



Raising sheep the EASY way!

Barbados Blackbelly Sheep Association International

# Blackbelly Banner

## American Blackbelly Sheep Debut at the Calgary Stampede

By Doug Noyes,  
BBSAI member in Alberta

This year has been very busy for us here at Rusty Iron Acres. A rough, late winter presented some challenges during lambing. We made a 5900 km round trip to southern California and the Morrison Ranch for some rams. Then we were invited to participate in the Alberta Sheep Breeders Association-Sheep Showcase at the Calgary Stampede.

Tina, Hannah, Matthew, and I were very excited and honored to be included in the show at the 101st Calgary Stampede. As the "Greatest Outdoor Show on Earth," this would prove to be a tremendous opportunity for us to showcase our American Blackbelly sheep. With over \$2 million up for grabs in the rodeo and \$1.5 million in the Chuckwagon races, there is a huge draw. There are over 1 million people in attendance over the 10 days of Stampede and approximately 30,000



people visit the live-stock barns every day.

As we approached the opening day, the mountains of western Alberta were met with 5-6 in. of rain in a matter of hours. The ground was already saturated and the result was extreme flooding in many areas downstream. The flooding that ensued created the worst natural disaster that Alberta has ever seen. 32 local states of emergency were declared. Close to 100,000 people were forced from their homes. The town of High River was evacuated entirely, and still remains largely uninhabitable. Large areas

of Calgary that had never seen flooding, were now underwater, including Stampede Park. The total damage is estimated between \$3 and \$5 billion.

With the safety and well being of Albertans at heart, priority was put on flood cleanup and restoring vital services to residents. The city of Calgary and the Stampede board then had a difficult decision to make—will the 2013 Stampede go on? Because the show brings in approximately \$200 million to Calgary each year, and to help rally community spirit, it was decided

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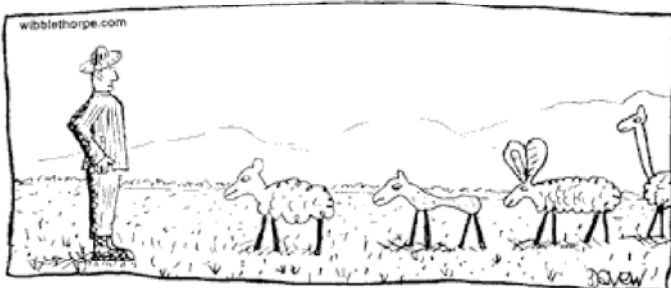
## How to Be a Good Sheep Buyer

By Carol Elkins

So you're thinking about buying some sheep, and you've located a couple of breeders with sheep for sale. You know you're a good guy and your check is good, so what's the problem? Well, until you start selling sheep yourself, it's hard to put yourself in the seller's shoes. I'm going to try to do that in this article. Hopefully it will help both buyers and sellers have a good sheep sale experience.

When you and a seller commit to a sale and he asks for a deposit, you should immediately get that deposit in the mail. The seller is trying to juggle sheep, pasture, breeding, etc., and the only way he can be sure you are a serious buyer is when he sees your money. For every serious buyer I've had, there were two or three before him who assured me they would call next week to finalize the sale. When a seller has a verbal commitment from a buyer but no monetary deposit to back it up, he simply does not know how to plan for anything. This is particularly true if you've asked to purchase bred ewes, or if you're not sure how soon you'll be able to pick up the sheep. If the deal doesn't work out, seller's breeding/feeding/lambing plans may be totally screwed.

Most sellers are willing to be flexible, but understand that



Farmer Wibblethorpe was particularly pleased with his collection of "bargain basement" sheep.

sometimes they cannot be. For instance, if their pastures are already eaten down to nubs, they can't leave the sheep on them any longer lest they kill the pasture. If they have reserved the only spare paddock for a scheduled breeding group and your sheep need that room for an extended stay until you can get them picked up, they are screwed. If they have nowhere to keep the sheep that they're holding for you, then they are assuming a lot of risk, and a lot of additional expense if they have to buy hay.

And speaking of risk, generally if something CAN go wrong with sheep, it will usually happen when the sheep are already partially paid for. The longer they stay on seller's property, the more likely Murphy's Law will screw something up. Waiting for sheep to be picked up is when coyotes break in one night and kill the entire lamb crop; or when the perfect ram lamb is suddenly dead in the front pasture because of a ram butting game gone wrong. Or a ram breaks out and impregnates all of seller's open ewes, many reserved for other buyers.

