



Raising sheep the EASY way!

Barbados Blackbelly Sheep Association International

# Blackbelly Banner

## BBSAI's New Online Book of Registry

At long last, the BBSAI is pleased to announce the availability of its online flock book. Now you can get information about a sheep, print a family tree of your sheep, and get a list of all your sheep's registered offspring.

To explore these new features, go to <http://www.blackbellysheep.org/about-the-sheep/book-of-registry/>

The first thing you'll see is the **Animal Search** screen shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Animal Search screen

The top box on this screen provides a quick way to get information about a specific sheep. If you enter the sheep's name in the **Animal Name** field, a dropdown list of all sheep with that name will display as shown in Figure 2 and you can choose one of them. If you don't know the sheep's name, you can enter the breeder or owner's name in the respective **Breeder** or **Owner** fields, and a list of all the sheep they've bred or owned will display.

Figure 2. Sheep x breeder

The bottom box on this screen allows you to search for lists of sheep. If you enter a sheep's name, for instance Zeus, in the **Animal Name** field, you'll get a list of all sheep named Zeus. If you enter a breeder's name, you'll see a list of all sheep bred by that person. But for now, let's see how you can get a list of all the sheep in your flock.

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# Online Book of Registry

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## Search for All Sheep in a Flock

To search for all of the sheep in your flock, enter your last name in the **Owner Name** text box in the bottom search area and click **Search**. A list of your sheep will display as in Figure 3.



Links	Picture	Reg #	Breed	Reg Date	Farm Tag	Br Flk Prefix	Name	Sex	DOB	Num in Birth	Sire Reg #	Sire Name	Dam Reg #	Dam Name	Breeder	Owner
<a href="#">I</a> <a href="#">P</a> <a href="#">O</a>		<a href="#">PAR01051528BBx</a>	BB	9/22/2008	NC 0012	PAR	<a href="#">Parrish's Fay</a>	E	1/1/2005	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Stephanie Parrish	Stephanie Parrish
<a href="#">I</a> <a href="#">P</a> <a href="#">O</a>		<a href="#">PAR06072245BB</a>	BB	4/25/2011	25	PAR	<a href="#">Parrish's Monique</a>	E	6/19/2007		<a href="#">PAR01051521BBx</a>	<a href="#">Parrish's Edward</a>	<a href="#">PAR01051525BBx</a>	<a href="#">Parrish's Sher</a>	Stephanie Parrish	Stephanie Parrish
<a href="#">I</a> <a href="#">P</a> <a href="#">O</a>		<a href="#">PAR07072248BB</a>	BB	4/25/2011	34	PAR	<a href="#">Parrish's Saffron</a>	E	7/2/2007		<a href="#">PAR01051521BBx</a>	<a href="#">Parrish's Edward</a>	<a href="#">PAR01051526BBx</a>	<a href="#">Parrish's Emmaline</a>	Stephanie Parrish	Stephanie Parrish
<a href="#">I</a> <a href="#">P</a> <a href="#">O</a>		<a href="#">PAR02072258BB</a>	BB	5/20/2011	0020	PAR	<a href="#">Parrish's Rain</a>	E	2/25/2007		<a href="#">PAR01051521BBx</a>	<a href="#">Parrish's Edward</a>	<a href="#">PAR02061522BBx</a>	<a href="#">Parrish's Ella</a>	Stephanie Parrish	Stephanie Parrish
<a href="#">I</a> <a href="#">P</a> <a href="#">O</a>		<a href="#">PAR12062259BB</a>	BB	5/20/2011	0018	PAR	<a href="#">Parrish's Caroline</a>	E	12/6/2006		<a href="#">PAR01051521BBx</a>	<a href="#">Parrish's Edward</a>	<a href="#">PAR01051525BBx</a>	<a href="#">Parrish's Sher</a>	Stephanie Parrish	Stephanie Parrish
<a href="#">I</a> <a href="#">P</a>		<a href="#">PAR02072260BB</a>	BB	5/20/2011	0021	PAR	<a href="#">Parrish's Chewey</a>	R	2/27/2007		<a href="#">PAR01051521BBx</a>	<a href="#">Parrish's Edward</a>	<a href="#">PAR02061523BBx</a>	<a href="#">Parrish's Beauty</a>	Stephanie Parrish	Stephanie Parrish

Figure 3. All sheep x owner

Click the heading of any column to sort the list on that field.

