



Raising sheep the EASY way!

Barbados Blackbelly Sheep Association International

Blackbelly Banner

Mary Swindell—Backbone of BBSAI's Registry

Mary Swindell took on the role of BBSAI's Registrar in 2006. The year before, BBSAI had outsourced its registry functions to a professional registry/database management company. That company made so many mistakes in our members' registrations that we had to terminate the contract. We never got our database back from that company, but former registrar Mark Fleming had maintained a duplicate copy of the submitted registrations, so all was not lost. Mary immediately stepped in as the new BBSAI Registrar, grabbed the registry firmly by the reins, and has managed it with the utmost integrity and professionalism ever since.

Unfortunately, because of some health issues, Mary has decided to step down from her position as BBSAI Registrar. In the interim, and while the BBSAI is developing its online database, Eileen Breedlove will

assume the Registrar position. Eileen is chair of the Online Registry and Member Database Committee and has worked closely with Mary to develop the requirements for the new innovative database.

If you've had the privilege to communicate with Mary Swindell during her many years of service to the BBSAI, you know what a wonderful and knowledgeable person she is. Her unique knowledge of blackbelly sheep is exceeded by no one. She has viewed thousands of your photos of blackbelly sheep and has unarguably the broadest perspective of the two breeds in the United States. Mary became the BBSAI's go-to expert on breeding strategies and has helped breeders figure out how to linebreed their sheep to develop bloodlines



Mary Swindell

and conserve valuable genetics.

Mary has willingly given of her time beyond the definition of "generous." In December 2005 there were 982 registered sheep. In 2013, there are 3,235 registered sheep. Mary has created certificates of registry for every one of those sheep and entered the data into the BBSAI registry. She's been busy! In addition to her Registrar duties, she has always found time to respond to the many emails sent to the BBSAI asking questions about the association and the sheep. You've read a few of her responses that have

continued on page 5 >

Inside this issue:

Mary Swindell—Backbone of BBSAI's Registry.....	1
Choosing between Livestock Guard Dogs, Llamas, and Donkeys	2
Too Many Rams?.....	6
The Beauty of Blackbellies.....	7
Ask the BBSAI.....	8
2012 Youth Outreach Grant Winner's Essay.....	9

Choosing between Livestock Guard Dogs, Llamas, and Donkeys

By Carol Elkins

I walked to my back pasture that Sunday morning in 2008 to find the rib cages and stomachs of five 90-lb lambs lying in the dirt. Sometime during the night, without a peep from my herding dogs, a cougar and a pack of coyotes went over/under my 4-ft field fence and ate my entire ram lamb crop, all presold and scheduled for transport the following week.

Two weeks later the cougar came back and started in on my ewe lamb flock. I'd been making 2 AM pasture patrols every night and caught her in the act. The next day, I put the ewe and ram flocks on lockdown, behind bars every night, while I waited like someone under siege until I could get a couple of guardian dogs. Six weeks later, friends in Texas sold me their brother/sister pair of Anatolian/Great Pyrenees. Considered puppies at 6 months old, they were, however, equipped with their adult bark and attitude. I've slept well every night since then.

Don't wait until you have a predator problem. Consider predator protection BEFORE you acquire your sheep. This article describes some things to consider when choosing what type of guard animal to get.

Livestock Guardian Dogs (LGDs)

Guardian dogs can effectively protect sheep from predation by coyotes, dogs, black bears, and mountain lions. They can be used to protect small or large flocks in fenced pastures and on open range.

Most adult guard dogs weigh 75 to over 100 pounds, but are surprisingly affordable to feed, eating much less than their size would suggest. They live with their

sheep 24 hours a day, working nights and dozing or walking with their flocks during the day.

Genetically wired to protect whatever they are told is "theirs," these working dogs are trustworthy (will not harm sheep), attentive to the sheep, and aggressive toward predators. These traits are instinctive and develop in most dogs with proper handling and minor training.

Purchasing a Guardian Dog

Visit one or more reputable breeders that raise dogs for predator control instead of show. Find breeders through farm magazine ads, Web searches, or by consulting your Cooperative Extension wildlife damage control specialist. Anatolian and Great Pyrenees are the most popular breeds. Akbash and Maremma are excellent as well, although may be harder to find. It doesn't matter which LGD breed or hybrid (crossbreed) you choose—their breed does not affect their performance. Do consider coat type and length. Short-hair coats won't matt like long-hair coats do and are better in hot or



Great Pyrenees owned by Mary Swindell, Cobden, IL

humid climates. Long-hair coats offer better cold-weather protection but will require serious grooming during spring shedding.

