



Greeting BBSAI Members!

SPECIAL ISSUE! Dear BBSAI members: The newsletter is usually sent to all members electronically unless other arrangements have been made. Everyone will receive a paper copy of this issue. We want to make sure that all members are aware of this great benefit of belonging to the association. If you have not been receiving your quarterly electronic copy, please be sure to double check your spam filter. And we hope that this issue will entice you to be sure to OPEN your electronic newsletter when it arrives in your inbasket! We strive to not only keep you abreast of important BBSAI business, but also to offer both educational and entertaining content. We sincerely hope you will enjoy each and every issue and look forward to receiving them! We also hope you will be tempted to contribute!

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_October/BBSAI_newsletter_October2005.htm

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Barbados Blackbelly Sheep Association International Newsletter
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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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Annual BBSAI Meeting Coming Up! Look for Info in the Mail!

Make plans to join the BBSAI Annual Meeting via teleconference! Your participation is encouraged!

1. Please RSVP your intention to attend the event by emailing webmistress@blackbellysheep.org or by phoning Carol Elkins at 719-948-3773. This is required in order to reserve a phone line for you on the bridge. When your message is received, you will be provided with a telephone number and instructions about how to participate in the event. Long-distance phone charges for this event are your responsibility; the BBSAI can recommend an inexpensive resource that charges only \$.03 per minute.

2. You must reserve a spot on the agenda if you want any "floor time" for discussion. The annual meeting uses Roberts Rules of Order and this can be tricky in a teleconference where we can't see people raise a hand to ask to speak. Therefore, only folks who reserve a spot on the agenda will be called upon. Please contact one of the officers or directors listed at the top of this newsletter or phone BBSAI President Josh Weimer (417-398-2526 or 417-398-9500) to let us know about what you'd like to talk about (or what question you'd like to ask) and how much time you require.

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President's Corner

By Josh Weimer

It's difficult to believe that it has been two years since I was installed as president of the BBSAI. It has been an honor to serve you and I am being honest in saying that the past two years have been rewarding and a lot of fun. I am looking forward to the last year of my election term.

The past year has been extremely busy. However, seeing and becoming a part of the enormous strides and successes that our association has experienced over the last couple of years make any and all time spent well worth the effort. The thankless efforts that the regional directors and the secretary have put forth have made the BBSAI what it has become today. I would also like to recognize our newsletter editor, Barb Lee. Barb's writing ability has taken our newsletter to a new level. We have come a long way in the past couple of years as an association. You as members should be proud of what your elected board has accomplished. I am.

The state of our association is very healthy; our financial condition is very good, we are working on the implementation of new programs for the youth, and we continue to recruit new members. This being said, I believe that we are in wonderful shape.

Remember to vote in the upcoming elections. It is you as members that can and will make a difference.

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New Feature! Breeder's Forum

(Editor's Note: While we examine the new American Blackbelly breed standard bit by bit, we encourage ALL blackbelly breeders to contribute to the forum. We each select for the characteristics that are most important to us. How are YOU building your perfect flock? Please share your observations and priorities with us! Send contributions to Barb Lee, newsletter@blackbellysheep.org)

What Makes a Good American Blackbelly Great?

By Barb Lee

One of the long term goals for the BBSAI is to establish an "elite" breed registry for American Blackbelly sheep. An "elite" blackbelly sheep is going to have to exceed the general standards and be an outstanding individual in every way. NOW is the time, and WE are the breeders that will establish what constitutes average and what constitutes extraordinary breed characteristics for the future.

There is an American Blackbelly Breed Standards committee which has recently given the breed its own identity, apart from the polled Barbados Blackbelly, by creating and adopting the new American Blackbelly Standards. With that task accomplished, it will soon be time for us to design the "elite" American Blackbelly Sheep, when the wind is in our sails again. Now it is time for us as breeders to craft our breed. Let's use this column

to find out what our breeders' priorities are, what makes a good blackbelly great in the eyes of its breeder, and what characteristics will launch us into the mainstream of our target markets. To keep on topic, I will, as newsletter editor, select the characteristic, editorialize on it, and invite comment. Discussions will appear in upcoming issues. Contact Barb Lee, newsletter@blackbellysheep.org with your replies. Remember, what you read here is my personal observations, unless otherwise stated, and NOT to be regarded as the position of the BBSAI.