Those of us who have been selling sheep for a long time have met all kinds of people and many of them have made selling sheep an unpleasant experience. I've had people cancel out of a sale mere days

before they were scheduled for pickup; one party didn't even bother to tell me they didn't plan to show up at all. Checks bounce, but you learn that only AFTER the sheep are on their way

to the new buyer's farm. That's why when us "old-timers" advertise sheep for sale, you will usually see a requirement for a 50% non-refundable deposit, a stipulation that buyer pays for ALL costs of obtaining a health certificate, and a deadline for pick-up (after which room/board fees will be charged). Any balance due should be paid before sheep are picked up or with cash on day of pickup. We certainly don't go into any relationship with mistrust, but we have learned to protect ourselves to ensure that the relationship stays good.

Added to the stress level when selling sheep is having to deal with a third-party transport service. Usually they'll have only a best guess as to when they'll arrive for pickup. One popular hauler, Ron Keener, is very difficult to plan for because the seller is always trying to hit a moving target when scheduling health certificates and time off work to be home for vet visits and pickup. Scheduling a 20-day health certificate to match an estimate of Ron's arrival time is nerve-wracking. When he breaks down or is delayed, the seller must take off work and try to get that health certificate reissued. Sometimes it may require yet another round-up of the sheep and a trip to the vet or more waiting for the vet to do a farm visit.

In summary, pay quickly, schedule a firm pickup date within 3-4 weeks (weather permitting), and do what you promise to do. Sellers will be more willing to sell to you again if the first experience was positive. And when you become a seller yourself, you'll think back to this article and say, "Oh, NOW I get it!" ❖

# Too Old for the 4-H or FFA? NOT!

By Joan Eubank, BBSAI member, Florida

As a child, my family moved around a lot. We couldn't even have a dog, let alone critters for 4-H or FFA. Now that I have retired and have my little dream farm, I wanted to get involved.

I started raising Barbados Blackbelly sheep and wanted to see them in shows at either the state or county level. I was told it would be an uphill battle getting our Barbados Blackbelly sheep accepted into any type of sheep show.

I contacted two local county fairs and began doing exhibits of my sheep. Exhibiting sheep provides a great opportunity to introduce my hair sheep to a community that thinks all sheep are woolie.

March of 2013, Dawn Shoemaker asked me and the FFA advisor at her son's school to come up with a plan to present to the fair board to allow the students to show sheep at the fair. Dawn is the mother of our first BBSAI Youth



Grant winner, Grant Shoemaker, and the Superintendent of the rabbit show for the Citrus County Fair. Our presentation went so well that they couldn't say no. The students will be showing sheep at the 2014 Citrus County Fair in Florida and I will be the Sheep Show Superintendent in charge of the sheep show. Wow! Did I get involved?

In April of this year, I entered two lambs and two ewes in the Florida Sheep and Wool Festival. Because it was an "Open" show, I could choose whomever I wanted to show my sheep for me. I con-

tacted some other 4-H and FFA students and asked them to show for me. One student, Maggie Cobb, has been considering purchasing a lamb from me to show at next year's Florida State Fair. I told her that she could "try it before you buy it" by showing my sheep for me. She loved it! She showed one lamb and one ewe, each taking first place in their class and the ewe taking Grand Champion in the Division. My other sheep took a second place in class, a first place in class, and a Reserve Grand Champion in the Division. This show was also a premium show, meaning money was awarded according to how the sheep placed. To further help the students out, I gave them the prize money to put toward their next year's project.

I am too old to be in the 4-H or FFA but I'm not too old to help these students and to promote the Barbados Blackbelly sheep.

**HOW ABOUT YOU?** ❖



## Calgary Stampede

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that "Come hell or high water" the show will go on. The Stampede has weathered two world wars and "The Great Depression" and never missed an opening. So with less than two weeks prior to opening, the 2000 year-round volunteers, 1200 year-round employees, and 3000 seasonal employees pulled together to bring the grounds to a point where it was extremely difficult to tell that anything had happened. We are very proud to see Albertans pull together and help each other out in this difficult time.

So as they say, the show must go on. From July 9th to 14th, we displayed a 4-year-old ram (from the Morrison Ranch), a 3-year-old ewe, a ewe lamb, and a ram lamb (all our stock from Rusty Iron Acres). There were five other breeds represented. Together, all of the producers greeted the public, eagerly discussed our breeds, the sheep industry, and farming in general. We took the opportunity to take to the small stage and speak to the public during the "breed showcases."

American Blackbelly sheep had never been at the Calgary Stampede. They received a tremendous amount of attention. People were



very impressed with the horns on the magnificent ram "12 Gauge" we purchased from the Morrison Ranch, the condition of our stock in general, and the very impressive body size and horn growth in our 3-month-old ram lamb "Aries." One very common theme was "look at the goats," "sheep have wool, where's their wool?" etc.

