



Greeting BBSAI Members!

The BBSAI Newsletter welcomes articles, notes and comments from members! Please send your submissions to Barb Lee, newsletter@blackbellysheep.org or 18555 S. Lyons Rd., Oregon City, OR 97045-8611. Thank you!

Note: If your email program is not set to accept HTML text, you have received a text-only version of this newsletter, which is boring because you can't see graphics and tables. If you would like to see what you've missed, or if you would like to download the newsletter from BBSAI's Web site, go to http://www.blackbellysheep.org/newsletter/2005_July/2005_July_newsletter.htm

July, 2005

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Barbados Blackbelly Sheep Association International Newsletter
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www.blackbellysheep.org

The Barbados Blackbelly Sheep Association International Newsletter is a benefit of membership in the BBSAI and is published quarterly. BBSAI was established to conserve and promote the Barbados Blackbelly and American Blackbelly sheep breeds. Annual membership is \$30.00, and includes the newsletter. We also accept unsolicited donations. Please send changes of address to BBSAI. All contributions are tax-deductible to the extent provided by law.

The BBSAI Newsletter welcomes articles, photographs, letters and classified ads that deal with American Blackbelly and Barbados Blackbelly Sheep. Publication of articles or advertisements is not necessarily an endorsement by BBSAI. No part of the BBSAI Newsletter (including photographs) can be reprinted, put on websites or used in any manner without the written permission of the President or Secretary of the Association. Issue deadlines for articles and ads are:

January - December 15
April - March 15
July - June 15
October - September 15

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Mark Fleming, Secretary/Treasurer: secretary@blackbellysheep.org

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Advisors
Susan Schoenian, Sheep and Goats Western Maryland
Research and Education Center—Marketing Advisor

Webmistress
Carol J. Elkins: webmistress@blackbellysheep.org

Good Journeys, James!

By Mary Swindell

It is with great sadness that I report the resignation of fellow Board member, James Harper. James has been one of our most loyal, kind and generous friends, and a wonderful Board member. His departure from the BBSAI Board will without a doubt be our loss. Because of his wonderful ability to make new introductions to people throughout the country, and because of his tireless dedication to the newsletter, we have been able to get the word out about the BBSAI on a level that we never have previously been able to accomplish. James has brought in and cultivated many organizations in affiliation with the BBSAI, through his work with the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy, the Virginia State University research center, and many other entities of great benefit to the BBSAI. Because of James' successful outreach efforts, the BBSAI has many contacts to this day that we would not have otherwise had.

James' friendly, relaxed and thoughtful approach to people and problem solving has helped each of us in our many activities, from the giant effort that we all put forth to hold the 2004 BBSAI Annual Meeting, to our monthly Board meetings, to the various challenges that we as a Board encounter. James has been a gracious and principled negotiator, and has always been a champion in standing up for the policies and standards of the organization. And most importantly, he has been a personal friend to each of us on the Board.

On a personal note, I will always remember the loving, patient ways in which James has conducted himself when working with each of us through difficult situations. He has been, and is, a true friend.

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President's Corner

By Josh Weimer

As the current president of the BBSAI I would like to express a heartfelt thank you to James Harper. James is stepping down from his position on the Board of Directors as well as the newsletter editor. He has spent countless hours helping myself as well as the others on the Board of Directors getting the association up and going in a positive direction. He has also made many donations that have truly been appreciated. It has been a tremendous pleasure to have worked with James over the last year and a half and I wish him nothing but the best in whichever way life leads him. Good luck James!!

The BBSAI is still looking for highly motivated members who are owners of American Blackbelly (horned) stock to be part of the Board of Directors. You must be willing to help in taking on tasks to promote the association as well as promoting our wonderful breeds. We NEED individuals who are motivated to pitch in and help with the many jobs it takes to keep our association going! If you think that you might be interested please give me a call at 417-398-9500. I would be glad to talk with you about what is expected of Board members and answer any questions that you might have.

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Call for Nominees!

By Mary Swindell

BBSAI Director

We would like to encourage more American Blackbelly breeders to become involved in the organization, and in particular, to consider running for office on the Board of Directors.

The BBSAI needs our many American Blackbelly breeders to become more involved in the organization, and welcome nominations of American Blackbelly breeders to the BBSAI Board of Directors. Those members interested in running for the BBSAI Board should submit their nomination (or the nomination of someone else that they think would be a good Board member) to the nominating committee, in care of BBSAI President Josh Weimer, Joshua@tri-lakes.net, or 417-398-9500. Those submitting nominations should also include a brief paragraph telling about themselves and describing their reasons for being interested in serving on the BBSAI Board. All BBSAI members in good standing are eligible to run for the BBSAI Board of Directors.

