



Raising sheep the EASY way!

Barbados Blackbelly Sheep Association International

Blackbelly Banner

How to Take Good Sheep Photos

By Carol Elkins

Many BBSAI members hate taking photos of their sheep, yet photos are required for registration. What can you do to make it easier and to get better photos?

Taking photos of sheep CAN be difficult. After all, you are invading their space and staring directly at them for an extended period of time. That's enough to make anyone nervous, especially an already nervous blackbelly. This article assumes you are using a digital camera (inexpensive and will save you a ton of money on photo processing). Make sure your battery is charged before you start!

Be Able to Tell the Sheep Apart Visually.

Before you even grab a camera, there are things you need to do to make this a much easier job. Bring the sheep into a small



Gerry Krause in White Lake, WI, takes great sheep photos, with lots of help from his hairy friends

corral where they can mill around and be comfortable. If you have a large flock, it would be a good idea to separate out the sheep you want to photograph, plus their dams (if they are lambs). A spare buddy or two can reduce their overall stress—they know there is safety in numbers.

Sit down in the middle of the corral so that you are at eye level with them rather than standing over them. This will give you much better photos and will make you less threatening

to the sheep. Watch them and make notes about how they are different from each other. That is the whole goal of this exercise. Is there a white tail tip on one? A dark patch of hair on the rump? This task becomes particularly challenging if you need photos of twin lambs. If your sheep are so identical that you can't tell them apart, you may want to use colored plastic necklaces or temporarily spray their rumps with different colored paints.

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Sheep Photos

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Once you believe you can tell the sheep apart by looking at them, you are ready to start taking photos. Grab your camera and a pencil and notebook and plop yourself back down in the middle of the corral—again.

Rule #1 (The Only Rule): Never Be in a Hurry

Work slowly so that you don't startle the sheep. Locate one of the target sheep and keep your camera focused on her. Take shots of her as she moves around. If she persists in hiding behind other sheep, slowly move toward the flock to start them walking around. Watch carefully for a moment to snap her when she is totally visible. Try to capture her face, head, body, and tail in the photo.

Generally, the less you move, the better the shots will be. But it takes a lot of patience. In addition to watching for those perfectly posed shots, you have to consider where the sunlight is. You won't get good photos if you are shooting directly into the light. Also be aware of dust on your lens. Critters stir up dust.

Take Notes

The hardest part of this job is identifying the sheep in the photos AFTER you take them. The sheep tend to all look alike. So anything you can do now that will help you later would be a good idea. Jot down notes as you are shooting to help you remember which sheep you were photographing (sheep looked right at me; lamb lying on mom's left side). Note something different in the last shot you took of her (e.g., sheep was next to water trough) to help you know when you stopped

taking photos of Sheep #1 and began photographing Sheep #2. Repeat this process for each of the remaining sheep that you need to photograph.

Download the photos to your computer. Don't wait to do this; do it while everything is fresh in your mind. If you're not certain how to download photos, there is a great 5-minute video at <http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/how-to-transfer-photos-from-your-digital-camera-to-computer.html> for both Windows and Mac.

Identify, Select, and Edit

Once your photos are safely stored on your harddrive, the work begins. You will need to use a photo editing program. You'll find plenty of free products—both installed software and Web-based—to choose from. Check out Picasa (<http://picasa.google.com>) and Gimp (<http://www.gimp.org>) for Windows/Mac options and Paint.net (<http://www.getpaint.net>) for a basic Windows program. You probably already have a basic graphics/paint program installed on your computer. Really, all you'll need is the ability to crop the photo, so don't be intimidated by having to learn a new software program.

You're going to take three passes through this bunch of photos.

- On the first pass, the goal is to identify the sheep in the shot. Open each photo, identify the sheep, and save a copy of the photo using the sheep's name or number in the filename. And since you have lots of photos of the same sheep, add an incremter to the filename (e.g., Sadie1, Sadie2, Sadie3).
- On the second pass, choose the best shot of each sheep (see tips below). Save a copy of this photo by adding the sheep's farm tag number to the filename (e.g., 0782Rocky.jpg). This way you'll be able to tell the photo you use for registration apart from the other photos because it has the sheep's ID number in it.
- Open each photo from the second pass and crop it down so that the sheep being registered is prominent and unnecessary background is removed.

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BEFORE: group photo



AFTER: cropped photo of single lamb

Sheep Photos

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Photo Tips

Make sure that the photo clearly shows the face, body, and tail of the sheep. Take the photo sufficiently close to the sheep so that markings are visible. The photo must not be blurry or out of focus.

