



Raising sheep the EASY way!

Barbados Blackbelly Sheep Association International

# Blackbelly Banner

## Chinese Year of the Sheep

By Tiana Franklin, BBSAI member, Santa Rosa, CA

We at Stomp & Steer Ranch were honored with the privilege of walking our American Blackbelly Ram in the Chinese Lunar New Year parade in San Francisco on February 19th. The Chinese New Year is a time for great celebration and is full of traditions. For instance, one lights firecrackers to frighten off evil spirits; gives money in red envelopes for good luck;

and it's a special time to honor your elders. This Lunar New Year is the year of the ram/sheep/goat. English translationists debate whether it's actually the year of the ram or goat, but the Chinese character yang is the same for both and for any other horned animal. "Legend has it that in ancient times, Buddha asked all the animals to meet him on Chinese New Year.



Twelve came, and Buddha named a year after each one. He announced that the people born in each animal's year would have some of that animal's personality."<sup>a/</sup> The sheep is regarded as tasteful, crafty, warm, elegant, charming, intuitive, sensitive, and calm.

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Tiana Franklin and David Engstrom walk their ram Shooter in the Chinese Lunar New Year Parade

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## Year of the Sheep

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Our family joined hundreds of people gathered at the Hilton Hotel in San Francisco's Chinatown to usher in the Year of the Ram and to say goodbye to the Year of the Horse. The mini-parade kicked off two weeks of festivities, ending with the big parade on March 7. Parade organizer Doris Grover said, "The live animal really signifies that we really believe—instead of bringing just a stuffed animal—that this is what we worship." Many people said that touching the ram's horns brings good luck. Three rams were included in the parade because 3 is considered a lucky number this year. The color red is a sign of good luck and prosperity. As you can tell, everything has a reason behind it.

We truly felt the great sense of tradition that everyone had for every aspect of this event. This year's festivities included Lion Dance by Asian Peace Officers'

Lion Dance Team, Golden Dragon and Water Snake Dance by Community Youth Center, and singing by the Children's Choir from Chinatown Community Children's Center along with drummers and a special lucky ribbon that was placed around each ram's neck by Mayor Ed Lee.

We consider ourselves very lucky and honored to be a part of this unique experience. We learned a lot about a culture's traditions that we were unaware of. We met some great people, and we were able to teach a lot of people about the amazing American Blackbelly breed. We only wish we could have stayed longer and spent more time with each individual person.

One lesson I learned from this is that breeding for good temperament is as important as any of the other qualities. I was absolutely thrilled with how well mannered Shooter

was. He was a true gentleman that made a lot of fans that day. As soon as we brought him out of the trailer he was the center of attention. Everyone wanted to pet him, touch his horns, and take pictures with him.

Shooter became a little "ramy" when he saw the other two rams in the parade, but settled in after awhile. There were a lot of fire crackers, drums, and dancing dragons, and he just took it all in. When the mayor put a necklace thing around his neck we were surrounded by cameras and he was very well mannered. During the mayor's speech, Shooter had a little girl massaging his ears the whole time. Once the speech was over, we went back to the trailers and were once again surrounded by people wanting pictures with the rams. Shooter was quite exhausted by the whole thing. ✨

at <http://www.infoplease.com/spot/chinese-newyear1.html>



Comparing necklaces? (Most definitely NOT!)

## Using Round Bale Feeders

By Jane Anderlini, BBSAI member,  
Prince George, BC

One of the sheep-raising adventures we've been having over the years has been our never-ending journey toward the perfect hay feeder for round bales. We have American Blackbelly and Katahdin/KatahdinX sheep. The two flocks are often together, so we need a feeder that works equally well for both breeds and also works for ewes, rams, and lambs of all ages/sizes.

Our Blackbellies are smaller than the Katahdins and have been strong supporters of testing all new designs for us. They've approached each as a challenge, exploring their top five questions:

1. Can I get inside the feeder?
2. Can I get out once I've been in and have a full tummy?
3. Can I get on top of the bale to play 'King of the Bale'?
4. Can I pull hay onto the ground to waste it?
5. And...what about ram horns?

In this article, we display some of the feeders we're currently using. Unfortunately, most of the sheep in the pictures are not Blackbellies, but the Blackbelly sheep use the same designs—they just never cooperate for photo 'ops' when we need them to!

### Square Wood Feeder

American Blackbelly ram horns can prevent them from eating adequately from most hay feeders. The idea behind this feeder was to give rams good access to hay. When the bale is full and above the short sides, the hay is easily accessed. As the hay moves down, the rams lift their heads over the bars and down into the bottom of the feeder. They very quickly figured out how to use the feeder.