**Note:** If you don't see a photo for a sheep in the **Picture** column, don't panic. The BBSAI hasn't uploaded all of the photos yet.

## Display Information About a Specific Sheep

Seeing a list of your sheep is just the start. You probably want to know about a specific animal in your flock—or in someone else's flock. Just click a sheep's name in the list of sheep in Figure 3 to display an **Animal Information** screen about the sheep, Figure 4.



PAR07072244BB [Parrish's Zeus](#) [P](#) [O](#)

Animal Information	
ID #: 2244	Type: Registry
Reg #: <a href="#">PAR07072244BB</a>	Breed: BB
Farm Tag: 45	Reg Date: 4/25/2011
Animal Name: <a href="#">Parrish's Zeus</a>	Sex: Ram
DOB: 7/15/2007	Num in Birth:
Sire ID #: <a href="#">0861</a>	Dam ID #: <a href="#">0862</a>
Sire Reg #: <a href="#">PLM0205861P</a>	Dam Reg #: <a href="#">PLM0305862</a>
Sire Name: <a href="#">Parrish's Cyrus</a>	Dam Name: <a href="#">Parrish's Clementine</a>
Sire Horns: Polled	
Breeder ID #: <a href="#">321</a>	Owner ID #: <a href="#">283</a>
Breeder Info: Stephanie Parrish PAR - Parrish Family Farm Westminster, SC	Owner Info: Gwendolyn McPhail BD1 - Tokeena Angus Seneca, SC

Figure 4. Animal Information screen

**Hint:** You can get to this screen anytime you see an animal's name or registration number underlined in a list.

The Animal Information screen gives you a lot of information about the animal, and it's the only place in the database that you can see a full-size image of the sheep. If you are researching an animal that you don't own, you can learn who bred the sheep and who owns it now. You also can see the sire and dam information for the sheep, but there is a better way to view that information—from the sheep's pedigree chart.

# Online Book of Registry

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## Display a Pedigree Chart

Notice the little green boxes in Figure 3 and Figure 4? Each box is a link to a very powerful function:

**i** = animal information      **P** = pedigree chart      **O** = offspring

The **i** button links to the Animal Information screen that we discussed on the previous page. This is just another way to access it.

When you click the **P** button, a Pedigree Chart for that sheep will display, as in Figure 5.