Make sure that the sheep is clearly distinguished from any other sheep in the photo.



BEFORE: Group photo taken too far away



AFTER: cropped photo too blurry and dark; face isn't visible

Restraining for Individual Shots

When you need to register a lot of sheep at one time and just don't have time to sit and wait for each sheep to provide the perfect shot, it may be easiest to restrain them and take a single photo of each sheep. When I first started raising sheep for registration, I'd restrain the sheep using a halter or by putting them in a headgate while I snapped their photo.



Hard way: hold sheep and sign at the same time



Easier way: hold sheep and prop the sign up

It's not as easy as you'd think to write down each sheep's name and **CORRECTLY** associate it with the photo 3 hours later. Screw up a photo in the middle of two dozen photos and half of them will be mislabeled. A couple years later (I'm a slow learner), I finally realized that I could write a sheep's name or number on a sign and include it in the photo so that I wouldn't have to take notes. If you don't have a headgate, you'll probably need a helper to hold the sign and lamb while you shoot the photo.

What to Send the BBSAI

When submitting the photos to the BBSAI, here's what we need:

- Write the sheep name and tag number on back of each photo.
- If submitting digital photos, include the sheep's name and tag number in the file name (e.g., 0782.Rocky.jpg).
- If using a digital camera, we prefer photos taken at high resolution (best quality). See your camera's instruction manual for details.
- We always prefer receiving digital photos rather than printed photos. The Registrar must digitize printed photos by scanning them, and scanned photos lose a lot of detail.

The photo that you send in with your sheep's registration application will be used for the rest of your sheep's life (and beyond!), so you'll want to make it the best photo possible. It will appear on your sheep's pedigree even when you sell the sheep.

When the BBSAI's new online database is launched, everyone in the world will be able to see your sheep's photo. People may judge the quality of your entire flock by the photos you've submitted of your sheep. Make their first impression a good one and take time to snap a really good photo. ☒

Lessons I've Learned

By Jann Bach, Fountain, CO

I am new to sheep husbandry. I just purchased a small flock of 10 American Blackbelly Sheep. I look forward to learning a lot about my new flock of sheep. I spent the morning separating my young rams from the main flock and found that there is a lot I don't know. I thought I would share my thoughts on some of it. I bet you have all been at this point and can appreciate my position.

1. When one sheep runs, they all run.
2. Calm quiet sheep in a small confined area, all getting along well, suddenly become independent, testosterone-filled hellions once liberated.



Jann's new flock of American Blackbelly and Tibetan Mastiff Spudgie

3. When not confined, boy sheep fight. With everyone. And if it isn't enough to fight with the other boys and the girls, a wooden box will do just fine.
4. It is not easy to separate sheep. I have a new admiration for sheep dogs.
5. No makeshift barrier is too tough for a sheep to tear down if he is determined enough.
6. See lesson #1. It is the true meaning of life.
7. If one sheep comes, they all come.
8. One person is almost too few to separate three sheep from the flock.

9. A portable panel is worth two humans.
10. I can out-muscle three young rams, but not by much.
11. Sometimes an open door is much scarier than being squished in a very small space.
12. When sheep are really worried, they lie down.
13. I cannot move a reclining sheep.
14. In retrospect I now understand why shepherds have "crooks."
15. Patience is a virtue.
16. It takes about two hours to separate three rams from the flock of 10 and get them into a stall on the other side of the barn.
17. This is still easier than working with Yaks!
18. I need a really good breakfast. I think lamb chops are on the menu. 🌿

Results of the 2013 Annual Meeting Election

The 2013 Annual Meeting convened by teleconference on November 13, and ballots were mailed after the meeting to elect the 2014 Board of Directors.

The slate of candidates submitted by the BBSAI Nominating Committee was approved by majority vote.

The following members will make up the 2014 Board of Directors:

- Eileen Breedlove
- Carol Elkins
- Sandra Hession
- Nancy Johnson
- Patrick Kahn

Thanks everyone for taking the time to return your ballot! We had a great response.

New BBSAI Members

Jann Bach	Fountain, CO
Kristi and Jeff Burke	Rochelle, VA
Maggie Cobb	Dunnellon, FL
David Durocher	Muldoon, TX
Calvin D. Ferguson	Locust Fork, AL
Ann and Ted Green	Krum, TX

In Memoriam—Mary Swindell—April 11, 1951 - October 11, 2013

Cobden, IL—Mary Louise Swindell, 62, died peacefully at her home in rural Cobden, Illinois on Friday, October 11, 2013, surrounded by her loving family and caregivers.