Buy a pup between 6 and 8 weeks old, or an older dog that was raised with sheep. Resist the urge to get a "rescue" animal. Consider getting two dogs, perhaps a brother/sister, especially if you keep your ewes and rams in separate areas or have a very large farm that would make it impossible for one dog to effectively patrol.

Examine the pup—and parents if possible. Be sure that neither parent exhibits excessive aggressiveness or shyness. These traits are likely to show up later in the pup. The pup should be confident, outgoing, and friendly. Avoid a pup that seems overly shy, or one that dominates its litter mates—it may later try to dominate you.

Rearing and Training

Treat your dog like a valuable employee from day one. Most troubles occur because owners forget that their dogs are workers, not pets. Don't let the dogs play with children or other dogs or hang around the house.



Spanish Ranch Mastiff (whose parents were imported from Spain) owned by Elaine Haas, Hillsboro, MO

Guardian Animals

← continued from page 2

Put the dog with sheep and leave it there. The dog should never leave its field. Good vets will agree to perform most procedures (including castration but not spaying) in your field. The best companions for your LGD are a few head of bum lambs in a small pen, preferably in a barn or isolated away from the flock. Pups at 8 weeks old develop a strong bond with sheep.



Great Pyrenees owned by Sandy Hession, Thorndike, MA

If the pup is very young, put a temporary fence between it and the lambs. This gives it regular contact with the lambs but protects it from being trampled. It is always a good idea to provide a place where the dog can get away to rest, eat, and be alone.

Spend time with the pup so that it is not afraid of you and will allow you to catch it later. Begin to train the dog basic commands ("come," "no," "sit") during its early exposure to sheep. Supervise the dog when it is first introduced to newborn lambs and reprimand it if it chases sheep. Remember, the dog is a working partner and cannot perform this role if it does not understand its job.

As the dog gets older, give it more opportunities to make decisions and take responsibilities. Move it from a small pen to a larger pen to a pasture, and from a few head

of lambs to the flock it eventually will guard. Observe the dog carefully, especially after each move or change in routine. Make sure it adjusts properly, and correct any undesirable behaviors early. It is especially important that the dog remains with the sheep.

Raise the pup with lambs that you plan to incorporate into the main flock. Once these lambs accept the dog, other sheep will accept it more quickly. If your sheep are spooky, introduce them to the dog in a small corral.

Routinely deworm (especially heartworm) and vaccinate your dog. And because they live out in the pasture, the longer-coated breeds will develop matted coats that can be painful when the fur starts to felt. Be especially observant in the spring when shedding time starts. De-matt and de-shed them, and trim pantaloons and manes if they are too matted to brush out. Provide a good quality dog food and make sure that the dog is willing to protect its food from the sheep; dog food contains meat by-products, which sheep should not eat.

You may choose to leave your dog intact if you want to breed puppies for income; some breeders believe that intact males are better protection against larger predators. However, consider neutering to reduce wandering and



Maremma (left) and Great Pyrenees (right) owned by Stephanie Parrish, Westminster, SC

Relative Effectiveness of Guard Dogs, Llamas, and Donkeys

Guard dogs effectively deter coyote and dog predation in fenced pastures and on open range, whereas llamas and donkeys appear best suited to fenced pastures of less than 300 acres.

Producers using guard dogs reported a lower percentage sheep loss than producers using llamas.

Several producers indicate guard dogs can effectively deter bear and mountain lion predation, whereas llamas and donkeys apparently are afraid of mountain lions, and their effectiveness in deterring bear predation is unknown.

Donkeys were rated less successful than guard dogs and llamas. However, these comparisons are inconclusive because all three species were not rated in the same surveys or under the same conditions.

Compared to guard dogs, llamas and donkeys appear less prone to accidental death, are long-lived, do not require special feeds, stay in the same pasture as sheep, and do not need to be raised with sheep.

(Colorado State University Cooperative Extension, No. 1.218)

over-aggression and if you have no plans to breed your dog.

