



Raising sheep the EASY way!

Barbados Blackbelly Sheep Association International

Blackbelly Banner

Selling Blackbelly Sheep for Meat

By Mary Swindell and Carol Elkins

Barbados Blackbelly and the American Blackbelly sheep are very similar and both have rather small carcasses. The ewes of both breeds at maturity range from about 85 pounds to about 115 pounds. The rams of both breeds range from about 110 pounds to about 150 pounds. What they lack in size, they make up in quality of meat. The meat is lean, tender, mild tasting, and delicious. They have the ability to maintain this tenderness and mildness of flavor well into their second year of age. This is unlike most woolly breeds, where the meat becomes strong tasting after about 12 months of age and is then known as "mutton." Some people think the reason Blackbelly meat is so mild flavored is because hair sheep breeds have less lanolin than woolly sheep

breeds, and that it is lanolin that taints the meat's flavor.

It is important to remember that Black-



belly sheep are more slow-growing than woolly breeds. A 90-lb wool lamb is ready for slaughter at 4 months of age. In contrast, it will take the Blackbelly lamb 9 months or more to reach that weight. When you determine the sale price of the meat, you will need to factor in the additional costs of feeding your lambs until they reach butcher weight.

If you plan to market your lambs at a sale barn, it is best to wait until they are around 12 months old so that you can sell them at the highest weight while remaining within the lamb price category. The grader at the sale barn will determine if your sheep will bring the "lamb" price by looking at their teeth.

Lambs over 12 months typically do not bring as good a price as lambs under 12 months.

You have a lot more flexibility if you plan to sell custom-slaughter lambs or to market them to ethnic niche markets. Buyers often prefer a smaller carcass, and you can sell them younger lambs and avoid having to supplement their food during winter. Some

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Saving a Newborn Lamb

By Mary Swindell

One evening you walk out to the barn to do chores and discover that your yearling ewe has had her very first lamb. As you monitor the situation for a couple of hours, you can see that the lamb doesn't seem to be nursing. The ewe doesn't move away or otherwise discourage the lamb, but nothing she does to help the lamb find the teat is working. What to do?

It is important that you act quickly to save the lamb's life. No matter what the reason is, the lamb will quickly weaken, become hypothermic (cold) and possibly die if you do not get some milk in it right away. Put the ewe and lamb together into a small lambing pen inside a shelter such as a barn. Stick your finger into the lamb's mouth and determine if it has a sucking reflex, and if



Photo courtesy of Donna Sikking

its mouth is warm. If there is no sucking reflex and if the lamb's mouth is cold on the inside, the lamb has developed hypothermia (subnormal body temperature). Lambs can get hypothermia regardless of the outside weather (they can even get hypothermia in the middle of summer if they have not had the warmth and nourishment of their mother's milk within

a few hours after birth). It is critical to get the lamb warm as soon as possible. Wrap the lamb in warm towels (heated in the oven or microwave). Keep the lamb dry and out of a draft. Some livestock supply companies carry a small microwavable blanket called "Little Critter Heater" which is like the microwavable heating pads made for people. In fact, if you need it, you may be able to get one of those heating pads from your Walgreen's or CVS Pharmacy which should work fine.

While you are checking for the lamb's sucking reflex, look in the roof of its mouth (you may need to use a flashlight) to make sure the lamb does not have a cleft palate and seems to be formed normally. If the lamb has a cleft palate or other serious birth defect, there is not much you can do to help it. But these are not common, and hopefully your lamb is just a little weak.

Meanwhile, check the ewe's udder, and try to milk her. See if she has milk in either or both teats. If you can, milk out several ounces of her milk right away, because her milk in the first couple of hours after birth contains colostrum, a necessary set of nutrients which give the lamb immunity against disease. If the ewe's teats are hard or feverish, she may have mastitis, and she will need immediate veterinary care herself.

Try to give the lamb a bottle right away containing the milk you got from the mother, or a colostrum substitute (such as a brand called CL Ewe Replacer). If you do not have mother's milk or colostrum mix, then use any brand of lamb milk replacer (usually available at farm stores). You may use goat milk replacer too, as it is similar.

The lamb should get about 2 - 4 ounces of milk as soon as possible. Thereafter, try to get the lamb to take a bottle at least 4 times per day, about 4 ounces per feeding. With small weak lambs, the Pritchard teats seem to work best (they are red nipples with a yellow screw top attached, usually available at farm stores). These will usually screw into the top of a soda bottle or water bottle.