Born April 11, 1951 in Carbondale, Mary was the daughter of Joe Wilbur and Bettye June Swindell who preceded her in death.

Surviving are three siblings: Joe (Kathy) Swindell of Carbondale; Dick (Sherry) Opp of Las Vegas; Betsy Swindell Hicks of Ocala, Florida, and many cousins.

Mary had fond memories of her childhood years, living in a 10-room apartment on North Illinois Ave. above Swindell Motors, which was owned by her father. In later years after the family moved to Sycamore St., family gatherings always included reminiscing about holidays or amusing incidents that happened at "the apartment."

In the early years of Mary's working career, she served the City of Carbondale's Code Enforcement Division. After receiving a master's degree from the School of Music, Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC), she taught band and chorus for 5 years at Giant City



School. Mary later changed careers when she completed a master's degree in Accountancy at SIUC and was hired by the university. For 28 years, she served in various managerial and financial positions at SIUC, becoming well-known throughout campus. In 2009, she retired as Business Manager in the Dean's Office, College of Liberal Arts.

During the past thirteen years, Mary owned and operated Bellwether Farm where she became a leading breeder of Barbados Blackbelly sheep. Along with her five border collies, she hosted herding clinics with nationally-known instructors who drew students and dogs from

across the country. She served as both Secretary and Treasurer on the Board of Directors of the Barbados Blackbelly Sheep Association International (BBSAI). For the past seven years, Mary held the Office of Registrar, making her permanent mark on the Association by developing BBSAI registration policies and standards.

A love of animals, as well as Mary's passion for Bellwether Farm, was evident in the number of animals she cared for which included border collies, sheep, cats, geese, chickens, and ducks.

Mary's many hobbies included, quilting, crocheting, and she made intricate doilies and colorful hats. During the time that she was undergoing treatments for her illness, she would present hats as gifts to other women who were battling the same disease.

Mary was musically talented and capable of playing several instruments, including piano, flute, guitar, and recorder. Gathering with friends to sing and play music was one of her favorite pastimes.

(Reprinted from G Meredith Funeral Home obituaries)

Ask the BBSAI

Questions sent to info@blackbellysheep.org are answered by BBSAI Registrar Eileen Breedlove.

Q: Help! My rams broke through the fence and got to the ewes. What do I do now?

A: I've heard of several situations recently where breeders had a ram break into their ewe flock resulting in an unplanned and unwanted breeding of their ewes. In some situations, it was because the breeding would result in lambs being born in the height of winter, which is usually something to be avoided. In others, the breeder didn't know for sure which ram did the breeding; a fence went down and it was a veritable free-for-all.

These breeders have mentioned a couple of solutions: one plans to pay for genetic paternity testing on the multiple rams that got loose. Another plans to simply sell the resulting lambs as either pets or slaughter lambs because it would be very difficult to register them without knowing for sure who the sire was.

For the breeder stuck with winter lambing, and for anyone wishing that their ewes hadn't been bred when they were, a simple injection of Lutalyse® within 10-20 days after breeding will cause the ewe to flush any fertilized eggs and start estrous. It doesn't work all of the time, but it is worth considering as an alternative to unwanted/unregisterable/untimely lambs.

It takes about 9-10 days for a functional corpus luteum to develop after breeding. The Lutalyse destroys the corpus luteum. Lutalyse is *fairly*

effective at terminating pregnancy in ewes between days 10 and 50. After 50 days the pregnancy is maintained primarily by the placenta (not the ovaries like many other species) and Lutalyse will likely not work. This all depends on the number of fetuses.



You will need to give each ewe a 2cc dose given intramuscular (IM), not subcutaneous (SQ or SC). A bottle of Lutalyse sufficient for 15 ewes will cost under \$20.

Q: My in-laws brought home a black bellied sheep as a companion for my horses, but I don't know anything about sheep. It gets really cold here in Washington, and I'd like to know what I need to do for the sheep to keep her warm when it snows bad (we have 2 ft now) and what to do when it gets hot out. She won't use the shelter and stays by the horses at all times.

A: Sheep hate to be alone, and they do best if they have at least one other sheep living with them. But if you are not able to get another sheep, at least your blackbelly sheep has the horses for companionship. Sheep and horses are flocking or herding animals, and they seek the safety of their flock (or herd). So your blackbelly sheep will probably be happiest staying close to the horses for protection and companionship. Most horses befriend sheep just fine. But keep an eye on them to make sure that particular horses are not harassing your sheep, because occasionally an individual horse and sheep do not get along.