All Dogs Come with Challenges

LGDs are considered puppies until they are 2 years old. And like all puppies, they will tax your patience—and perhaps your wallet. My female chewed through \$500 of PVC irrigation piping and valves

continued on page 4 ➤

Guardian Animals

< continued from page 3

before I figured out a way to dog-proof the equipment. Some LGDs are jumpers; some are diggers; some are roamers and will not stay inside a fence. My male was a collector as a puppy—tree limbs, pipe, rocks—all added to a growing pile in his pasture.



Anatolian/Great Pyrenees cross owned by Carol Elkins, Pueblo, CO

But by age 2, both of my dogs settled into mellow, problem-free employees. The male still hasn't realized that at 150 lb, he has outgrown his puppyhood playmates and that dragging them around by the back leg isn't a good thing. So when I wean the ram lambs, I pull the male LGD out of their area until the chaos dies down and they grow a little larger. The female LGD is totally trustworthy with her newborn lambs, and the ewes trust her.

Remember that these dogs bark—especially at night when they are working. They have several levels of bark that escalate as they perceive the threat level to increase. Although my dogs don't bark without a reason, their reason may be a marauding rabbit, a need to respond to something that a dog across the river said, or paying homage to a full moon. So consider the impact that your LGDs might have on the relationship you have with your neighbors and on your family's need for sleep.

The advantages of LGDs are well

documented. They will significantly reduce—if not totally eliminate—predation on your sheep. They provide emotional security for the sheep, and the sheep learn to do what the LGD wants, such as "Danger! Get back to the barn NOW!" There are plenty of reports of LGDs helping ewes during lambing and protecting abandoned lambs.

Using LGDs has indirect benefits, as well. You will not need to confine sheep at night, you'll realize more efficient use of your pasture, and the security of knowing your sheep are safe will reduce your stress level. You should have no trouble justifying the initial cost and ongoing maintenance of these valuable employees.

How much will it cost to buy a guardian dog? It depends on the breed you choose, where you are located, and the breeder's reputation. In general, plan to pay between \$150 to \$500 for your dog. Annual food and health care will run around \$250. But remember that a dog needs to save only 2 to 3 sheep per year to "earn its keep." Consider it to be another form of insurance.

Llamas

Llamas have a strong herd instinct and they like being with others of their own species. After being taken from their llama herd and placed with the sheep, they will adopt the sheep as their new herd. Being the largest of that new herd, they become dominant and protective. Research has shown us that llamas are effective at guarding sheep 95% of the time.

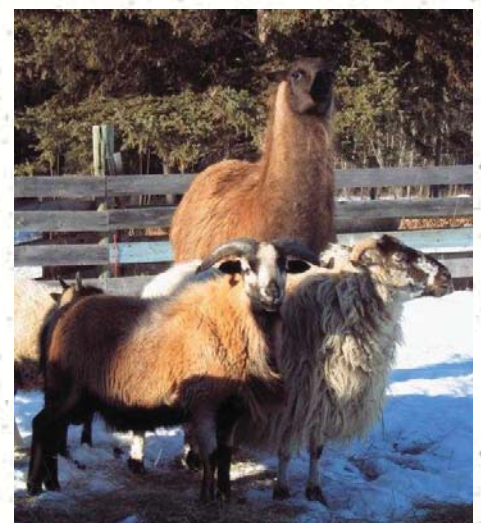
Llamas are naturally aggressive toward coyotes and dogs. Typical responses of llamas to coyotes and dogs are being alert; alarm call-

ing; walking to or running toward the predator; chasing, kicking, or pawing the predator; herding the sheep; or positioning themselves between the sheep and predator.

A single llama generally is more effective than multiple llamas. The effectiveness of gelded males, intact males, and females is similar. However, intact males may attempt to breed ewes. Some llamas are aggressive toward sheep.

Llamas do not need to be raised with sheep nor trained to guard sheep. Llamas quickly adjust to being with sheep. Try to introduce your llama to its sheep in a corral rather than an open pasture. Llamas' success isn't related to its age when introduced to sheep, the presence of lambs, or type of habitat.

Llamas suitable for guarding may be purchased for \$500 to \$1,200. Their general care is the same as for sheep, and no special feeds are required. A 250-lb gelded llama consumes 7 to 10 lb of good grass hay per day. If you deworm your sheep, be sure to include the llama. If food is provided for llamas, place it in a feeder



<http://therealowner.com/exotic-unusual/unusual-pets-sheep/>

Guardian Animals

← continued from page 4

high enough to be out of reach of sheep. Llama meat is quite good and, like blackbelly sheep, leaner and more nutritious than most supermarket beef and lamb.