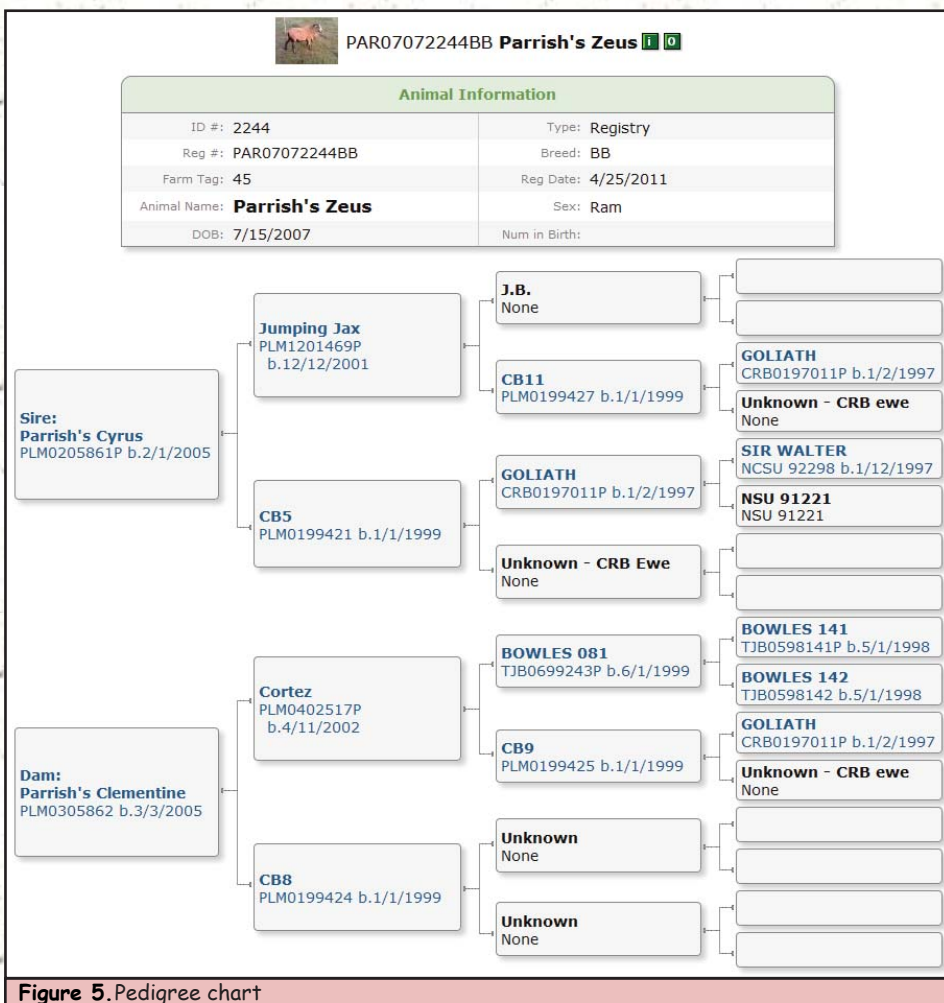


Figure 5. Pedigree chart

If you want to print the Pedigree Chart, please use either Internet Explorer or Firefox as your browser. Those browsers provide a Print Preview feature and allow you to scale the Pedigree to fit on one page.

OMG, this is so cool! But wait, there's more!

## Display a List of Offspring

If you click the **O** button, you can see a list of all the registered offspring that the animal sired.

The list of offspring looks just like any other list of sheep in the database, so I won't show you a picture of it. Just remember that this is a list of registered offspring—not a list of all the offspring that a sheep sired. Wouldn't it be great if members registered all of their sheep?

This is a very brief description of some of the ways you can use the new online database. But there's a lot more to discover. Be brave—explore the database. Click things to see what happens. Scroll around and look at the photos. Get the scoop on someone else's sheep! ✂

**Note:** While you are exploring the database and looking at your own sheep records, you may discover errors or missing information, especially in older sheep records. Feel free to email the registrar at [registrar@blackbellysheep.org](mailto:registrar@blackbellysheep.org) to report these errors and to provide correct information. As time allows, we want to fix everything that we can to increase the integrity of the data.

## Flavor of Lamb

By Nathan Griffith

[Editor's Note: Nathan Griffith is editor of the popular Sheep! Magazine (<http://www.sheepmagazine.com/>). I was asked by someone who had just purchased a copy of the BBSAI's Lamb Lover's Cookbook if there were studies that supported a comment in the cookbook about blackbelly lamb not tasting muttoney like breeds of woolled sheep often do. I referred the question to Nathan, and this is his response.]

Most of the research about lamb flavor conflicts with other research. In my opinion, way too many of the experiments over the years have been set up in the universities and labs



without considering the potential interference from all sorts of environmental variables, including motley mixed breeds of varying bloodline percentages.

For example, the Idaho Exp. station's David Cramer's first "accidental" findings that "the stouter the average strands of wool or hair fiber on the test sheep's hide, the milder the meat" in 1970, couldn't be replicated later in the same year. He was astounded that at first the team ranked in exact order the gaminess of the subject sheep according to tested fiber diameter. The odds of all that lining up are highly unlikely unless there was some unknown influence at work. Later in the year, results were all over the map.

Unfortunately, they didn't include mouflons, a mainly hair breed. I'm reliably informed that mouflons are generally strongly gamy flavored, which tends to destroy the constant touting of "all hair breeds" as non-gamy.

Nearness or farness to Earth's equator has a profound effect on sheep gaminess, especially in regard to varying day lengths.

