from your spreadsheet file so that you don't have to retype them.

When you purchase flock management software, you will be able to see each sheep's event record and all pertinent data about the sheep in one place. But until then, these two spreadsheets will get you by.

If you don't have Excel or Numbers and want a spreadsheet program for free, here are four options:

- Google Docs Spreadsheet (<http://docs.google.com>) is the spreadsheet component of the Google office applications suite that includes a word processor, presentations and spreadsheet tools as well as Gmail and Google Calendar. The Google Docs applications are cloud based, so you need a good, consistent connection to the Internet.
- OpenOffice.org is an open source office application, and it is available for a range of operating systems including Linux, Mac and Windows. 

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
1	Eartag	Name	Registration No	Gender	DOB	Sire	Dam	Paternal Grandsire	Paternal Granddam	Maternal Grandsire	Maternal Granddam	Scrapie TagNo	Disposition	Disposition
2	251	Wren	CJE04092084BB	Ewe	08-Apr-09	Zebediah	Sparrow	Zane	Spaw	Zion	Spaw	COPB070215	Sold	06-Jan-11
3	252	Casper	HAM03091690BB	Ram	15-Mar-09	St. Michael	Lilah	VSU 2414	VSU 2592	Zeke	Yvonne	TX23773-105	Butchered	12-Dec-09
4	253	Midnight	HAM03091692BB	Ram	15-Mar-09	St. Michael	Keeper	VSU 2414	VSU 2592	Frederick	Lady	TX22773-109	Butchered	12-Dec-09
5	254	Moonlight	HAM03091693BB	Ewe	15-Mar-09	St. Michael	Keeper	VSU 2414	VSU 2592	Frederick	Lady	TX23773-108	Sold	27-Aug-13
6	255	Ellen	CJE09092085BB	Ewe	23-Sep-09	Zion	Elsie	St. Michael	Virginia	St. Michael	Pester	COPB070218	Sold	06-Jan-11
7	256	Trudy	CJE10092086BB	Ewe	03-Oct-09	Zion	Troublesome	St. Michael	Virginia	unknown	unknown	COPB070223	Sold	06-Jan-11
8	257	unnamed		Ram	08-Oct-09	Zion	Vanna	St. Michael	Virginia	Zion	Yvonne		Died	28-Jul-10
9	258	Valerie	CJE10092087BB	Ewe	08-Oct-09	Zion	Vanna	St. Michael	Virginia	Zion	Yvonne	COPB070227	Sold	06-Jan-11
10	259	Jezebel	CJE06102088BB	Ewe	05-Jun-10	Zebediah	Moonlight	Zane	Spaw	St. Michael	Keeper	COPB07 00013	Sold	25-Sep-10
11	260	Miriam	CJE06102088BB	Ewe	05-Jun-10	Zebediah	Moonlight	Zane	Spaw	St. Michael	Keeper	COPB07 00008	Sold	25-Sep-10
12	261	Zeeman		Ram	09-Jun-10	Zebediah	Troublesome	Zane	Spaw	unknown	unknown		Butchered	26-Mar-11
13	262	Zarish	CJE06102090BB	Ewe	15-Jun-10	Zebediah	Sparrow	Zane	Spaw	Zion	Spaw	COPB07 00012	Sold	25-Sep-10
14	263	Ayalet	CJE06102091BB	Ewe	15-Jun-10	Zebediah	Sparrow	Zane	Spaw	Zion	Spaw	COPB07 00011	Sold	25-Sep-10
15	264	Devorah	CJE06102092BB	Ewe	19-Jun-10	Zebediah	Vanna	Zane	Spaw	Zion	Yvonne	COPB07 00009	Sold	25-Sep-10
16	265	Shoshanah	CJE06102093BB	Ewe	22-Jun-10	Zebediah	Elsie	Zane	Spaw	St. Michael	Pester	COPB07 00006	Sold	25-Sep-10

Ear Tag FAQs & Tips

Reprinted from Premier One
(<http://www.premier1supplies.com>)

[Editor's note: Experienced Blackbelly breeders recommend inserting Premier's small Brass tag in one ear at birth and Premier's Mini Tag or Q-flex 1.0 in the other ear at around 4 months old. The brass tag number should be the sheep's permanent number. The Mini and Q-flex tags can be used as your farm's Scrapie tag. If you use a plastic tag as the sole tag, make sure that a lamb's ear is large enough before tagging to not be deformed or injured by the tag.]