Donkeys

Given ample opportunity, most donkeys will bond with sheep and protect them from predators. However, not all donkeys make good livestock guard animals—there are significant behavioural differences between individuals. Some donkeys can be overly aggressive with the sheep. The female donkey that I adopted from the BLM bonded with a newborn lamb and tried to kill its mother when I turned her out of the lambing jug.



source unknown

Donkeys have an inherent dislike for dogs and other canids. They will bray, bare their teeth, run and chase, and attempt to bite and kick an intruder.

Researchers recommend using only one jenny (female) or gelded jack (male) per pasture; intact jacks are too aggressive, and two or more donkeys might stay together instead of being with the sheep. They also recommend about a four to six week period for the donkey to bond with the sheep. Remove donkeys during lambing because they might trample lambs or disrupt the ewe/lamb bond. Challenge a new donkey with a dog to test its response. Do not use donkeys that are not aggressive. Donkeys are most effective in small, open pastures or where sheep are cohesive and graze together.

Donkeys can be obtained from the Bureau of Land Management or U.S. Forest Service under the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act for \$125. They also can be obtained at stockyard auctions and from breeders for \$250 and up. ❁

BBSAI Board Votes

05/24/2013 | Voted to hire Doug Meyer to build online registry and membership database for \$2000 plus maintenance and hosting fees (4 yes, 0 no) Passed

Mary Swindell

← continued from page 1

been reprinted in this newsletter over the years.

As another example of her tireless efforts to help, she published the BBSAI Book of Registry in 2006 so that members would have access to the data in the registry. A few years later, she figured out how to make it available on BBSAI's Web site, and she updates it quarterly.

Mary Swindell was on the BBSAI's Board of Directors for six years and served as both Secretary and Treasurer. During most of those years, Mary was a business manager for the Southern Illinois University, and the BBSAI benefitted from her expertise in financial and business management.

She made her permanent mark on the blackbelly breeds by developing BBSAI's registration policies, inventing a better way to define breed standards, and being the force behind BBSAI's decision to close the Barbados Blackbelly and American Blackbelly registries.

The BBSAI wouldn't be who we are without Mary's selfless dedication to the Association. Words are insufficient to express the debt of gratitude that the BBSAI owes her.

Note: If you are using an older registration form, please download a current copy from the BBSAI's Web site at <http://www.blackbellysheep.org/registration/> It displays the new address that should be used when mailing registration materials to the BBSAI. ❁

Too Many Rams?

By Eileen Breedlove, BBSAI member in Oregon

We began raising Barbados Blackbelly Sheep with four experienced bred ewes and two ram lambs. The ewes gave us nine lambs: three sets of twins and a set of triplets (we lost two). Counting the lost ones we had five ewe lambs and four ram lambs; about what we expected.

In due time we bred these ewes again, to one of the ram lambs, now grown. Since we were trying to grow a flock, we were hoping for mostly ewes. We got eight lambs. Seven were rams (we lost one), and one was a ewe lamb who failed to thrive.

My husband Bill, who used to raise cattle, said "It's the ram." He told me that in the artificial insemination catalog for bulls, the bulls are advertised as having a given percentage of calves of each gender. Since Bill was breeding for meat, he wanted steers. Using the percentages in the catalog, he was totally successful. He said that it would be useful trying to find out if the same is true for Barbados Blackbelly sheep.

I asked other Blackbelly breeders, and they all assured me that the percentages even out over time; that this was just a fluke. They did tell me that some breeders had previously had great difficulty obtaining lambs of one gender or the other.

I looked online to see what I could find about determination of lamb gender. After extensive searching, I found a research paper about Cuban Pelibuey sheep. This interested me, because the Pelibuey sheep look very much like the Barbados Blackbelly sheep. They have a similar body type, same small ears, and the rams

have a ruff and generally no horns. They can be bred year round. They are not all the same color, but are brown, white, and combinations. I think they may be a little bigger.

This paper was exactly what I was looking for! The focus of the study was to determine what factors affected lamb gender. I was excited! The research reported in this paper studied 959 lamb records for determining factors. The factors included number at birth (single, twin, triplet, quadruplet), mating season (spring, summer, autumn, winter), sire, and ewe age at mating.