So let's start with the head!

Following are breed standards for the various characteristics of the head as adopted by the BBSAI.



HEAD: The head is medium size and proportioned to the neck and body. It will be noble with a typical "roman" nose. The head of the ram is distinctly masculine and that of the ewe is feminine. The muzzle is wide and strong with firm lips. The lower jaw is colored black. The incisor teeth must meet the dental pad.

EARS: The ears are pointed and when alert stick out from the side of the head parallel to the ground. The inside of the ear is black. Some variation in the size of the ears is permitted. Floppy ears and half ears or less ("elf" ears) are a disqualifying characteristic.

EYES: The eyes are brown in color and almond shaped. A wide black mark runs from above the eye to the base of the crown. Inverted eyelids are disqualifying traits.

HORNS: The rams, depending on their maturity and heritage, will have differently shaped and sized horns. Most horns are acceptable as long as they clear the face and do not hinder, or impair the animal's quality of life. Acceptable horn shapes include: tight horn curls; large horns that sweep out and curve behind the neck; heart-shaped horns; and horns that sweep outward in a spiral. Overall, they should be well-balanced and symmetrical. Rams with loose scurs and horn buds at maturity will be disqualified. Ewes may be polled or horned and loose scurs and horn buds are permissible.

Rarely can a prospective new breeder get past the gorgeous face of the average blackbelly, and by the above characteristics we may identify our breed readily. Other than being attractions to the human eye, which of the above features do we need to zero in on to fine tune our "calibrated eyeball" in selecting a superior sheep?

The muzzle is wide and strong with firm lips. What's so important about that?

The sheep is a grazing animal (though ours would have us believe they are browsing animals!) Consider how the sheep eats. She must nip grass off by grasping it between her teeth and dental pad and clipping it. The broader her muzzle is, the more grass she can nip in one bite. The less work for her, the more efficient an eating machine she is. If you do not think this is important, get down on your hands and knees in the pasture and try to pull ten pounds of short grass with your hand. You will find out just how much hard

work this is!

Since our blackbellies are supposed to be efficient grazers, we want them to have efficient eating gear! A good broad muzzle assures the sheep can grasp the largest amount of grass possible with each bite!

The incisor teeth must meet the dental pad. For the very same reasons above, no sheep should ever be allowed to breed which does not have teeth meeting the dental pad perfectly. The ewe with an over or under bite will never be an efficient grazer, and will pass this defect on to her offspring. It can affect everything from her growth, to her weight maintenance, to her lactation. This feature should not be a "kinda sorta" thing. Even slight deviations should not be tolerated.

Lamb teeth don't always meet the dental pad perfectly. If there's a question, the lamb should be allowed to mature for several months before it is culled to see if it will grow into its teeth, but it should definitely have a "caution" placed on it, no matter how perfect it is in all other respects.

Inverted eyelids are disqualifying traits. What are "inverted eyelids?" The technical name is "entropion" and is a condition where the lower, or sometimes the upper eyelid, is turned under, causing the eyelashes to chafe the eyeball. The undesirability of this trait is obvious. Though it can be corrected, it is a heritable defect that should never be allowed to perpetuate in our breeding programs!

The rams, depending on their maturity and heritage, will have differently shaped and sized horns. Most horns are acceptable as long as they clear the face and do not hinder, or impair the animal's quality of life. Needless to say, the horns of the male American Blackbelly are its crowning glory. We can't eat the horns, but we don't all breed sheep to eat. Some breeders are entirely focused on the trophy market, which demands magnificent horns. The American Blackbelly breed is about horns. For the very reason that so much of the breeding of the American Blackbelly is for the trophy market, no serious breeder, regardless of their personal target market, can overlook the requirement for spectacular horn growth in an exceptional ram.