If you cannot get the lamb to take a bottle (weak lambs without a sucking reflex often do not want to take a bottle), then you may need to tube feed the lamb once or twice, to help the lamb recover its strength. After one or two tube feedings, then try to convert to a bottle. Lambs that are tube fed too many times can develop irritation or damage to the lining of the esophagus.

To tube feed a lamb, you will need a narrow rubber lamb stomach tube and a syringe which fits on the upper end of the tube. Try to get 2 oz. colostrum (or milk replacer) down through the tube. If you need to tube feed a second time in a few hours, again try to feed 2 oz. milk through the stomach tube. I usually carefully insert the tube, then attach the empty syringe (do not use the plunger, just leave the top of the empty syringe open, and simply pour the milk in).

If you do not have a lamb tube and syringe, you may be able to get one at your local farm store or vet's office. To insert the tube, sit on a low footstool. Hold the lamb in front of you between your fingers, dangling it by its front legs (with one finger propping its head straight up toward the ceiling). With the other hand, gently insert the tube into its mouth,

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Newborn

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and guide it gently and slowly, straight down (keeping the lamb's head pointing upward). The lamb should not exhibit any signs of extreme stress as the little tube



is slowly guided down its throat. Gently ease the tube as far down as it will safely go (you can measure it to the lamb's naval before putting it in to get an idea how far it needs to go). Then insert the syringe into the upper end of the tube and make sure it is tight into the tube. Continue holding the lamb by its front legs, slightly off the ground, with one hand (also hold the syringe between two fingers). With the other hand, pour the milk into the syringe, up to 2 oz. Steady the syringe as you do this, and let the milk drain down

into the lamb's stomach through gravity. Be sure that the syringe does not come up out of the lamb's stomach during this process. Wait until all the milk is drained down (give it a few extra seconds to go all the way down the tube). Then when all the milk is completely down, quickly pull out the tube all at once so that no milk falls back into the lamb's wind pipe. The whole object of the tube feeding is 1) to make sure the tube goes into the stomach and not into the windpipe, 2) to avoid damaging the lamb's esophagus by inserting the tube gently and slowly, and 3) to get all the milk into the lamb's stomach and none of the milk into the wind pipe.

Once you have warmed the lamb and gotten some milk in it, and once you have determined that the mother has milk, then use every opportunity to help the lamb find the mother's teat and encourage it to nurse. This will give you the best chance of getting this lamb back to a normal start. Even if the lamb does not want to nurse right away, keep it with its mother in a small pen for several days, even if you are bottle feeding it. This will help the lamb and ewe develop a possible bond which will give the lamb the best chance for survival. ❄

New BBSAI Members

Jane Anderlini	BC
Jan Cox	LA
Angela Hatcher	VA
Donald and Linda Hudson	MI

Freezer Lamb

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ethnic buyers may take advantage of on-farm slaughter if you are willing to allow it. You can charge for this service by building it into your pricing schedule.

Check with your local Hispanic, Greek, middle eastern, and other international communities and learn what they want to buy and when their religious festivals occur. You will quickly establish yourself as a prime supplier, and your clients will spread the word!

Another very lucrative market for your lamb is the local farmers market, cooperative grocery store, or direct-to-consumer market. Americans are frantic to put all-natural, grass-fed meat on their family's dinner table. Your job is to let them know you have lamb for sale. Put up flyers on every bulletin board in town. Feed stores, health food stores, and grocery stores are great places to find customers.

Send a brochure to doctors, nutritionists, alternative care providers, and other health practitioners. They'll happily refer their clients to you for a healthy alternative to their junk-foot diets.

The BBSAI hopes to conduct a nutritional analysis of blackbelly meat to help members provide solid, science-backed reasons for choosing blackbelly lamb over store-bought (foreign) lamb. In the meantime, you can use some good information in an article written by former BBSAI member Barb Lee at

http://blackbellysheep.org/articles/nutritional_analysis_blackbelly_lamb.pdf ❄

2011 Florida Fairs

By Joan Eubank

School started again and that means it's county fair time! For the second year, I exhibited

- Eubank Acre's Dunnellon Daisy was shown by Kayla Reed in the Breeding Lamb Hair Sheep category and won third place.



Citrus County Fair Exhibit

sheep at the 2011 Southeastern Youth Fair in Marion County, FL. Once again it was a big hit. I had an American Blackbelly ewe with her two week old twins at the fair for all the children to hold and pet. This year I designed a coloring page to hand out to the children and put the history of the Blackbelly sheep on the back for the parents. I also exhibited at the Citrus County Fair, this time with a Barbados Blackbelly ewe and her twins. We were a big hit there too.