The results?

"The type of birth did not have an effect on sex proportion as single, twin, triplet or quadruplet litters contained similar number of males and females. Sex proportion was independent of the season of mating. Ewes were likely to produce more males when conception took place in autumn. There was a slight trend for ewes to produce more males if they are mated younger than 12 months and older than 48 months. Ewes mated at intermediate age produce more females."

And finally:

"Sex proportion was strongly associated with sire."

This was what I wanted to know: whether or not the sire was an influence. This paper said that not only is it an influence, it is the major influence in lamb gender.

For my fall mating, I did not use the same sire. I used a new different sire from my first group of lambs. This was a first-time mating for the sire and for all three ewes, who were born in February and mated in December.

Bred to young ewes, which would produce more males; bred in the fall, which would produce more males, this ram produced all ewe lambs. I am breeding him again to four ewes. Three are older (perhaps geriatric), and one is a yearling. I am eager to see what we get.

To see what history could tell us about Barbados Blackbelly sheep, I researched the registry, sorted by sire. There is a caveat: I assume that breeders did not register offspring they were going to cull or wether. Thus the number of registered rams sired by a given ram might be low. I do not wether my ram lambs, but I know there are others who do.

The numbers in the registry show wildly different percentages for different rams. I urge you, as breeders, to look at your own percentages. Since the rest of us have no way of knowing what lambs were born and not registered, perhaps in a year or so we can take a survey. I intend to track this for myself, and the new online database will make this kind of comparison easier.

I will let you know in a future article what the sire of my new ewes produced from this breeding.

You may want to read the research paper yourself. You will find it here:

<http://www.lrrd.org/lrrd19/12/mace19188.htm> ✨



The Beauty of Blackbellies

By Mike Hummel, BBSAI member in Ohio

Here at Soggy Top Farm our story is similar to many others that I have read over the years. Our kids had moved out of the house, so why do we need such a large yard? But as we liked the open space, we decided to fence in the yard and throw in a couple of goats or something. The something came first—two American Blackbelly ewes, Curly and Fluffy. The goats came several years later.

Then a trip to Tennessee for a ram and some more ewes. Next year a trip to Pennsylvania for more sheep. Now we have a mixed flock of 40 ewes, a couple rams, and 33 munchkins. We call them "Little Hoppers."

We really like the Blackbellies because they are such easy keepers. No tail docking, no shearing, naturally worm resistant, hardly any birthing issues. Most of the time, they just show up with a lamb or two and say "hey, hey, look what I found."

Which leads me into a veterinary story. The vet that we had worked with for over 30 years retired from field work. The group that we now use has six vets in their clinic. One of the white sheep had a prolapsed uterus, so they sent a vet out to get the lamb bed back in place. So far so good—the lambs were eating and we kept a heat lamp in the jug, just in case. One morning the poor ewe can't get to her feet and we again called the vet while my wife/best friend ran to the house for bottles and milk replacer. We were trying to get these hungry lambs to eat when the vet walks in the door. He looks the ewe over and tells us that she has lock jaw. Rat fat! We were chatting with the vet as we wrestled with the lambs, and

the vet stops in mid sentence. He says, "I have to ask you, how long have you had sheep?" You could see that he was puzzled about the hard time we were having with the lambs. I replied, "Four years, but with these Blackbellies we have

you know what I mean. Some of the gals will come over to say "hey" and some will let me scratch them behind their ear. Of course if you really want a lap full, just rattle a coffee can with some corn in it. Hello Ladies!



Mike Hummel's American Blackbelly flock

never seen a lamb born, let alone had to feed any lamb a bottle."

He laughed and said, "Well that explains it." It seems that the bottle that we were trying to use was way too big and the nipple was made for something far larger than a 3-day-old lamb. So it was off to the supply store for the nipples that fit on a pop bottle. Those did the trick. You have to wonder though what exactly was going through the vet's mind when he saw us trying to feed those lambs, I'll bet he thought he had a couple of dingbats for clients.

We really enjoy these animals. Sometimes at the end of a tough day at my day job, I'll simply sit down in the barn or pasture and enjoy their gentle company. Sort of takes the rough edges off if

On a different matter, have you ever considered using social media to promote your farm and flock? I recently started a Facebook page for our Soggy Top Farm, and in the first week 460 people viewed my page. I even have 39 likes and 13 friends. Since March 21st, over 1,000 people have visited our page. Now I ask you where can you get in front of that many people in that short of time for free?