EARS: *The ears are pointed and when alert stick out from the side of the head parallel to the ground. The inside of the ear is black. Some variation in the size of the ears is permitted. Floppy ears and half ears or less ("elf" ears) are a disqualifying characteristic.*

EYES: *The eyes are brown in color and almond shaped. A wide black mark runs from above the eye to the base of the crown.*

While the above breed characteristics may seem cosmetic in nature, truthfully, what are our sheep if not stunningly beautiful? Floppy ears would not only be out of type, but may also suggest, with our open registry, that there is a recent infusion of non-blackbelly blood, as would wooliness or white spots. Since we are working inevitably toward a breed of sheep that reproduces itself with absolute certainty, and because we have a very large gene pool to select from, any evidence of recently infused "outside blood" is just proof of a genetic variability (or a whole packet of genetic variability) that we just don't want.

Some people never get past the beautiful faces when first falling in love with blackbelly sheep, so the importance of these features should not be undervalued. Clear, distinct and unmistakably blackbelly facial markings further identify our sheep for the elegant breed they are, and dramatic, high quality markings will add measurably to the value of

a trophy animal. These traits simply cannot be underrated in the superior animal!

So that is our American Blackbelly head! Please share your comments with our readership by directing them to Barb Lee, newsletter@blackbellysheep.org.

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Calendar of Blackbelly Events

If you know of any events where newsletter@blackbellysheep.org for inclusion in upcoming newsletters!

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New Members

Judy Akers
Breigh Cox
Charles Clark

We welcome you into our flock!

Membership Renewals

Mark & Lin Storey
Sandra & Frank Smith
Barb & Robert Lee
Terry Callahan
Victoria Howard
Elaine Haas
Diane Baker
Mary Swindell
Susan Smith

Thank you for staying with our flock!

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Legs: The Structural Foundation

Reprinted with permission by Dr. Kay Orlando, DVM
From the "The Best of Memo 3"
Published by the National Pygmy Goat Association.

(Editor's Note: While this article specifically addresses the conformation of pygmy goat legs, Dr. Orlando confirms that the only significant difference is in the length of the bones. Extensive searching for the scientific rationale behind the desirability of straight front legs in sheep, both from the front and the side, has been disappointing. I believe this article reveals why we should be concerned with strong, sound leg conformation in our blackbelly sheep.)

It is difficult to visualize skeletal structure under hair and muscles, but this framework determines much of what we see on the outside of the animal. A good structural base is especially important to the legs. Correct legs give our goats a graceful stride and the agility to amaze us with their jumping ability. Legs must not give out before the rest of the animal. They must last through many pregnancies in does and a long breeding life in bucks. The next time you sit back and watch your goats, pay special attention to those very important legs and see whether they are really working as they should

Many of the leg structures in the illustrations can be palpated. Judges commonly mention them. As breeders, we should be familiar with leg structure.

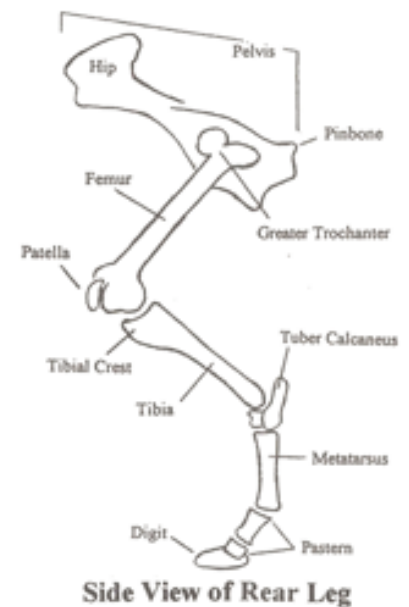
The Rear Leg

The femur, or thigh bone, is attached to the pelvis at the hip joint, a ball and socket joint which permits rotational movement. Large gluteal muscles and a tough joint capsule and ligament keep the hip deeply seated in its pelvic socket. The hip joint is buried in muscle and cannot be readily palpated, but a large bony protuberance of the femur (greater trochanter) can easily be felt. This bump, the thurl, indicates width between the hip joints.

The knee, formed by the femur and tibia, is called the stifle. This is a hinge joint with movement along a single plane. Large muscle groups of the front of the thigh attach to the tibial crest through a small, flat bone called the patella (kneecap). The tendons, patella and tibial crest should form a straight line when viewed from the front. Any deviation to the inside or outside puts undue stress on the patella and can pull it from the groove in which it rests (luxated kneecap).