I sponsored three Barbados Blackbelly sheep for the Southeastern Youth Fair in Marion County.

- Eubank Acre's Onieda, shown by Kayla Reed from the Dunnellon Middle School FFA, won third place in the Breeding Ewe Hair Sheep category.
- Eubank Acre's Ozelle, shown by Chelsea Dominey from the Dunnellon High School FFA, won second place in the Breeding Ewe Hair Sheep category.

After the fair, Chelsea Dominey took Ozelle back to her farm to have her lamb. Before Ozelle's baby was born, Chelsea was given an orphaned woolly lamb, and she put it in the stall with Ozelle and bottle fed it. A week later Ozelle had a ram lamb but before he was dry, Chelsea's mother rubbed him down with a towel and then rubbed the

towel all over the orphaned lamb. A few days later the orphan would not take the bottle and they discovered that Ozelle had accepted the strange looking lamb as her own and was nursing her. Ozelle is a blue ribbon winner in my book!

I had the privilege of being a mentor to Grant Shoemaker, our 2011 BBSAI Youth Grant winner.



Eubank Acres Ozelle—2nd Place

He bought an American Blackbelly ewe lamb from me and housed her at his school's FFA facilities. He and his mother had a lot of questions and I was right there to help with all his needs. He showed his lamb at the Florida State Fair and also entered her in several county fairs. Grant brought his American ewe and her newborn ram lamb to the Citrus County Fair and exhibited them with my Barbados Blackbelly sheep. He had all of his awards on display as well. He is a wonderful promoter of our breeds



Grant Shoemaker and Cinnamon—1st place

and plans on showing his ewe again next year. We need more youth like him to secure the future of our breeds.

The BBSAI will offer its \$400 Youth Grant every year but we need more Mentors. While I remain the Youth Show and Exhibit Chairperson, I plan on making phone calls to our BBSAI members in hopes of convincing YOU to support our future breeders. ❖

Importing Sheep into Canada

BBSAI member Cat Laxton of Auburn, Ontario, has been working with the BBSAI Exceptions Committee to register her small flock of Barbados Blackbelly sheep. Because her stock came from unregistered animals, and because she has only two ewes and a ram (a "flock" requires at least three ewes), Cat is required to conduct progeny testing on her sheep to ensure that they will breed true.

To successfully complete progeny testing, a sheep must be bred to an unrelated animal of the same breed and produce at least one ram lamb. If the ram lamb meets breed standards, the lamb's parents will have successfully completed the test and will be accepted for registration.

Cat chose to purchase two unrelated, registered rams to use for testing her ewes. Because there are no registered BB sheep in Canada, she needed to purchase from an American breeder. Luck was on her side because up until last year, no export of live sheep was permitted across the U.S./Canadian border. Now that the border is open, Cat arranged to purchase sheep from BBSAI member Pat Schooley in Maryland, a mere 563 miles away.

Because this is the first import of BB sheep into Canada, Cat volunteered to document what she did so that future importers could learn from her experience.

1. Make sure that the seller has assigned permanent flock ID numbers to the sheep and is willing to meet any other requirements of the country of destination. (Note that imported rams must have their scrapie identification number tattooed on their body and that imported ewes must be from a flock enrolled in the USDA

voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program). Most sellers will require a deposit and you will be responsible for paying any extra costs incurred while meeting your country's import requirements. In addition, you will have to pay for transport costs and the border vet inspection fee.

2. Call the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) (877-909-2333) to obtain a producer database account number (see <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/anima/trac/20100722index.shtml>).

3. Download the Application for Permit to Import from <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/anima/imp/perme.shtml>. Provide your producer number and the permanent ID numbers of the sheep you plan to import. TIP: Check the "Single Entry" box even if you are importing more than one sheep; single entry refers to the number of trips you plan to make across the border, not the number of sheep you are importing.

If you have any problem's with form filling, contact Dr. Susan Ray at the University of Guelph (519-826-2810).

4. Decide which border crossing you will use and identify the name of the vet who presides there. Cat used the Lewiston/Queenston Bridge crossing at Lewiston, NY, staffed by Dr. King (905-937-7343). Let the vet know that you are acting as your own broker

at the border so that he doesn't assume you know what you are doing. Ask the vet what hours he is usually available to inspect sheep crossing the border.