I've eaten DorpCroix crosses ("Royal White") that I considered gamier than our Cotswold longwool sheep, though this cross ranked

very low in gaminess in official tests, as have the separate Dorper and St. Croix. Dorper gets its mildness from the ancient Persian Blackhead hair sheep that was used to cross on the Dorset sheep (the "per" in Dorper). Polled Dorsets test relatively gamy; the Persian Blackhead, never.

American Tunis sheep have a relatively fine wool fiber, but their reputation is firm as a mild-meat sheep, which is how my sister described it, being an official taster for the ALBC rare breeds tasting event in Northern Virginia some years back (her husband is a longtime professional chef, hence the invite).

I'm fairly well convinced the gaminess is due to endocrine secretions, and that those secretions can also follow

bloodlines within a breed as much as the breed itself. I suspect either pituitrin or one of its components, because the faster growing breeds commonly exhibit gaminess, but then so do slow-growing Merinos and Rambouillets and their derivatives. Exceedingly small amounts of endocrine substances can taint a whole sheep when they attach to the fatty acids within any tissue in the animal. We're talking a pinhead of the stuff diluted in maybe 100 Olympic swimming pools. And wethers are as affected as ewes and rams.

I personally have noted gaminess in ewes more than rams, though that flouts conventional dogma. We've butchered hormone-charged rams during breeding season with nary a hint of gaminess. "Lamb-hating" guests thought they were eating buttered beef, and loved it.

At least one test of hair breeds in either Arkansas or Missouri a number of years ago (can't remember which at the moment) involving cattle ranchers ended up with the ranchers preferring blind test samples of hair breed sheep meat over their own beef, hands down: Very embarrassing for the cow pokes.

That said, many breeds have longstanding histories of gamy flavor, while others have longstanding mildness reputations. Under certain circumstances, I believe any breed can acquire gaminess temporarily, and there are remedies for that too, besides the usual heavy garlic, hot peppers and lemon treatments. One of the best is an old deer hunter's spicing secret for gamy bucks and does.

## Lambing Jugs

By Jann Bach, BBSAI member in Fountain, CO

I wanted to share what I have set up for lambing jugs on my farm. There are 4 jugs, each one is 4' x 6' with a water bucket, small feed tub, and a heat lamp. They are all adjoining, although the ewes could be separated by one jug if all four aren't filled. They will be bedded with straw. The rest of the 12 x 24 stall is open, so the ewes that aren't in the jugs can be in the stall but can't interfere with mom and lambs.



## Changes Affecting Members in July

Membership renewal forms will go out in the mail in May. Current memberships will expire June 30. In addition to sending in your check to renew, you can choose to complete the form online and pay your dues using PayPal (which accepts credit cards). Last year the online membership application proved to be extremely popular and saved members a lot of time.

The BBSAI has clarified the purpose of its Associate membership category. An Associate membership is non-voting and has no sheep registration privileges. It is generally used by affiliations that support the BBSAI.

## Lamb Flavor

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Gland removal doesn't work on sheep harboring glandular gaminess, though some butchers insist it does.

There is an enormous amount of info on this, but fingers are all firmly pointing at branched-chain fatty acids, polyunsaturated fatty acids, and monounsaturated fatty acids. All these are barking up the wrong stump in my opinion, but are all razor close to the real culprit—the natural hormones lurking in those fatty acids.

Unfortunately, there are environmental influences that both directly taint the meat and that stimulate certain endocrine responses that in turn taint the meat. The sheep biz is a long way from solving this problem, but in the mean time, hair breeds like the BBB and Dorpers, etc., are as good a solution as any. The breeds that haven't fared well in taste tests are nevertheless very popular and they're politically inordinately powerful. No one wants to release data that damage that popularity; it could have university funding ramifications, like what former-senator Bennett (R-Utah) did to Dr. Jones when ASI was upset by his USDA 787 Report about 10 years ago.

[Editor's Note: Nathan Griffith is sympathetic to hair sheep's lack of attention in the media. He gives good exposure to hair sheep breeds in Sheep! Magazine. Every issue contains a lengthy article by Canadian hair sheep breeder Helmut Lang. If you don't already subscribe to Sheep! Magazine, have a look.]