Our sheep did very well with the crowds and atmosphere considering their wild traits and that they had never been in a show before. They were calm and quiet, but 6

days in the barns was enough. Our ram developed a cough—likely due to the stress—and we are treating him with antibiotics now. He appears to have made a full recovery already.

It was great to talk about the breed and its history and share the key attributes of our breed with folks from all over the world. We are thankful for the opportunity to have been invited to the Sheep Showcase 2013 and look forward to participating next year. ❁

## Hydroponic Fodder as a Feed for Sheep and Goats

By Susan Schoenian  
Sheep and Goat Specialist,  
University of Maryland

A hydroponic fodder system consists of a framework of shelves on which metal or plastic trays are stacked. A layer of seeds, often barley, is spread over the base of the trays and the seeds are supplied with moisture and sometimes nutrients via drip or spray irrigation. The seeds will usually sprout within 24 hours and in 5 to 8 days produce a 6 to 8 inch high grass mat that can be fed to livestock.

Fodder sprouts are tender and young, the equivalent of fresh green grass. As such, they are highly palatable and nutritious to all types and classes of livestock. On a dry matter equivalency, hydroponic fodder compares favorably with other nutritious feedstuffs.

The downside to hydroponic fodder is its high moisture content. The dry matter content of hydroponic fodder is only 12 to 15 percent, compared to almost 90 percent in unsprouted grain and hay. Because of its low dry matter content, the cost of nutrients in hydroponic fodder is usually considerably more expensive than other feedstuffs.

Nutritional requirements of livestock are based on dry matter intake (DMI). If fed to livestock at a rate of 2 percent of their body weight (a common recommendation), hydroponic fodder will only meet a fraction of most animals' nutritional requirements, especially the high-producing ones. Thus, the fodder, while excellent feed, is only a nutritional supplement and an expensive one at that.

Proponents of hydroponic fodder systems make many claims about hydroponic fodder as a superior

livestock feed, but few of the claims have been substantiated or proven to be repeatable in experiments. While two studies with sheep and goats gave conflicting results, research with small ruminants is generally lacking.

Hydroponic fodder is not likely to become a major source of feed for commercial livestock, but could have application under specific circumstances: dry and drought-prone areas, limited land



Hydroponic barley

availability, high alternative feed costs, small farms, organic farms, and non-ruminants.

Read full article on hydroponic fodder as a feed source for sheep, goats, and other livestock (including nutritional and economic comparisons) at [www.sheepand-goat.com/articles/hydrofodder.html](http://www.sheepand-goat.com/articles/hydrofodder.html).



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Raise **AMERICAN BLACKBELLY HAIR SHEEP**

Baaa, Baaa, Black Sheep,  
Have You Any Wool?

No Sir, No Sir,  
I'm COOL!...



I'm a **BARBADOS BLACKBELLY HAIR SHEEP!**

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

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- Calendars
- Water bottles
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[blackbellysheep.org/giftshop.html](http://blackbellysheep.org/giftshop.html)

# Sheep Tagging 101

By Carol Elkins

## Ear Tags

The BBSAI requires that a registered sheep be tagged with a permanent, unique ID, preferably from birth. Tagging allows a breeder to identify specific animals and record events surrounding their care and breeding.

There is no single tag that will work well for blackbelly sheep from birth to death. The approved



scrapie ID tags are too large to fit in the ear of newly born lambs. Most of the other tags rip out. The ewe in this photo was tagged with my

USDA-approved scrapie tag when she was a week old and it ripped her ear clear down to the base.

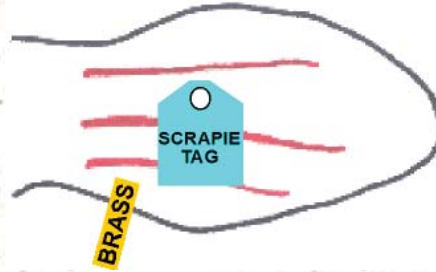
I now use a two-tag method that works extremely well for me.

1. At 2 days of age, I tag a lamb using a small brass tag I purchase from [Premier1supplies.com](http://Premier1supplies.com). The tag bears the individual number of that sheep, and that number becomes the sheep's permanent ID number. The tag is not easy to read, but I have never had one rip out. It is a reliable method to ensure that a sheep and its number are never parted.