5. Download a copy of the "Requirements for Small Ruminants Imported from the United States for Breeding, Domestic, or Captive Purposes" at <http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/anima/heasan/pol/ie-2007-5e.shtml>

Fax the completed import permit application to Dr. Susan Ray at Univ. of Guelph (519-837-9771) who will process it in about 2 weeks. The permit is valid for 90 days (3 months).

6. When you receive the original, signed permit, fax it and the list of requirements that you downloaded from the CFIA to the U.S. breeder. The breeder will need to provide the import permit number to their vet.

7. The U.S. breeder must arrange for their vet to inspect the sheep you are purchasing. The vet will need to verify the flock's origin, inspect the flock, ensure that

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Cat used separate open-mesh dog crates for each of her rams, with attached water bowls and shredded-paper bedding. She fitted dog collars on them so she could handle them at the border for tattoo/ ear-tag reading.

Ask the BBSAI

Questions sent to info@blackbellysheep.org are answered by BBSAI Registrar Mary Swindell.

Q: My son has inherited what we were told is a barbados lamb. He was a week old when we received him. He is now 3 months old but is not very big. I see the pics of the sheep on your site and they are filled out well and very tall. He is a little ram and so far only comes up to my knees in height. Is he going to get bigger? When will he fill out? When you feel his loin area you can feel his bones.

A: Barbados Blackbelly sheep are slow growers, taking about 2 years to reach full size. A lamb that is 3 months old may be from about 20 to about 45 pounds, and usually comes up to your knee (as you described). This breed does not get its full weight and size by the first year. Most BB lambs are between 65 and 85 pounds at around 11 - 12 months. The ewes generally reach around 85 to 110 pounds during their second year (between 12 months and 24 months). The rams generally reach around 90 - 145 pounds during that second year. It is in the second year that most of these animals put on their "filling out" weight. So what you have described seems about normal for your lamb's age.

Your description of "feeling his bones" is a little worrisome. Sounds like he may be on the thin side, even for his age. It could be that if you are only feeding him grass or hay, he simply needs a little grain supplement during these early months. Be careful about over-feeding him grain however, as you do not want him to bloat (a life-threatening condition that can be brought on by too much grain in the diet). For a little lamb, I suggest not feeding any more

than about 1/8 to 1/4 lb grain per day. Also, if he is not getting sheep minerals, you should probably add a sheep mineral block (or granulated minerals) free-choice. The minerals should be especially prepared for sheep and goats and should not contain any or much copper (sheep are highly sensitive to copper, and a fatal toxicity can quickly build up in sheep if they get too much in their diet).

It is possible that his thinness may be related to other health issues, such as heavy parasite infestation. If he seems lethargic, if the inside of his lower eyelids and mucous membranes appear pale (a sign of anemia), if he is starting to develop a puffiness under his lower jaw (called "bottle jaw"), if he has a loose stool, or if he seems to be underweight in spite of a good diet, he may have a heavy worm load. It is wise to worm him at 3 months to make sure he doesn't build up this heavy worm load. There are several effective dewormers for sheep, including Ivomec, Valbazen, Panacur, Safeguard, Prohibit, Cydectin, and others. These can be easily given as an oral drench (using a small syringe).

It may be that your ram lamb is healthy and of normal weight for his particular genetic bloodline. Some Blackbelly sheep are bigger than others, and it would be helpful for you to know something about the size and look of his sire and dam in order to get an idea of how big this little lamb can expect to be. If possible, try to visit the parents of the lamb to gain this information first hand.

Please do not overlook the possibility that this little ram lamb will get much bigger someday, and may actually become pushy, even aggressive. If you are bottle feed-

ing him (or if you have been) and keeping him as a pet, you may want to consider neutering him (castrating him) before much more time goes by. A small 3-month old ram lamb is still easy to castrate by banding, or by surgical methods. But by the time he is 4 months or more, you will not be able to band him at home easily. After that point he will probably need to be taken to the vet to be castrated.

Castrated male lambs (wethers) can grow up to be gentle and sweet companion animals, and can have many useful duties on your farm, such as a buddy for a ewe or a ram that needs to be kept separate from the rest of the flock. However, intact adult rams that were raised as bottle lambs and/or pets can be especially aggressive as adults. The familiarity that was so charming at 3 months can turn into aggression when the lamb gets older and becomes sexually mature. So bottle-raised rams tend to be the most aggressive and the most dangerous of all rams, and I always recommend that you castrate bottle ram lambs. If you want a breeding ram, try to get one that has not been handled much by humans, so that he will have a healthy respect for humans, and perhaps a little fear.