The BBSAI Board elections will be conducted as a mail-in ballot process, and results will be tabulated and announced this fall during the BBSAI Annual Meeting. Prior to the Annual Meeting, mail-in ballots and candidate background information will be mailed out to all members in good standing.

Get involved! Make a difference!

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Calendar of Blackbelly Events

American Blackbelly and Barbados Blackbelly sheep are being displayed and/or advertised at the following sheep and wool festivals:

North American Hair Sheep Symposium and Sale
San Angelo Fairgrounds San Angelo, TX
October 6,7,8 2005
Contact Philip Glass
325-465-4267
email: dorper@wcc.net

World's largest—all breeds Hair Sheep Sale
September 3-5, 2005—Bethel, MO
Seminars, workshops, exhibits, supplies, equipment
Featuring 10 meat, dairy, and trophy breeds, including Katahdin, Red Russian, Dorper, Tasmanian Spotted, Black Texas Dall, Barbados, Mouflon, Painted Desert, St. Croix, Wiltshire Horn.

For information, contact

Hair Sheep Research Center
Box 207
Bethel, MO 63434
573-588-4536 evenings

If you know of any upcoming events in which American Blackbelly or Barbados Blackbelly Sheep are participating, e-mail lee@ccwebster.net.

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New Members

Joseph and Linda Moretto

Fred and Jan Mancuso
Geoff Horn
Stephanie Parrish
William Bennett
B'Beth and Will Carlton
Thomas Frank
Beth Stamper

We welcome you into our flock!

Members, we are looking for new members and friends to share the love, preservation, and dedication of our breed. Herd new members and friends to join BBSAI. In exchange you will receive two FREE Certificates of Registry.

Membership Renewals

Mike and Becky Lannon
Tony and Karen Maeder
Susan Young
Robin Blakley

Thank you for staying with our flock!

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BBSAI Secretary/Treasurer Update

BBSAI HAS NEW REGISTRAR!

If any of you have renewed your membership or registered some of your sheep in the past couple of weeks, you have seen changes in our certificates. The Board of Directors opted to enlist the use of a registrar to prepare our certificates. Although we are still in a period of transition with the registrar, many of our members have been very happy with the changes.

AccuRegister, our registrar, has a lot of unique and special abilities with the new database involved. As an example, each registration certificate will contain up to a 5-generation pedigree, allowing you and others to trace the history of your sheep. With this service, the association's prices have not changed. In fact the, only drawback is it will take a few more days to process.

Your procedures to obtain a new and/or renewed membership, or a sheep registration application will remain the same. Each membership or sheep registration application will be mailed to me. Once the data on the application is checked, I send the completed applications to the registrar. The registrar will finalize the data and prepare the certificates for mailing.

In case you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me.

We will continue to upgrade and enhance our services for you, but we need help. We are always looking for more folks to help out. Let us know!

Mark Fleming
BBSAI Secretary/Treasurer
July 5, 2005
secretary@blackbellysheep.org

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The Shepherd's Diary

By Barb Lee

The day begins with a comforting routine. The horses are standing at the back fence, peering at the house. As soon as the back door cracks open, they turn and amble toward the barn. Sometimes they dawdle long enough at the fence to get a stroke on the face and say g'day before continuing to their stalls in anticipation of breakfast.

When I enter the barn, there's a mob of expectant faces standing just outside the door. Tan faces, picked out in black stripes, the three fall lambs are always first in line for a handout. The horses are fed, then I fill a bucket for the sheep, and the gentle morning dance begins. As I slide their inside stall door open to pass through, they have long since turned and begun to amble down the lane toward the small paddock where they have lounged for the night. It is so lovely to be able to say "amble," because there was a time when the word would have been "flee." They have learned the steps to the dance now, and join in with as much anticipation as do I.

I follow them slowly down the lane, and watch them spill out into their night paddock with great enthusiasm, then turn to watch me as I open the first gate.

The sight of the scampering lambs gladdens my heart! They have not yet learned the great importance of the dance; they only join in with the innocent delight of the young.

The small flock waits with patient expectancy as I push the gate aside, then falls in politely behind me. How intriguing it is, to be silently voted Flock Leader for the Moment by the sheep!

They no longer scatter at the second gate, and though they are free to scamper through as I swing it back, still they indulge me in my honorary role as Flock Leader, and wait for me to lead them down the long, grassy lane.

We walk along a fence with a great brooding wall of fir trees on the other side. I hear the soft and confident shushing of small hooves and slim legs following just behind me through the wet grass and it is the sound of earth music. On our side of the fence, the open green pasture sweeps away to the right. A small, fresh and abundantly grassy bit of the pasture has been given to the sheep to care for during the day. It is their job to help it grow by keeping it trimmed. It is a job which they relish with great alacrity. When we arrive at the paddock opening, all joy breaks out and the sheep scatter, positioning themselves to be first at the trough when I empty the white bucket into it. Still they wait politely until I have turned my back and stepped away from them over the low fence.