## More on Taking Sheep Photos

By Jane Anderlini, BBSAI member in Prince George, British Columbia

I appreciated Carol Elkins' article on photographing Blackbelly sheep in the January 2014 issue of the BBSAI newsletter. We all go through taking registration photos and they can be challenging given, as Carol points out, all the required parts of the sheep that must be clearly visible in the same pose. The tails and faces don't always do what we want them to at precisely the same moment!

We've discovered a simple, fairly quick, way to take registration photos of our American Blackbelly lambs that isn't stressful for our sheep or for us and it's (almost) foolproof. We weigh our lambs regularly from birth, so they become quite comfortable walking through the scale. With a group of lambs in a holding area in the barn behind the scale and another group of lambs in a small field on the other side, we read and record tags as each lamb passes through the scale to the field. When we open the scale, we've found that the lambs consistently bounce away about fifteen feet then abruptly stop to turn, with their sides to us, and look back at



Sheep exits holding pen

the holding pen - with all required registration parts in view. Each lamb does exactly the same thing! They'll stand still like this for a minute or so in the wide open space. With a digital camera, there's plenty of time to take four or five good pictures before they realize the lambs in the holding pen aren't following them and they spot the other lambs in the field and bound off to join them. We're working with instinctive behaviors here, and each lamb is only alone for a minute or two until they join others.

We make sure when we set up that we won't be taking photos into the sun, and we write each lamb's number down when they're in the scale so we know what order the pictures were taken in. In between lambs, we snap a random photo of the sky, or something else without a sheep in it, to clearly separate the photos of each.

Our process works best with two people—one to open and close the scale; the other to record numbers and to already be crouched down with the camera ready to capture the pose. I don't think the scale is the magic ingredient here; a gate would probably work just as well. Having lambs on each side, though, is reassuring for them; they don't like being alone.

Later, in the house, we select the best shot for each lamb, crop unnecessary background out of the picture, label it, and it's ready to be emailed to the Registry. 🌸



Perfect poses every time!

### New BBSAI Members

Thomas Fraser	Elbert, CO
Rick & Cindy Gagnon	Indian Hills, CO
Paulo & Agostinho Matos	Hampton, NJ
Steve Steinmeyer	Grundy Center, IA

## Ask the BBSAI

Send your questions to [info@blackbellysheep.org](mailto:info@blackbellysheep.org)

**Q:** How many ewes can a ram cover?

**A:** It depends on a couple of things: age of your ram, temperature, and if you want all your lambs to come at one time or if you don't mind them spread out. A ram will keep breeding as the occasion arises but if there are too many ewes then the lambs will be more spread out as he has a chance to get to each ewe. I'd say he should be able to cover 10-15 ewes over a 35-day period. More than that will increase the lambing spread.

A ewe comes into estrus every 17 days and stays in estrus for 2-3 days. A flock of ewes tends to cycle together but not always. To make sure that a ram has time to get to all ewes, I allow him access for 35 days, which is two estrus cycles. That way, if a gal was just finishing up her cycle when first exposed and the ram didn't cover her, he'd have a second chance 17 days later when she has her next cycle.

If you choose to use a cleanup ram, I recommend waiting a minimum of 2 weeks after taking the first ram out. That way you can be absolutely certain of who sired the lambs. If you allow less time, and if fertilization is delayed, then you don't know for sure who the sire is. Mary Swindell had one lamb in a set of twins born two weeks after the first lamb. It doesn't happen often, but it happens. If you can't be certain of the sire, then the value of that lamb is diminished because you don't have a full genetic record.

**Q:** I'm thinking about culling one of my favorite ewes. I hate to do it. She's so friendly, I just love her personality. She's one of my biggest ewes, and she has a nice coat—everything a breeder could ask for—but her lambing record is almost non-existent. Plus, she is not a twin, and she didn't have twins either time she lambled.

**A:** Here are the guidelines that I use on my farm:

1. If a ewe has been continually exposed to a ram twice for not less than 35 days per exposure and did not conceive, and if the ram covered the other ewes in his breeding group, then the fault is the ewe's and she should be culled.