Q: I am in the process of sending in some registrations for American Blackbelly Sheep. I wanted to email you some sample registration photos to ensure they are suitable. You know how hard it is to get them to stand around for a photo!!! Can I email in a sample or two? My biggest concern is the requirement to show the tail, as they always want to face the photographer.

A: Yes, you are welcome to send

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Ask the BBSAI

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sample registration photos of your AB sheep to make sure they are suitable for registration. In fact, I prefer that you send me all your registration photos by e-mail, as JPG files. Please name each photo with the name and tag number of the sheep so that I can keep track of which one is which. And it is preferable that you send medium-sized photo files (between 200K and about 700K each) rather than giant-sized files (over 1,000K each), which are really bigger than we need.

As for the contents of the photo, try to get each sheep centered in your photo and try to get his whole body in the photo. A side shot with the sheep looking toward you is best. If the whole tail doesn't show in that photo, then that may be the best you can do. You are welcome to send along a second shot of the rear if you would like. The best shot will be used for the registration paper, but that second shot will also be retained in the BBSAI database. A front shot that doesn't show the side very well is not particularly useful. But it is important to make sure we get a good view of the face (or most of it) in the best photo. So try to encourage your animal to look your way.

Also, try to get your sheep in good light, and avoid bright sunlight that creates glare on their coat and shadows created by the sun or nearby obstacles, because both obstruct the true colors of their markings and coat. Taking photos can be quite a challenge sometimes, but the photos serve to document our animals for the future and are required to back up our statements as breeders concerning the registerability of our sheep. ☒

Canadian Imports

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rams have the required US ear tattoo (that is VERY important), and issue a health certificate. If tests such as bluetongue are required, then that will delay getting the health certificate.

You should double-check that the form indicates which ear was tattooed and the size of the tattoo. Note: The health certificate is good for only 30 days so you must make sure you have transported your sheep across the border before the certificate expires.

The vet must send all relevant paperwork to the breeder's State Veterinary Office (see http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal/health/area_offices). The State Vet must endorse the paperwork and return it to the local vet, who

will then contact the breeder and ask them to pick it up.

8. Inform the border vet of your expected day of crossing.

9. When you pick up your sheep, double-check everything: ears tattoos; all paper work; your original import permit; the health certificate endorsed the US State Vet; and the breeder's invoice for the rams.

10. Contact the border vet 1 hour before you expect to cross the border to make sure he will be there to inspect your sheep. ☒

Wondering what to get

- ✓ the kids
- ✓ the significant other
- ✓ Aunt Myrtle
- ✓ the dog

for Christmas?

Choose from
over **110 gifts**
at the
BBSAI's Giftshops

<http://blackbellysheep.org/giftshop.html>



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 classified ads 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.

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Letter to the Editor

Once again, a job well done on the summer 2011 BBSAI newsletter. One comment on Andrew Dotson's article about trophy ranch opportunities. BE advised, that the very first step is to check your state's game laws. I don't know if anyone is tracking this, but several states in the southeast ban or require special permits to keep, breed, sell, purchase, or even transport AB sheep for the purpose of hunting.

Here in Alabama, the only way I escape regulation by the state game agency is by ensuring that I have all animals tagged and that I have a state/federal farm premise ID. I am still not allowed to hunt, or knowingly sell for hunting, any of my AB sheep. If not tagged, they are considered exotics and may only be handled by specifically permitted operations (and you can no longer obtain a permit). I hear that Georgia has enacted a similar ban and the adjacent states are also considering it. In partial defense of the state's actions, they are trying to protect the multi-billion dollar wild deer herd from any infectious diseases that may be shared.

John Carlton
Double J Farms

BBSAI Board Votes

07/27/2011	Vote to send letter to Barbados Patent Office objecting to the Barbados Agricultural Society's plans to patent the Barbados Blackbelly Sheep. (4 yes, 0 no) Passed.
08/31/2011	Vote to accept the slate of Board candidates presented by the Nominations Committee. (5 yes, 0 no) Passed.
09/28/2011	Vote to modify distribution of Youth Grant to \$300 first and then \$100 after receipt of winner's article & photos (4 yes, 0 no) Passed.

Send the BBSAI your farm's business card that features blackbelly sheep and we'll include it in a newsletter (space permitting). Mail to 808 30th Lane, Pueblo, CO, or email newsletter@blackbellysheep.org