The hock, analogous to our heel, is formed by the tibia and a group of smaller bones. Like the stifle, this is a hinge joint. The Achilles tendon attaches the muscles of the back of the leg to a bony knob called the tuber calcaneus. These structures are easily palpated as there is little muscle covering. The metatarsal bone is the long bone below these smaller bones. The bone group from the tuber calcaneus to the end of the metatarsal is called the rear cannon. Two digits, like our fingers, make up the pastern and claws.

Viewed from the front or rear, the leg bones should form a straight line from the thurl to



the claws. However, because the stifle extends forward into the flank, abdominal bulk may cause the stifle to deviate outward. This causes compensatory inward deviation of the hock, termed cow-hocked.

From the side the rear leg should exhibit a great deal of angulation. Being easy to see, hock angulation is most commonly mentioned. Stifle angulation correlates with hock angulation. This combined angulation gives spring to the rear leg. Spring cushions the concussion of each step on the joints and imparts the ability to jump with ease. A common fault is postiness of the rear legs lacking enough angulation in either the stifle or hock joints. In this case, the leg is straighter, the muscles are shorter and the cushioning effect of good angulation is absent. This puts more stress on all the joints, especially the hip. Such animals do not jump well, if at all. If the rear cannon is vertical, a line dropped from the pin bone should pass along the back edge of the hock and cannon. This line falls well behind the cannon bone in under-angulated, posty legs and falls ahead of the cannon in excessively angulated legs.

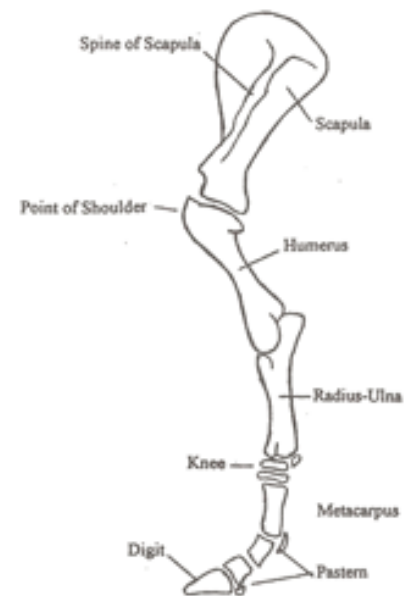
Rear legs should also be examined while the goat is on the move. Legs that appear structurally sound while the animal is standing are useless if they cannot propel the animal properly. Goats should track with legs squarely under the body, moving forward in a straight line. The leg is flexed, the foot lifted and moved forward. The rear leg should push the goat forward, not just keep up with the rest of the goat. Cow-hocked animals tend to swing the hind legs inward as they move. Posty-legged animals cannot properly flex their joints due to the shortened muscles; the foot is lifted from the ground by shifting weight to the opposite leg and swinging the leg outward and forward giving the gait a choppy, side-to-side roll.

The Front Leg

While the front leg is not as involved in propelling a goat over obstacles as the rear leg, proper alignment and structure are just as important. Front legs bear 60% to 65% of the weight. Unlike the rear leg, attached to the skeleton by a bony joint, the foreleg is attached with muscles and ligaments. Foreleg attachments, therefore, must be strong and correct to support weight over many years.

The scapula, or shoulder blade, is laid onto the chest wall over the first few ribs. The top of the scapula can be felt just below the dorsal processes of the thoracic vertebrae or withers. Muscles that hold the scapula in place attach to these bony processes. This attachment should be strong enough that fingers cannot be inserted under the shoulder blade from the top or rear. Shoulder blades set too low on the chest wall or too high over the withers will not have as strong a muscular attachment. The dorsal spine of the scapula, which runs the length of the bone, is easily palpated. Muscles holding the scapula in place attach to this bony spine.

The shoulder joint, or point of the shoulder, is formed by the scapula and humerus. The goat has much less rotational movement in this joint than we do because the humerus, like the scapula, is closely attached to the rib cage with muscles for support. Movement of this joint is mostly forward and backward. The angle of the scapula is very important



Side View of Front Leg

to the structural integrity of the foreleg. Several sources list the scapula angle to be about 137° , which seems to be ideal for cushioning movement and for the strength of the attachment. A straighter angle causes more concussion and less shock absorption. A steeper angle is less stable, and the shoulder joint is more easily dislocated because more force is exerted on the joint as the goat walks.