The most important thing to keep in mind is that sheep are prey animals, and they are subject to predation by coyotes, cougars, neighborhood dogs, and other medium- to large-sized predator animals that would normally not bother horses. Sheep also can slip through fencing that horses and cattle might not go through. So keep in mind that if coyote or other predators have been a problem in your area, your blackbelly sheep may not be safe from these. But often when blackbelly sheep are kept with cattle or horses, their cattle and horse "friends" will have a tendency to deter predators from coming near, which is helpful.

As for shelter from winter storms, if you have a shelter for the horses and if they go in it whenever the weather turns bad, your sheep will probably go in too, just to be close to his "friends." These blackbelly sheep are very hardy and will probably be just fine during the winter as long as the horses are fine. Blackbelly sheep can jump and leap over the snow and will be OK even if the snow is 1 or 2 ft deep.

However, their diets are important. They must always have access to dry hay and fresh water during the winter. And they also need a sheep mineral block (or granulated minerals). These minerals are especially formulated for sheep and goats and contain selenium (a necessary nutrient) plus other important minerals and salt. But it does NOT contain much copper, which can be extremely toxic to sheep in large quantities. Mineral supplements containing copper (which are common cattle mineral supplements) are NOT suitable for sheep. Consult your local farm

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Ask the BBSAI

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supply to see if you can get sheep and goat blocks or granulated sheep or goat minerals. Blackbelly sheep also like to have access to a regular white salt block.

Blackbelly sheep do best on a high-fiber, low-carb diet, so it is best if most of their diet is forage (grass in the summer and hay in the winter). They also can use a small amount of grain during the coldest months for the calories (heat) it provides. Almost any grain is fine (shelled or cracked corn, or a general-purpose all-stock feed) as long as it isn't too rich.

Be sure not to feed too much, because sheep can bloat from too much grain. Bloat is a dangerous and sometimes deadly condition where gases build up to toxic levels in their stomachs. A daily diet of 1/4 lb grain per sheep is plenty during the winter months. If you have mild temperatures during the winter, you may not need any grain at all. Monitor your sheep. If he appears in good weight, he may not need grain at all during the winter. If the temperatures get very cold after winter gets into full swing, you may want to start feeding him a little grain each day. Feed him separately from the horses if possible, so that he doesn't get more than he's supposed to. It shouldn't be hard to lure him in as you shake his grain in a little pan to coax him in. If you feed him at the same time each day, it will be good for his system, and also will teach him to come to you when you show up!

Blackbelly sheep are fairly independent and rather shy, but they can be trained to come to you if you are patient and if you have a little reward, such as their daily grain, or a treat such as a carrot for them.



BRRRR! It's cold outside!

There are many wonderful articles in past issues of the BBSAI quarterly newsletter. These past issues are available free of charge on the BBSAI web site at <http://www.blackbellysheep.org>. There are also wonderful photographs and articles about raising Barbados Blackbelly sheep (the polled breed) and American Blackbelly sheep (the horned

breed) on that same web site, on the "About the Sheep" page. You can also read the official breed standards for both breeds and perhaps decide whether you have an American Blackbelly (AB) sheep, or a Barbados Blackbelly (BB) sheep. Furthermore, you may want to look on the web sites of some of our members on the "Breeder Directory" page for even more great photos and information. Some of our members have particularly extensive web sites with lots of good links to great information about raising sheep.

Q: One of my rams lost its ear tag that the previous owner had inserted. This was the sheep's only ID. Do I need to notify someone or just replace it with one of mine?

A: All you need to do is replace the tag with one of your own. Make sure to note in your records both the lost tag number and the new number so that you can trace back. ❄️

BBSAI Board Votes

09/25/2013	Voted to change the Associate membership type by lowering the dues to \$15 and not allowing sheep registration. This change is effective immediately, but current Associate members may register sheep through the remainder of the membership year (until June 30, 2014). (5 yes, 0 no) Passed
10/30/2013	Voted to accept proposed editorial revisions to the by-laws and standing rules to make grammar and capitalization consistent throughout the document and to correct references to "Secretary" that should now refer to "Registrar" because the Secretary and Treasurer positions were separated in 2010. (5 yes, 0 no) Passed

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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Barbados Blackbelly Sheep on Stamps



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