I am marginally computer savvy and was able to put my Facebook page together in a couple of hours. I would encourage you to give Facebook a try. If you have too many problems, ask some 10-year-old to help you out. ☒

Ask the BBSAI

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

Q: I am trading some dairy goats for six unregistered BBS ewes. A friend of mine has a small flock of unregistered BBS and I will get a ram from her. We believe that both groups of BBS came from the same place. All are beautiful and clearly purebred. We would like to register them. I am not sure if this is possible based on all the tales I have been told! Please let me know.

A: First, I do not know whether you have American Blackbelly sheep (horned rams) or Barbados Blackbelly sheep (polled rams). When you say "BBS" it could mean either of those, or just "blackbelly sheep" whose horned or polled heritage is unknown.

Both the Barbados Blackbelly and the American Blackbelly registries are closed, meaning that the parents of a sheep must be registered in order for the sheep to be registered itself. You would have to go through an extensive "Exceptions Committee" protocol in order to try to get these sheep registered, and there is no guarantee that the committee would approve their registration. The committee might require you to do at least one generation of "progeny testing" (producing one or more lambs from breeding the group, to prove that they will continue to produce sheep meeting the breed standard of whichever breed you have).

So any information that you can find about the parentage of these animals will help. If they have not been registered but can be traced to parents who are registered, that helps a lot.

Which type of sheep do you think you have? American Blackbelly or Barbados Blackbelly?

Keep in mind that the ewes of both breeds seldom show their horned or polled genetics. But sometimes American Blackbelly ewes will have small bumps where horns would be, and sometimes these bumps will actually be small scurs or small horns on the ewes. If so, these ewes should be categorized as American Blackbelly ewes and/or are probably not registerable as Barbados Blackbelly ewes. The last thing in the world that we want to do is to cross the American Blackbelly and the Barbados Blackbelly breeds.

So we would not want to take a nice Barbados Blackbelly polled ram and breed him to American Blackbelly ewes, who will put the horned genetic back into all his babies. So even if you think you have a polled Barbados Blackbelly ram and polled Barbados Blackbelly ewes, it is important to make a good effort to be sure that is the case.

The same is true for the American Blackbelly breed. You would not want to breed a nice American Blackbelly ram with a wonderful set of horns to polled Barbados Blackbelly ewes. Their offspring will have smaller and smaller horns, and you would effectively be "breeding out the hornedness" in his offspring by using polled Barbados Blackbelly ewes as the dams.

So it is important to know which type your ewes are, since 95% of the time you will not be able to tell from looking in the ewes. That is why the BBSAI Exceptions Committee often requires progeny testing on sheep of unknown heritage. This is because we cannot

tell which type the mothers are, so we must get them to produce ram lambs which will display the hornedness or polledness and thus establish the AB or BB status of their mothers. Even after those ram lambs are born, it will take 6 - 8 months for any horn growth to get big enough to establish the identity of the breed as AB or BB.

Q: At what age do you stop breeding blackbelly sheep? I read that you will have your largest litters between the ages of 3 and 6 years. I also read that sheep live about 13 years. Even if it is a smaller litter, I still want to consider the health of the ewe and lamb. So what is the recommended age to stop breeding?

A: I suggest letting your ewes breed for as long as they want to or are physically able to. If they die lambing, then that often is better than dying slowly while their bodily functions shut down or they slowly starve because they have no teeth. If any ewe shows signs of not being able to care for her lambs (not enough milk, bad bag, weak lambs, etc.), then make the decision to retire her now rather than using a fixed-in-stone age for retirement.

Because blackbelly ewes generally have twins, litter size is fairly constant across age. Occasionally, a yearling ewe may have only one lamb the first time, but she will usually twin thereafter. ✨

New BBSAI Members

Christina Byers	Sebring, FL
Kelly Cutich	McIntosh, FL
Paul Hueg	Hammond, WI
Will Hueston/Pam Hand	Free Union, VA
Tierney Medick	New Paltz, NY
Linda Montgomery	Mt. Crawford, VA
Larry Mullen	Brookshire, TX
Pamela Quist	Cadiz, KY

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.