How can I reduce tag losses?

- Insert tag midway between the skull and the tip of the ear. Tags placed too close to the skull in sheep are more likely to become infected. Why? 1) The tissue can become too thick for the tag; and 2) the wound is less able to heal (not enough air).
- Avoid the larger veins in the ear. Why? Tissue around damaged veins heals less rapidly and is more prone to infection.
- Don't use cheaper nylon (e.g. Snapp or Swivel) tags as long-term tags. Why? They quickly become brittle from UV light.
- Avoid double-button round tags for sheep and goats. Why? They are more likely to snag and tear on long grass, vines, wire fences and hay feeders.
- Avoid low-fiber diets. Why? Sheep on high-grain or liquid diets are desperate to chew—even on ear tags. When one starts chewing tags, its pen-mates will copy the behavior.

How do I keep track of an animal if a tag falls out?

1. Install 2 tags (one in each ear)—with the same number. Official tags can't be duplicated—but you can use the same individual animal number on the second "backup" tag if you don't add a flock or premise number.
2. Tattoo the animal. No animal ID is more permanent.

What tag colors imprint the best—and the worst?

- Light colors (spearmint, salmon, yellow, white) are the most readable.
- Dark colors (brown, purple, red) are the least readable.

How Ear Tags Can Help You...

1. To indicate sex

Benefits:

- Allows rapid sorting by sex while sheep and goats are moving down a chute or in a holding pen.
- No need to get your hands dirty or spend valuable time to "check the plumbing" of each animal.

To do this:

- Ears of males: Insert primary tag in left ear.
- Ears of females: Insert primary tag in right ear.

2. To indicate year of birth

Benefit: No need to catch them to check teeth. A tag will tell you the age from 25 ft away. Faster decisions when sorting for culling or breeding.

Two ways to do this (we do both):

- Use a different color for each year. Lambs with purple tags were born in 2010. Lamb with yellow tag in year 2011.
 - Begin tag number series with the year of birth. Tag 147275 indicates lamb is the 275th lamb tagged in 2014.
3. To indicate sire (and dam)

Benefits: No need to check records for breeding decisions.

Three ways to do this:

- Use a different color second tag for each sire (blue tags = Sire XYZ; purple tags = Sire ABC).
- Have sire name printed on the tag of its progeny.
- Hand-write the ewe's tag number with a marking pen on the lamb's tag. If space is limited write it on the inner surfaces of the tag.

Note: Since tags can be lost, we strongly advise using 2 sire/dam tags (one in each ear).

4. To indicate single, twin or triplet

Benefits: Speeds up sorting for breeding and sale purposes. Reduces need to keep and/or consult records.

To do this: Use a different color for each lamb type. Repeat this color year after year. Premier's code is:

- blue = single
- green = twin
- orange = triplet



Scrapbook



What Is Wrong with This Sheep? Can You Spot It? Look closely at the sheep in the foreground and see if you can spot the discrepancy. (Answer is on page 7)



Matthew and Hannah Noyes showing their American Blackbelly ram at the 2014 Calgary Stampede



Elaine Haas' flock of Barbados Blackbelly in Hillsboro, MO

Ask the BBSAI

Send questions to info@blackbellysheep.org.

Q: Can I breed a ewe and ram who are brother/sister? I am selling some ewes and rams but they all have the same ram father. I just want to make sure that the new owner will be able to register the offspring from a brother/sister breeding pair.

A: If the parents are registered, the lambs can be registered as long as they meet breed standard. The BBSAI does not police breedings. In a rare breed such as Barbados Blackbelly, breeding brother to sister might be the best thing to do. You can learn more about this conservation breeding approach in the Summer 2014 issue of the BBSAI newsletter at <http://www.blackbellysheep.org/newsletter/2014/2014july.pdf>

Q: We moved to property in east Texas. It is 5.5 acres of coastal Bermuda with a spring-fed pond. The previous owner ran 3 or 4 calves on the property. Shelter and fencing are available, but the fencing is barbed wire and is designed to contain cattle, not sheep. Can barbed wire be used for sheep or should I replace it with fencing designed for sheep?

A: Sheep will easily escape from traditional five-strand barbed wire fencing, so it is not a suitable restraint. If you add additional strands so that there is no less than 5 in. between strands and make sure all strands are really tight, then it will probably suffice. Many shepherds prefer 2x4 or 4x4 field fencing. But rather than replacing your existing barbed wire fencing, consider putting field fencing on top of it. Use the upper barbed wire to discourage predators from climbing over the fence, and the lower barbed wire to discourage predators from digging under the fence.