Further down the leg, the humerus and ulna form the hinged elbow joint. A bony projection of the ulna sits in a hollow in the humerus to stabilize lateral movement. Unlike our forearm, which has two separate bones (radius and ulna), these bones are fused for most of their length in the goat. This eliminates most rotational movement in the goat's foreleg, like our forearms have.

The carpus, or knee is formed by the ulna and a group of smaller carpal bones, analogous to our wrist. The knee supports the goat's weight lying down or standing. The metacarpus is the long bone below the carpal bones. The carpal and metacarpal bones make up the front cannon. Two digits, like our fingers, make up the pastern and claws.

Claws should point forward. Goats with claws turned to the inside (toe-in or pigeon-toed), usually have a compensating outward deviation of the elbows.

Forelegs viewed from the front should be strong, straight and set wide to indicate chest width. Elbows should be held close to the chest and point directly backward, not out to the side. A plumb line dropped from the point of the shoulder should pass through elbow, knee pad and between the claws. The foreleg is structurally the strongest when the bones form this straight line. Deviations from a straight line put undue stress on the joints.

While the side view of the shoulder joint should be angled near 137° , the side view from elbow to pastern should be a straight line. The knee should not bend forward (buck knee), or bow backward. Both conditions are structurally unsound. Pasterns should be short, strong and slope forward at about a 45° angle.

Front legs should also be examined while the goat is moving. From the side, the leg is flexed, the foot lifted and is extended forward. This movement should be easy and graceful. Pasterns should show strength and resilience, absorbing the concussion. Weak pasterns bend almost to the ground as the animal walks, putting extra stress on flexor muscles along the back of the leg.

In the front view, the forelegs should track squarely under the goat, moving forward in a straight line. The body should not roll from side-to-side as weight shifts from one front leg to the other. Goats that toe in swing their legs out as they move (paddling). Crooked legs or feet that toe out will cause the forelegs to swing inward.

Any leg examination should include close inspection of the hooves –after all, they support the entire leg. Good leg structure is useless if the feet cannot support that structure. Both claws should be symmetrical, point forward and be held close together. The coronary band should run parallel to the ground. The hoof wall should be smooth and without defects. Splayed feet, with the heels together and toes pointing out, can become a crippling problem.

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The Shepherd's Diary

By Barb Lee

(Do you have a bit of blackbelly prose you would like to share with us? Please Do! Email your submissions to Barb Lee, newsletter@blackbellysheep.org)

LUCY

Her name is Lucy. I don't remember why I gave her that name. Perhaps I was thinking of my dad, and his silly colloquialism for cheap wine, "Sweet Lucy."

She was born in the spring of my first lambing season and was special from the first minutes of her life. How well I remember, propping myself against the wall in the cold barn, dribbling life sustaining colostrum down her tiny brother's throat. She did not know yet, that EVERYBODY wasn't Mama. She folded up her beautiful brand new legs and snuggled right up against my leg and fell asleep.

As she grew, she would dash out from the flock to greet me every time I came around. I would hold out my hand, she would sniff, give my finger a bite, then dash back to the safety of the flock!

Over time, my daily contact with the flock became briefer, as seasonal chores relaxed. Lucy's blackbelly genes kicked in and she became shyer, but still, she remained the boldest of the bunch, and is always first in line at the feed trough.

The last few days have seen an interesting development. "Auntie" Rose, a smart, sensible and favorite ewe, has adopted me as something of a friend. I have had her for a year. By "friend," I mean that when the flock comes in for the evening, I can sit in the door, and Rose has begun eating from my hand. For any sensitive blackbelly breeder, the sheer pleasure of a shy ewe building the confidence to eat from one's hand brings about a whole new level of love and respect for the animals.

Cheeky Lucy couldn't stand this. She and several of her buddies had their noses within inches of the hand that Rose was gobbling from! But no, it was just too scary.

The next day, oooh, it was just too much. While Rose hogged all the proffered grain, Lucy inched up, sniffed, bit my thumb and dashed away!