When I am far enough away not to threaten them, I turn and savor the view. Even the tiny lambs have found their place at the table. Auntie Glenna, mother of twins, has adopted Frosty's single lamb and eats at the Children's Table with the little ones.

I continue my morning walk back towards the barn. When I make my turn into the night yards, I turn and look beyond the brushy thicket. I can see that they have finished their grain and have spread out to savor the second course, the fresh young grass. During the day they will lounge, play, graze, nurse, and soon two more ewes will bring forth lambs to learn the mysterious dance that we have taught to each other. To add to the earth music of mother calling to lamb, of small hooves and slender legs shushing through the wet morning grass, to the sound of a quietly opened gate and the gurgle of the spring freshet that bubbles out of the ground in the thicket.

Music is wherever you listen for it here. And I never tire of the tune.

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Why Register Your American Blackbelly Sheep?

By Barb Lee

As a member of the Breed Standards Committee for the newly named American Blackbelly Sheep, I've had plenty of opportunity to contemplate why we are going to all the trouble of establishing the new breed standard and splitting the registry between polled and horned animals. Everyone has their own feelings on the subject. Those expressed here are strictly my own. I sometimes struggle with the "why am I working so hard on this?" question. The tougher part to deal with is "why do I care so much about registering my sheep in the first place?"

While I was mucking the barn today, and watching a pair of new lambs hop and pirouette like a couple of three year old ballerinas, it came to me.

Verifiable ancestry.

The American Blackbelly Sheep Registry is still an open registry. That means that sheep of unknown ancestry can be registered, provided they meet a minimum physical and visual standard, which is what the new breed standard represents – the MINIMUM standards for acceptance into the registry. Verifiable ancestry is not a criterion for registration. Yet.

That is not likely to be the case forever. The BBSAI is actively working toward continual improvement of both the polled and horned breeds. There has been discussion about offering an optional "Register of Merit" for outstanding individuals within the American Blackbelly breed. Individuals submitted for consideration would have to meet stringent criteria as proof of their capability of predictably excellent offspring. While this would mean extra work for the shepherd, just imagine what added value there would be for bloodstock with the initials R.O.M. after the farm and sheep's name on the registration papers!

The "Register of Merit" is just talk at this time, but if it becomes a reality, one criterion that is almost certain to be required is verifiable ancestry. This will mean proof that there have been no outcrosses on other breeds for a certain number of generations. That may be three generations, or five generations. The only way the ancestry can be verified is through the records of the BBSAI – in other words, a registration number for every ancestor.

Why is this so important?

In the polled Barbados Blackbelly breed, it is thought that virtually every true genetically polled animal in North America is accounted for. This is not true of the American Blackbelly.

It is general knowledge that the American Blackbelly (Barbado) is a three-way cross of Barbados Blackbelly, Mouflon and Rambouillet. That was the beginning of the breed. There is no way to tell what has been introduced into the far flung flocks in existence today. Because the markings of the Barbados Blackbelly transmit fairly reliably, any animal carrying enough resemblance to the Barbados Blackbelly (with the addition of horn genetics) may meet the minimum standard for registry.

The problem is, persons purchasing breeding stock with no, or only one known set of ancestors may encounter very rude surprises when the first crop of lambs is born. Excessive wool and white markings are two indicators that the genetics of the parents have been influenced by additional outcrossing along the way. To the would-be breeder of pure American Blackbelly bloodstock, this can be a devastating setback.

The Barbados Blackbelly, the parent stock of the American Blackbelly breed, is known for mild flavor, parasite resistance, out of season breeding, multiple births, good mothering instinct and thrift. Shepherds breeding commercial flocks have used

Blackbelly blood to infuse these characteristics into their wool sheep.

But what do they give us in return when those outcrosses-in-disguise come back to the American Blackbelly flock? Do we gain or lose? Do we gain mutttony flavor, wool that doesn't shed, seasonal estrus and parasite susceptibility?

These are things we need to think about as breeders of "true" American Blackbelly sheep. When we are selling breeding stock, we want to be able to show that a certain number of generations of our breeding stock are verifiably "unmuddied" by outcrosses. We need to be confident that animals purchased for breeding will not surprise us when undesirable traits crop out from what look like "pure" American Blackbelly parents. Registration of animals with a verifiable pedigree, while not an infallible guarantee, is at least some assurance that our initial purchase of breeding stock will breed true to the characteristics for which we selected them.