2. If a ram is placed in a small breeding group of ewes (no more than 8) for 35 days and more than one of the ewes fails to conceive, the ram may have fertility issues. If it happens a second time, the ram should be culled.

3. A ewe is expected to twin every lambing event except her first. If she fails to twin twice in a row, the ewe should be culled. Older or geriatric ewes who are retained for the genetic value of their lambs may be excused from this guideline because fecundity sometimes decreases with age.

4. Sheep with fertility problems should be removed from the gene pool to ensure that any genetically transmitted fertility issues do not contaminate the overall population.

**Q:** I'm new to raising barbado sheep and used to the American variety as most breeders around me raise them for their horns. I have at least one ram close to a year old that has never developed horns although the sire does have them. How would I tell if he is polled or just lacking something

needed to produce horns as others from the flock have? He does have small "buttons" on top of his head that have not grown more than the length of his hair.

**A:** Because your ram is known to have parents carrying horned genetics, in all likelihood he is carrying a mutated gene. The genetics of hornedness and polledness are not well understood in American Blackbelly and Barbados Blackbelly breeds. Matters are more complicated because there are separate genes for scurs and buttons in addition to genes for horns. Usually, polledness is a dominant trait, but occasionally a Barbados Blackbelly ram with 100% polled ancestors will sprout horns. Likewise, occasionally an American Blackbelly ram with 100% horned ancestors will be polled.

It also is possible that your ram's mother is carrying polled genetics. Because ewes of both breeds are generally polled, any horned genetics that they may have are hidden. You really never know what breed of sheep a ewe is until you breed her to a ram with known genetics and she consistently produces lambs that are true to breed type. If she is carrying one or two polled genes, and if there is a recessive polled gene in the sire, then that could explain why your polled ram is polled.

Rather than risking the genetic anomaly being carried forward, you would be wise to cull the ram.

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 business cards 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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January Issue – December 15  
July Issue – June 15  
April Issue – March 15  
October Issue – September 15

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### BBSAI Officers:

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## Ask the BBSAI

**Q:** What signs should I look for to help me know when a ewe is going to give birth?

**A:** Here is a story that happened on my farm many years ago. When I was a newbie, I would leave all lambs with their moms until they were 4 months old. Then I would move the ram lambs to the bachelor group to wean them. One year, one of those 4-month-old rams bred a 4-month-old ewe and I didn't know it. Five months (152 days) later, I noticed that this ewe had a bloody backside. I looked around and discovered to my amazement that she had just plopped out twin lambs! I had no idea that she was pregnant. She showed no signs of being pregnant and no signs of lambing.

### Morals of the story:

1. Ram lambs can be fertile at 4 months.
2. Ewe lambs can be fertile at 4 months.
3. Always pull ram lambs from their moms at 3 months of age.

Always assume that a ewe that has been exposed to a ram is pregnant unless the time has passed beyond 152 days from when you pulled the ram.

If you are using a ram of questionable ability to cover ewes, wait 2 weeks after you pull him from the breeding group and put in a different ram to "clean up" any ewes that the first ram might have missed.

You will be lucky if you are given any advance warning that a ewe is about to lamb. Contrary to what the books instruct you to look for, there will rarely be a "hollow" in front of her hips; no swelling in her vulva; and often no bagging up of her udder. The ewe will separate herself from the flock sometimes. That usually is as much advance warning as you're likely to get.

When you do see a ewe go into labor, it is worth waiting around to watch. Under the best circumstances, you will see a miracle. But you will agonize every minute of the delivery and the subsequent cleaning—standing up—finding teats saga. 99% of the time you simply need to stand back and watch and let the ewe take care of things. 1% of the time you need to help. Knowing when that 1% is happening is one of the hardest things about raising sheep. ✦

## BBSAI Board Votes

01/04/2014	Vote to authorize paying Doug Meyer \$200 to collect, identify, and associate each of the non-embedded animal photos in our Registry files with its applicable animal record in the online database (5 yes, 0 no) Passed
01/29/2014	Vote to retain officers in the same positions as they held in 2013 (5 Yes; 0 No) Passed
01/29/2014	Vote to accept proposed editorial revisions to the Standing Rules (5 Yes; 0 No) Passed