Yesterday, there was a new hitch in the morning routine, as Rosebud dawdled along, frequently turning and looking for a handout, which I thoroughly encouraged! Lucy and her hooligan friends were trying hard to follow her example!



But yesterday evening, the breakthrough came. As I sat on the step of the barn door, Rose busily slurping up the grain from my hand, Lucy shoved her face in and started cleaning up.

And the rest of the lambs are just a breath away from joining in!

It could scarcely be more magical than entering a glade in some forest and having



the wild creatures come forth to greet you. It's a connection to that ancient cycle that is denied most mortals. A privilege granted to

only a few.

A small muzzle, nibbling delicately from the hand...how must it have felt to the first human ever to coax a wild creature to accept a small peace offering from the hand!

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Flock Finds Niche on Sandoah Achers

By Susan Smith

www.sandoahachers.com

Just because we finished our second ever lambing season, sold most all the ram lambs born, and then a thirteen sheep starter flock to a gentleman in New York doesn't mean it is time to quit work for us here at Sandoah Achers. Already we have orders for next spring's lamb rams, and if we choose to sell, there are those who want our ewes also.



When we began raising hair sheep we purchased the very best ram we could find. The Wickenheiser family in Carlton Michigan allowed us to purchase the beautiful ram in the above picture. Junior was eight months old when we bought him and look what a handsome ram he has grown into. He is a registered American Blackbelly.

In late 2003, when we purchased Junior our full intentions were to raise sheep for meat, and 4-H. We bought three ewes in the late fall of 2003 that were already pregnant. We were a little thrown by this because we wanted "Junior" lambs, but then this was to be a bonus for us. In February and March of 2004 there were deliveries of four beautiful ram lambs and two beautiful ewe lambs. Later in the spring we purchased an outstanding registered American Blackbelly ewe from the same family Junior came from.

As I said we had full intentions of selling these sheep for meat. I put up flyers at some feed stores. I only received one response to the flyer and that was from a man who wanted to purchase the ram lambs to raise for placing at the age of two years into hunt clubs. He bought the four ram lambs and we made a written contract stating he would purchase every ram lamb produced here at Sandoah Achers. I do not sell my ewe lambs usually, but I might sell a starter flock as I did this year.

This sale motivated me into the research mode. I discovered what was going on in the exotic hair sheep world and with hunting/game ranches. I wanted to be part of this world. We now have six ram sires, possibly seven. We purchased the best we could buy. Nancy and Tom Richardson sold us some fine rams with the horn genetics we wanted. We have not sacrificed conformation, health, or beauty in any of our sheep just because of horn genetics. We work at producing the best all around sheep.

We had thirty lambs born this year, sold eighteen of those, we have kept the ewes lambs and have seven really nice ram lambs yet to sell. We may keep the seven and raise them

ourselves to the age of two years. It is expensive to do this unless you have pasture, but believe me, the price per ram can be worth it. For our second lambing season I believe we did well.

This fall's breeding flock will be split five ways. This will give the new rams their chance to add their genetics to our flock. With the rams I have now, we never have to go to an outside ram. We have the genetics and with proper nutrition and a proper breeding program we are confident we will have some of the finest horned hair sheep there is to be found.

Our flock's niche is going to be supplying hunt clubs, or hunting ranches with Exotic Hair sheep. We raise American Blackbelly, Black Hawaiian, Texas Dall, Painted Desert and we have added Mouflon cross ewes and a ram to our flock. We hopefully will be breeding 70 ewes this fall. Sounds like a lot doesn't it, well it is, but figure those ram lambs are sold already.

Hair sheep in the United States are coming into their own. Where is your flock's niche?

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Adventures in Tagging Blackbellies, Part Two

By Barb Lee

Last issue, I was desperately trying to find a way to identify my sheep. Several different styles of ear tags were getting ripped out of those delicate little ears, despite how carefully applied. My last attempt at that time was to use sheep branding paint.

That experiment was worse than useless! The paint and branding irons were costly. I first attempted to apply the brands to the lambs with no preparation. The paint scarcely lasted a day. So I then shaved a patch of hair on each lamb and applied the brands to the short hair. The paint was advertised to last 6-12 months. Within a month, I realized I had better do something quick, or I would lose their identities entirely as the paint faded quickly.