2. When a sheep leaves my property, whether to slaughter or for sale to another breeder, I apply the USDA-approved scrapie ID tag. The tag I choose to use is Premier1's MiniTag. On one side it bears my farm ID and on the other side it bears a unique individual sheep number. I record

that number in the sheep's record. If any tag is lost, I replace it and note the new number in the record.

It is very important that you apply the tag to the area on the ear between the blood veins. If you hit a vein, it will hurt the sheep and bleed a lot.



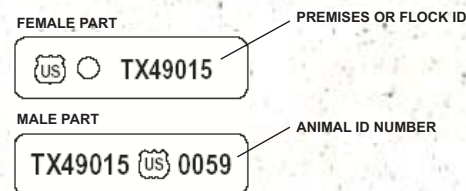
A brass tag or other tag that wraps around the edge of the ear must allow room for growth. You don't want the ear growing around the tag. Therefore, you should place it so that about half of the tag hangs off the bottom edge of the ear.

A button tag or Premier's MiniTag should be placed in the center of the ear, between the veins, about a third of the way down the ear (starting from the head).



## Scrapie Tags

There are two components to the tag: Your premises or flock ID, which is your state's postal abbreviation followed by a two- to five-digit number; and an animal ID number. This number can be either



an arbitrary sequential number or an individual animal identification number that you can choose. The important thing is that each number is unique and can only be used once. Zeros count—01 is different from 001.

## Necklaces

Sandy Hession in Massachusetts uses plastic necklaces and large, easy-to-read tags to help her quickly identify each sheep in her newly acquired flocks. She assigns a different colored tag for each of her bloodlines and then uses different colored collars that correspond with sheep names, or relatives. She records the color of each sheep's collar and tag in her flock records. Sandy says that her system "makes identification at a distance much easier, and works well when trying to point out a specific sheep to someone that doesn't know them."



Photo courtesy of Sandy Hession

The tags come from Premier1 and the collars from [CaprineSupply.com](http://CaprineSupply.com). The collars have a split ring that allows you to make them any length, and will release if the sheep gets hung up. "It is strong enough to allow you to hang on to the sheep for most purposes though, and makes a very convenient handle," Sandy says. ❖

## Ask the BBSAI

Questions sent to [info@blackbellysheep.org](mailto:info@blackbellysheep.org) are answered by BBSAI Registrar Eileen Breedlove.

**Q:** How tall does your fence need to be and what type of material?

**A:** Blackbelly sheep require somewhat higher fencing than the heavier woolie breeds. They are somewhat "springy" and can run well and jump too. So most breeders try to get a fence that is about 5 feet high, made out of woven wire (field fence) or something similar (horse fence), with a couple rows of some kind of strand wire on top to bring it up to the 5 foot height. The sheep can get through 5-strand wire fencing pretty easily, so that doesn't work as well. But most blackbelly sheep are pretty good about staying within fenced areas, if they are not threatened from inside, by dogs chasing them, etc.



The main problem is usually not keeping the sheep in, but rather keeping coyotes and other predators from coming in through the fence from the outside. So electrification (such as a hot wire on extended insulators on the outside near the ground level, and perhaps another hot wire on the top strand) really helps to protect the sheep from predators. Also, a row of barbed wire at ground level helps keep predators from digging in under the fence.

Also, many breeders purchase a livestock guardian dog, especially raised and trained to protect these sheep. The dog lives with the sheep all the time and protects them from predators. Great Pyrenees, Anatolians, Akbash, and Spanish Mastiffs are some of the breeds used for this purpose. Be sure to get your livestock guardian dog from a reputable breeder who prepares the young dogs for this work they will do. Especially if your property is too large to economically fence with the kind of protective fencing stated above, a livestock guardian dog can help protect your sheep and lambs, even if you are not able to electrify your fence.

**Q:** I do not have a scrapie or federal ID yet. Do I need that to register my sheep or can I use regular ear tags and update my info later?

**A:** You don't need the scrapie tag to register your sheep. That is a federal program, not the BBSAI's program. We enter the scrapie number in the database for your convenience, but it's not necessary. If you wish, you can update your information later.

**Q:** My vet says that the new scrapie program will require me to genotype my sheep and scrapie test them. How can a small breeder afford to do this?

**A:** Your vet is describing the Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification program. You want NOTHING to do with that program.

What you are required to do, by federal law, is acquire a farm premises number and insert an ear tag in all sheep that leave your property. This is the Mandatory Scrapie Eradication Program, not the certification program. That is

all you have to do. No reporting. No testing. No nothing.