Issue deadlines are
January Issue – December 15
July Issue – June 15
April Issue – March 15
October Issue – September 15

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Carol Elkins, Secretary
Sandra Hession, Treasurer
Eileen Breedlove

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2012 Youth Outreach Grant Winner's Essay

Maddie Shannon, an 8th grade student at Lake Weir Middle School in Ocklawaha, FL, won BBSAI's 2012 Youth Outreach Grant of \$400 last fall. Maddie raised her Barbados Blackbelly sheep, Glory B, and showed her at the Southeastern Youth Fair and at an open show sponsored by the Meat Sheep Alliance of Florida. In addition to showing her sheep, Maddie was required to write an article about her experience, which the BBSAI is delighted to print below.



Hello, my name is Maddie Shannon and I am an eighth grader at Lake Weir Middle School. I am 13 years old and the president of my FFA chapter. At the 2012 Southeastern Youth Fair I met Mrs. Eubanks and I learned about the wonderful Barbados Blackbelly Sheep Association. So last February I wrote an essay and entered it at the chance of winning a 400 dollar grant. I purchased Glory B. and I was elated when I finally brought her home. She is such a sweet lamb and all she wants is attention from anyone who will come and play with her. I am so glad that I got this wonderful opportunity to learn about the Barbados Blackbelly Sheep Association and that I got the privilege to be able to say that I own this wonderful rare breed.

One day my Ag teacher Ms. Driver asked me to wear official dress. I did not think anything of it and I thought sure why not. So the next day I came to school in official dress. As soon as I got to school I was sent to the front office. Then from there they sent me to the media center. I walked through the double doors and I could not believe my eyes. There was Ms. Driver, Ms. Quelland (principle) and Mr. and Mrs. Eubanks. At first I thought that I might start crying because I was so happy. I found out that I was the winner of the Barbados Blackbelly Sheep Association grant. The 400 dollars helped me to pay back my parents for purchasing Glory B and to help me purchase supplies that I would need to groom and show her with. I thought that that day could not have been any better but then Mrs. Eubanks said that she had a surprise for me. We all walked out to the land lab at the school ad there waiting for me was Glory B, my dad, who was supposed to be sick, and my grandmother.

I took Glory B to two sheep shows this year. The first show was in February at the Southeastern Youth Fair Breed Sheep Show. Glory B did not do so hot! She was already not very happy to be there. Glory B hates to go anywhere. She was very upset when put her in the truck that morning. When I got to the show with her she did not want to do anything. It was finally time for me to go into the show ring. I was so nervous. We walked into the ring and Glory B started to jump around like a maniac. She loves people and absolutely loves to get attention but when the judge went to touch she liked o of jumped out of her skin. The judge said that she did not have enough depth in the front and he also said that she was knock-kneed. I walked away with a participation ribbon, but I was ecstatic. I got this wonderful opportunity to learn about the sheep industry, to practice my showmanship skills, and to participate in the youth fair.

The second show I went to was put on by the Meat Sheep Alliance of Florida. This was the first open show that I have ever done with any kind of animal. It was an amazing experience. I placed second in my class and I thought that Glory B did 100 percent better. At this show Glory B was more comfortable with being round al of the sounds and commotion. She was not as jumpy in the show ring, but she still did not want to stand still for the judge. The judge at the show also said that Glory B was knock-kneed. I have truly enjoyed showing Glory B and I plan on showing her all of the way through high school.

This past year my Barbados Blackbelly sheep has taught me many great things. The most important thing that she has taught me is patience. When working with an animal you have to be able to have a lot of patience with them and you cannot get mad at them if they don't do exactly what you want them to do. Sometimes I get mad because an animal will not listen to me and Glory B has a mind of her own. If Glory B does not want to do something then she will fight you tooth and nail because she does not want to do it. I have had to have patience when working with Glory B so that I am able to get things accomplished. I am still very happy that I got this opportunity and I am so thankful that I had people like Mrs. Eubanks to help me with grooming and caring for Glory B.

Sincerely,
Maddie Shannon

Well
done,
Maddie!

The BBSAI 4-H/ FFA Youth Grant Program is designed to encourage young breeders of American Blackbelly and Barbados Blackbelly sheep to raise and show their sheep and in doing so, to promote the breeds so that more people can learn about them. Deadline for applications is September 15. Learn more about the program at <http://www.blackbellysheep.org/youth-grants/>

Contact John Lowrie at youth_outreach@blackbellysheep.org to apply. ✨