Q: My elderly parents took in twin lambs this winter when the mother died. One twin died the next day. They did not know to give the remaining lamb colostrum. But they fed it and it is now about 2 months old and follows them around. But it is not eating grass or sheep feed. Is there anything that can be done for this baby now?

A: Your parents are to be congratulated on getting that baby to 2 months old. It is a lot of work. The problem is that the lamb hasn't had an opportunity to learn from other sheep to eat grass or sheep feed. He really needs to be with other sheep so that he can learn how to be a sheep. At 2 months of age, he can be weaned, but before weaning, he really needs to get his rumen working by eating hay or grass. Can your parents locate someone who has sheep and who can take the lamb, at least for a few weeks while he is weaned? Or alternatively, can your parents locate a weaned sheep to live at their house with their lamb? The lamb needs to be kept outside with other sheep and after a couple of days of bottle he should be weaned. He needs to be drinking water from a trough/bowl and eating solids. There is some debate about the best way to wean: some people advocate stopping cold turkey; some people advocate gradually reducing the amount of milk over a couple of weeks until you're not feeding at all; others advocate diluting the milk with water and maintaining the same quantity. But before you wean, you need to get the lamb on solid food.

You didn't indicate what sex the baby is. Be advised that ram lambs that are bottle fed usually grow up to be dangerous. At 2 years of age when their full hormones kick in, they need to prove they are alpha male. Since bottle-fed rams have no fear of humans, they will butt

and ram to make their point. If the lamb is female, this will not be a problem.

Q: I have a 9-month-old ewe lamb that I bottle raised. She has two white ankles (rear), and her tail is about 1/3 white. I was going to keep her for a test breeding, but she's very small for her age. My 3-month-old weanlings are almost as big as she is. Will she grow out of this? Should I keep her and breed her?

A: I suggest that you record your bottle baby with the BBSAI as a "Tracked" sheep. Sheep that do not meet breed standards but who could bear a registrable sheep can be recorded as Tracked. The BBSAI provides this special designation to ensure continuity in a bloodline's records. Tracked sheep cannot be registered, but both of their parents must be registered. The offspring of tracked sheep can be registered via the BBSAI Exceptions Committee.

However, I recommend you wait until she reaches her full growth, whatever that might be, before breeding her. Not only does she need to pour all of her resources into her own growth (and not fetal growth), but she needs to be big enough to carry the lambs to term. That would be my only concern if she doesn't put some additional growth on.

The question of selling an undesired intact blackbelly sheep as a pet is still unresolved in my mind. I have done it and I still don't think I should have. Once that fully fertile ewe leaves your property, you will never know if she is eventually bred or not. Granted, her offspring would not be registrable, but they could still find their way into the communal gene pool, which might or might not be a good thing. The point is that you are no longer in control of that decision

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Ask the BBSAI

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if you sell her intact. In addition, I would worry that a “pet” sheep would be purchased by someone who doesn’t understand that even “pet” sheep should never be without another sheep. Sheep really aren’t good pets.

Q: As a member I was wondering why my name is not on the list of people who raise barb sheep. The purpose of being a member is for the advertising.

A: If the BBSAI has no record of your owning any registered sheep, then you will not be listed in the Breeder Directory. You may own registered sheep, but if you have not transferred ownership from the person you purchased them from to your name, then we have no proof that you own them.

One of BBSAI’s missions is to promote the interests of American Blackbelly sheep breeders, and we can do that only if the member owns registered American Blackbelly sheep. We believe that registered sheep will command higher prices than unregistered sheep, and that breeders who take the time to register their sheep and keep careful breeding records will make a lasting contribution to the overall quality of the American Blackbelly breed. Another BBSAI mission is to improve the genetics of each generation of sheep. Again, we feel that this can be best accomplished by registering sheep so that their lineages and bloodlines can be tracked across generations to enable breeders to develop the best breeding strategies that can improve their stock.

I encourage you to purchase registered sheep and/or transfer ownership of the registered sheep you have to your name. Doing so will automatically include you in the Breeders Directory and help

you better promote the work you are doing. The BBSAI is happy to put its power and voice in the sheep industry to work for you.