Over time, as we conduct our breeding programs to swing the American Blackbelly breed as much as possible toward the original virtues for which the Barbados Blackbelly is famous (with the addition of trophy racks on rams), those words "verifiable ancestry" are going to become more and more important to the value and integrity of our breed. As the markets expand for hair sheep with those original virtues, we may see our pure American Blackbelly ewes becoming more and more in demand for outcrossing in commercial flocks. That is almost certain to mean added value for the shepherd. But we MUST guard against the F1 outcrosses coming back to the American Blackbelly bloodstock, or we're right back where we started - completely unpredictable heritable traits in subsequent generations. Our most effective guard dog is BBSAI American Blackbelly Registry for animals sold as bloodstock.

We need to take steps NOW to make sure the pendulum doesn't swing again toward registering look-alike outcrosses. The future of the American Blackbelly is NOW, and registry of our current bloodstock is the foundation for the future.

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Adventures in Tagging Blackbellies

By Barb Lee

One of the most perplexing problems I've encountered as a newcomer to American Blackbelly sheep is telling them apart! Even in a small flock, it's sometimes difficult to identify which ewe is which and which lamb belongs to whom! I have tried two types of ear tags, but those delicate little ears just seem doomed to get ripped as the precocious animals stick their heads through fences and such and catch the wretched tags on fences. Friends have also shared disappointing results with other types of small tags.

At first I tried a slim plastic strip type tag, that folds over. It is sold as a lamb tag. My young ram promptly ripped it out, and his noble head is flawed to this day. The tag tended to "spin" in a ewe's ear and ended up with the post upside down and the fold of the tag through the ear. Next was a ewe that shredded her ear in half.

Now I was placing these tags exactly as described in the catalog, close to the head and between the veins with enough room for the ear to grow. Whatever other tags were in the flock at the time that Rose ripped her ear in half were promptly removed!

With a small flock, I could identify them fairly easily, but then came the lambs! It didn't take long to discover that they were peas in a pod, and frequently had sleepovers at each others' houses! Before I completely lost track of them, I had to do something! So I tried the little wee brass tags.

I must have a jinx with tags, because one ear was promptly ripped, and one became

infected. In the interim, seven gorgeous lambs arrived from the Fleming farm in Missouri, and they too, had some unfortunate experiences with the brass tags. The Flemings would not tolerate selling me a "damaged" lamb, and provided a different lamb, this time with NO tag!

So, while I do not think I will be able to dispense with small tags at birth entirely, I am looking for alternate ways to identify the animals.



For the big girls, I did what I have seen in some photos – I went to the farm store and purchased several feet of plastic chain at \$.16 a foot, some tiny "quick links" and some big cattle ear tags. The cattle tag slid onto the quick link, and about seventeen links of plastic chain make a perfect collar for the ewes. The tag stands out to the side, and is easily legible from many feet away. So far, they haven't snagged the collars on anything, and I have found that they are fantastic grab handles when they are sailing past you at shoulder level, trying to escape!

Now what to do about the lambs! Before I weaned lambs and entirely lost track of who's who, I decided to try sheep branding paint.

The set of branding irons I received did not have a "0", and I have to see about getting the supplier to send me one. Also, I thought I ordered a half gallon of paint, and received a whole gallon! That should last me the next 40 years!

Well, we nabbed the lambs, and I took horse hoof nippers to snip the brass tags out of the ears (those that were left), then dipped the brands in the paint and applied it to the lambs' sides, making several mistakes. We branded them right on the flat of the ribs, then turned them loose in the stall where we were working. Of course the first thing they did was huddle in a corner and smear each other! Within 24 hours, the brands were all but illegible.

Reading the can, (not looking at the picture in the catalog) I determined that the paint was on too heavy, too low, and should have been done on "recently shorn" fleece. These guys still have their lamb fuzzies. Well, try again!

This time, we laid them down, and I took my horse clippers and shaved a patch fairly high on the ribcage. Then I dipped in the brands, tapped off the excess, and applied them to the shaved spot. We then took them outside and turned them loose one at a time. The only one who is a little smeared was the one that jumped up and brushed past Bob's pants leg. As of this writing, those three inch numbers are visible a mile away.



The paint is said to last 6 months to a year. We will see how it looks as the hair starts to grow. Hopefully the brands will last until they are big enough to be collared.

Obviously this isn't going to work for little lambs! I think we will have to continue using the brass tags until they get big enough to sport a paint brand. Or, maybe I can get hubby to make me a set of 2" brands!

Anybody who's successfully conquered the dilemma of putting tags in paper-thin blackbelly ears is invited to contact me, lee@ccwebster.net, and I'll share your hints and advice in the next issue!

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Thank you for being a loyal BBSAI member. We value your membership and will continue to strive to be a good resource for you. Please let us know how we are doing and share with us any ideas you may have about what the BBSAI can do for you.

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