The state will give you free ear tags and an applicator. The tags are not very good and fall out a lot. Most breeders opt to purchase better tags, specifically the MiniTag sold by Premier1. Here is their info on tags for the Mandatory Scrapie Eradication Program: [http://www.premier1supplies.com/list.php?mode=article&cat\\_id=15](http://www.premier1supplies.com/list.php?mode=article&cat_id=15)

I apply the MiniTag on lambs at 3 days old and have not had any problems with them staying in. However, other breeders apply a small brass tag into the ear of a 2-day-old lamb and use that number as the lamb's permanent ID in your record-keeping. They apply the scrapie tag only on sheep who are leaving their farm.

**Q:** I'm thinking about buying some sheep from a breeder quite a ways away from me. I'll need to hire someone to transport the sheep and I was wondering what all is involved with that. Does the breeder handle all of those arrangements?

**A:** Buyer is generally totally responsible for shipping arrangements. If you want to use a third-

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### New BBSAI Members

|                     |                    |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| Tracie Anderson     | Corning, SK        |
| Willard Bass        | Llano, TX          |
| Helene Brink        | Yuba City, CA      |
| Lynn Brown          | La Plata, NM       |
| Robert Dikes        | Harker Heights, TX |
| Rita Jean Guill     | Elma, WA           |
| Mildred Hendershott | Mitchell, IN       |
| Dana Hoffman        | Columbia, SC       |
| Gwendolyn McPhail   | Seneca, SC         |
| Osman Mendoza       | Homestead, FL      |
| Jose Telleria Iii   | Emmett, ID         |
| Jorge Vila          | Labelle, FL        |
| Ted Zaranka         | Washougal, WA      |

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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Please send changes of address to  
BBSAI  
808 30th Lane,  
Pueblo, CO 81006

or email  
Newsletter Editor Carol Elkins  
[newsletter@blackbellysheep.org](mailto:newsletter@blackbellysheep.org)

### BBSAI Officers:

Patrick Kahn, President  
Nancy Johnson, Vice President  
Carol Elkins, Secretary  
Sandra Hession, Treasurer

Eileen Breedlove, Registrar  
[registrar@blackbellysheep.org](mailto:registrar@blackbellysheep.org)

## Ask the BBSAI

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party transport company such as Ron Keener, you will need to make arrangements directly with him and pay him.

Regardless of whether you hire someone to transport your sheep or if you pick them up yourself, the sheep must have a health certificate. Seller is responsible for obtaining this health certificate from his vet to certify that the sheep don't appear to have scrapie and are generally healthy looking. Seller's vet will let Seller know what the requirements are and what tests, if any, are required. Your State will have its own import regulations and requirements and may require specific tests. Generally, shipment of rams older than 6 months require a brucellosis test, which can take 7-10 days to acquire after the bloodwork is drawn from the ram. State import regulations are available here:

[http://www.aphis.usda.gov/import\\_export/animals/animal\\_import/animal\\_imports\\_states.shtml](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/import_export/animals/animal_import/animal_imports_states.shtml)

Seller will either transport the sheep to his vet for inspection or will arrange with his vet to make a farm visit. Don't be surprised if seller chooses the farm visit. It is hard enough getting the sheep rounded up for a manual inspection without having to get them loaded into a trailer or pickup truck. After the vet inspects the sheep, he will issue the health certificate, which is generally valid for 20 to 30 days after issue. The vet will require scrapie tag numbers for all sheep to be inspected, their date of birth, age, sex, breed, and the farm name/registration number/description of the sheep.

Because Seller must pay the vet for this, Seller will usually require this fee as part of a deposit he'll ask you to put down on the sheep. This fee will not be refundable because Seller is out of pocket for this money regardless of what Buyer ultimately decides to do. The only reason to expect a refund of this fee is if for some reason the sheep fails the inspection.

If you plan to pick up the sheep from Seller yourself, then try to let Seller know the target date ASAP so that Seller can get the vet scheduled and make other scheduling decisions for the rest of the flock. Make sure that your transport arrangements take into consideration the traveling temperature and weather conditions. Open pickup racks are not good for hauling sheep long distances. Somehow you need to provide an enclosed environment to protect the sheep from the weather while also ensuring that there is adequate ventilation. Blackbelly sheep travel extremely well, but if you'd be unhappy riding in the chosen conveyance, chances are they will also be unhappy.

If you plan to transfer the sheep from one vehicle to another (including Ron Keener's trailer), be aware that if you lose hold of a sheep in an open, unconfined area, you will never see that sheep again. When I swapped sheep with a breeder in Oklahoma several years ago, I arranged with the OK county fair manager to be allowed access to a livestock barn in which both vehicles could enter and the door closed behind us while the sheep transfer was made. That limited the amount of space that we'd have to chase a sheep around if she got loose. ❦