It never dried! Everything that touched it left yucky red paint to smear on my hands or clothes. I was going to buy some big cattle ear tags to hang around their necks, but then I discovered actual neck tags in the QC Supply catalog. They are fairly large, and are printed on both sides, so you can always read the number.

I also ordered their neck rope fasteners and got some soft, 3/8" braid. I didn't like the fasteners when I first saw them, but decided to go ahead and give them a try.

It's probably been about a month since I hung the neck tags quite loosely around all the lambs' necks. So far I love them! I especially love being able to tell them apart so easily now. The tags have not caused any trouble and hang safely despite being loose enough to allow the lambs considerable growth. I think I am sold!

I will eventually probably go with collars for the neck tags, but for now the soft braid is working perfectly.

I don't know what I will do yet with little wee lambs. Within a month, I am sure they will be large enough to tag with this system.

I would love to hear the experience of others in tagging their sheep (tagging is a requirement of registry!) I know I am not alone in my experience with torn ears! If you would like to share your comments, please contact me at newsletter@blackbellysheep.org.

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Udder Management

Management of the ewe's udder can sometimes be a complex situation. A post-parturient ewe without a functional udder represents an unprofitable situation. I will try to cover several areas that are of concern in udder management that I will attempt to discuss in detail.

First, one must understand the anatomy of the udder and its function. The udder is a secretory gland that derives its nutritional supply from a very generous blood supply and is controlled by a complex hormone system. In the sheep much of the time it is inactive and nonfunctional. When ewe approaches lambing the blood supply increases, the gland enlarges and becomes functional. As the lactation process diminishes the reverse is true. In treatment and diagnosis of udder disease and abnormalities one must understand normal udder anatomy and function.

Udder management during the dry period should consist of palpation of the udder. A normal nonfunctional udder will be soft and pliable and sometimes almost nonexistent. Palpation may reveal hard spots of various sizes and involvement. These spots indicate abscesses and induration of the udder that generally do not respond to treatment and depending on their size, seriously reduce or eliminate udder function. Some udders will remain pendulant even when dry and if they are free of hard areas they generally are functional. This is a good time to remove troublesome extra teats. They can be removed by simply snipping them off with a sharp scissors. Teats may also be palpated for cores which indicate the teat would not function even if the udder is sound. Very little can be done during this period other than removing the extra teats. Occasionally abscesses may be opened but generally culling should be considered because generally the lambs born from these ewes will become lamb bar candidates.

Management at lambing time is an important factor in prolonging the life of the udder. Ewes that are heavy milkers or have single lambs should be fed less grain, particularly the first week or ten days after lambing. It is extremely important to milk out extra milk in large udders until the lamb or lambs can keep up with it. Stretching and enlarging of teats is a result of pressure building up in the udder. Sometimes the teats need to be milked out so the lambs may nurse. Occasionally prior to lambing the udder will become swollen and edematous, fluid in the tissues. This may be treated with Naquasone boluses or injectable diuretics.

Mastitis, simply defined, is an inflammation of the udder and is of concern because mastitis limits or severely restricts the productive life of the ewe. Many types of mastitis occur, but little research has been done. Sometimes it is chronic with just induration and reduced milk supply; this type, generally caused by strep bacteria, needs research and is poorly understood. The more acute type will be discussed here.

Acute ovine mastitis is characterized by cessation of appetite, depression, swollen inflamed udder, usually one-sided, and lameness of a rear leg or legs. Prompt treatment is very essential if there is to be any hope of salvaging the udder. Quite often the best that can be hoped for is the life of the ewe and salvage of the uninfected side. Immediate injection of broad spectrum antibiotics is essential and occasionally one injection of dexamethasone to stimulate appetite is necessary. Three or four day treatment is generally necessary. The udder should be infused with lactating cow antibiotic mastitis tube.