Q: I just sold a lamb who is not yet registered. Can I just give the buyer a bill of sale and let him register the lamb?

A: The proper way to do this is for you to register the lamb using the BBSAI registration application and sending in \$5 for each lamb to be registered. After receiving the registration certificate, you fill in the transfer information on the back of the certificate. Then you give the certificate to the buyer. The buyer sends in the transfer certificate and \$5 for each lamb transferred.

If you are in a hurry, you can give the buyer a certificate of parentage and a bill of sale. If the buyer is a member of the BBSAI, he can register the lamb by sending in a registration application, the certificate of parentage, and \$10 for each lamb to be registered. Buyers who are not BBSAI members

Answer to “What’s Wrong with This Sheep?”

This is a 6-month-old lamb that has all the male attributes (ruff of hair on the chest and horns) except for a penis. It has a vulva instead.

Like humans and other mammals, there are always instances of androgyny in a population, where an individual has a combination of masculine and feminine characteristics. In the wild, these characteristics are quickly selected against and bred out because they do not enhance reproduction. The owner of this sheep wonders if the sheep will be able to breed or bear offspring.

cannot register sheep; they can only transfer them.

Q: My ewe just gave birth to a ewe lamb that is a solid charcoal color. I have never seen this color in our American Blackbellies before. I was wondering if you have seen this color or if the color will change as it ages?



A: It is not uncommon to see very dark brown or almost black American Blackbelly sheep. The all-black color was purposefully selected for and developed into the Black Hawaiian sheep breed in the 1970s. To be registerable as an American Blackbelly, the sheep’s black belly, black facial barbs, and other black markings must be clearly distinguishable from the solid charcoal color of its body, and all other breed standards must be met. 🌟

New BBSAI Members

Erica Force and Terry Cole	Kaufman, TX
Jerry and Anne Frazier	The Dalles, OR
Carrie Hoffman	Pleasant Plain, OH
Jason Leonard	Norwood, ON
Samantha Musho	De Leon Springs, FL
Jessica Ophus	Vanderhoof, BC
John Parrish	Westminster, SC
Sundi Prechtl	Riverside, CA
Jacob Shaffer	Bartonville, TX
Carol and Joe Shaffer	Bartonville, TX
Leslie Smay	Kane, IL

The Barbados Blackbelly Sheep Association International is a non-profit organization registered in the State of Missouri



Raising sheep the EASY way!

The BBSAI Newsletter is a benefit of membership in the BBSAI and is published quarterly. The BBSAI Newsletter welcomes articles, photographs, and business cards that relate to American Blackbelly and Barbados Blackbelly sheep. Publication of articles or advertisements does not necessarily constitute an endorsement by BBSAI. No part of the BBSAI Newsletter (including photographs) can be reprinted, put on Web sites, or used in any manner without written permission of the BBSAI.

Issue deadlines are

January Issue – December 15

July Issue – June 15

April Issue – March 15

October Issue – September 15

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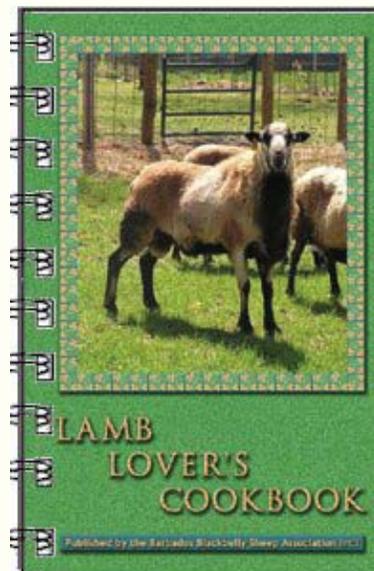
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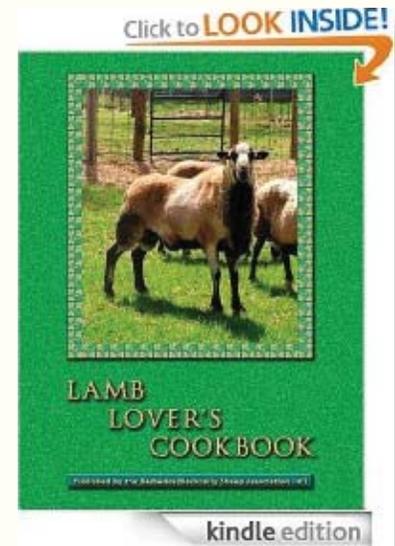
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