Weaning the lambs is an important consideration in udder management. How effective reducing water and feed intake at weaning time, in reducing mastitis, is dependent on several variables. The most drastic method consists of withholding water for 24 hours prior to weaning and 24 hours afterward plus reducing protein level and feed consumption one week prior to weaning. Present recommendations do not include withholding water but do include reducing feed consumption, grass hay only, the last week prior to weaning. Ewes that have a history of mastitis that has been successfully treated should be infused with dry cow tubes at weaning time. Some producers use Albon in the drinking water prior to weaning, with some success.

The condition of the ewes also must be considered. Thin ewes, older ewes and poor milking ewes need not be subjected to restricted nutrition. Also it takes the presence of mastitis bacteria to cause mastitis. A tight udder of milk alone is not serious other than the fact that it may cause structural damage to the udder by enlarging teats and breaking down suspensory attachments.

It should be remembered that allowing lambs to nurse too long is hard on udders; 5 to 8 weeks is ideal -over 10 weeks is too long.

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Product Review: 50 mL Roux Pistol Grip Syringe

By Barb Lee

I'm still new to this sheep caper, and while I love the sheep, I HATE sheep handling day! My facilities are still not adequate to keep stress to sheep and shepherds to a minimum, and any little thing that can make the job easier is welcome!

I happened to browse the product information on multi-dose, pistol grip syringes for vaccinating lots of animals, and became interested in the possibilities. It took me a little while to sort out how these things worked from the brief info in the catalog, but I finally got it. The barrel of the 50ml pistol grip syringe will hold 50ml of vaccine, and can be set to deliver doses in from 1ml to 5ml quantities. A fresh needle is inserted for each animal, and you administer the injection without having to stop and fill dozens of individual throw-away syringes. What a concept – not dragging the vaccine and a gunny sack full of paraphernalia out to the barn!



There are many different styles of these multi-dose syringes, varying in their capacity and also their ability to be fine tuned down to as little as .5ml dose. From the QC Supply catalog (1-800-433-6340, www.qcsupply.com), I settled on the 50ml Roux pistol grip syringe, which is calibrated to deliver doses of 1ml to 5ml and costs \$32.55. Along with the syringe, I ordered a box of 100 needles, some syringe cleaner and syringe lubricant. Last night and today, I used the new syringe to deliver boosters to the lambs.

As with most new tools, there's a bit of a learning curve, and I wasn't exactly sure how to proceed with the thing. I guess the manufacturers figure you're smart enough to know you have to sterilize the equipment before filling with vaccine, because there's nothing in the directions. What bothered me is that I did not know how the rubber parts would hold up to the boiling water, but I figured it was more important to boil it than to introduce something nasty into my sheep. Boiling it didn't hurt it, but I put a trivet in the bottom of the pot to keep the equipment away from the element.

My first attempt at filling it was a little ham fisted; the glass barrel really needs to be screwed in snugly to make a good seal, and I lost a small amount of vaccine due to leakage. Fortunately I had a big new vial! I gingerly tightened everything up, worrying about breakage, but no problem.

Since my flock is small, and the dose was only 2ml, I was able to load up the one syringe with enough vaccine to do the entire flock, leaving the vial safely in the refrigerator. Armed with enough needles to use a fresh one on each animal, we headed for the barn and the rodeo began!

Aside from the comic performance of catching flying furballs, the one element of the evening that calmed me a bit was the syringe. There it was, all cocked and primed, with a fresh needle, when each critter was nabbed. It did its job quietly and efficiently and was one less thing for me to think about while I was tagging and taking registry pictures. It had a bubble of air under the plunger, but because the gun was pointed down, the air was at the top and never entered the animals.

The only difficulty I had was with the needles, which didn't want to unscrew. I solved

that problem by putting a little less pressure on them when I attached them.

As safeguards, I filled the syringe with a little more vaccine than I expected to use, and took out a few extra needles, because I knew I'd forget if I changed some of them and wanted enough to do it anyway when I was in doubt. The extra little bit of vaccine was lost, as I didn't want to reintroduce it into the vial.

I give a big thumbs up to this product. I am sure there are better ones on the market, but this device saved me a lot of the fiddly work of vaccinating with ordinary syringes that can add to the hassles at sheep handling time. I will probably invest in others along the way, which will dose the tiny lambs, and also larger numbers of animals. Anything to make life easier for the shepherd and the sheep! This is a good tool.

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