Square Wood Feeder—Vertical Bars

This design does make climbing on and in it quite easy for lambs of all sizes. Since the sides are low, the Blackbellies can easily jump out once they're in (if their tummies expand after eating). We've found some waste with new bales since the hay is above the tops of the bars and the sheep drag hay off the top. Once the bale is partially eaten, there's little waste. It's a perfect feeder for adult rams with horns. Slabs from square bales stay below the tops of the sides with less waste than from a full round bale, making it effective for hand feeding.

We made this square wood feeder with vertical 2" x 8" bars, spaced 8" apart. Each side is 4.5' and the height is 2.5' (low enough for rams to get their horns over the bars). Bales are dropped into this feeder using a tractor with a bale fork. 4' round bales fit in it easily.

### Square Metal Feeder

After the sheep had tested the square wood feeder, we made a metal one using the same basic design with the addition of bolts



Square Metal Feeder—Vertical Bars

in the corners that are easy to remove, making it quick to take apart to store or move. The metal feeder is easier to clean and, with the bars being narrower, potentially allows for more heads to be in the manger at the same time.

The overall dimensions are the same as the square wood feeder (4.5' long sides; 2.5' high), with bars of 1" metal tubing welded together.

### Rectangular Metal Feeder

Again, with the horns of American Blackbelly rams in mind, we made this feeder for the season when rams and ewes are together for breeding and using the same feeder. With horizontal bars, a ram can get more of his head into the feeder than he can through vertical bars.



Rectangular Metal Feeder—Horizontal Bars

Apart from very small lambs that can go in and out with ease, we've found sheep stay out of feeders with horizontal bars—they can't walk through the spaces, so the hay stays cleaner. It does seem easier for hay to be pulled out of the horizontal bars, however, so some sheep have wasted more than we'd like to see.

We welded 1.25" metal tubing for three sides of this feeder. It's 8' long, 4.5' wide, and 4' high. We mounted a 4' high ramp (up 1' from the bottom) that can also be

## Using a Stanchion to Feed a Rejected Lamb

By Carol Elkins

When a ewe rejects her newborn lamb, there are several things that you can do to “persuade” her to change her mind before you opt to start bottle-feeding the lamb with expensive milk replacer. One of the most successful solutions is to use a head gate (stanchion) to hold the ewe’s head while her lamb nurses.

### Benefits of Using a Stanchion

It is critical that a newborn lamb receives colostrum during the first 24 hours of life to ensure that it has sufficient antibodies to resist infection. At birth, the lamb does not carry any antibodies, and the colostrum provides the antibodies until the lamb is able to manufacture its own. A rejected lamb can be allowed to nurse that “first milk” if you restrain the ewe in a stanchion.

For the first few days after lambing, a ewe recognizes her lamb by sense of smell. Amniotic fluids stimulate the ewe to lick and clean the lamb. As the lamb begins to digest the ewe’s milk, the lamb’s feces and urine will take on what the ewe perceives to be “her lamb” smell. The sooner you can get a ewe’s milk into her lamb, the sooner she will be tempted to accept him as her own. Restraining the ewe in a stanchion prevents the ewe from butting the lamb or moving away from him to prevent him from nursing.

### Stanchion Options

You can purchase a metal stanchion for around \$150 from companies that sell goat and sheep supplies. Avoid a stanchion built on a stand (a milking stanchion) because it prevents the ewe from lying down. The ewe may need to be restrained in a stanchion for long periods of time, even days, so it is important that the stanchion be constructed to allow her to lie down and

comfortably eat. Alternatively, you can build a quick stanchion out of a few pieces of scrap 2 x 4 and a couple of bolts.

### Before You Use a Stanchion

One reason the ewe may be rejecting her lamb (other than the fact that she is young or can’t count) is that her teats may be tender or sore. Be sure to check them; milk both sides to be sure there is good milk and no signs of mastitis, sores, or infections that could be causing her pain. Also check the lamb’s teeth. If they are pointed or overly sharp, nursing may hurt the ewe’s teats. If necessary, file down the top edges of the lamb’s front teeth with a small file.

### Building a Stanchion

A stanchion works by having one stationary vertical slat and a second vertical slat that opens and closes around the sheep’s neck, pivoting on a bolt at the base and locking with another bolt at the top.

Look around your barn and corral to see if you can build a stanchion INTO an existing pen or wooden stable divider. This will provide stability and make it more convenient to house the ewe and lamb(s).

When I decided to construct a couple of lambing jugs inside my sheep shed, I took the opportunity to build a stanchion into the wooden 2 x 6 slats of one of the jugs.

The design is simple: a top casing and bottom casing hold a stationary vertical slat on the right and left sides. A middle slat with a convenient handle (optional) pivots on a bolt extending through both sides of the bottom casing. Drill as many locking holes as required to adjust the width of the opening between the stationary slat and the pivoting slat, and insert an eye bolt or long nail through a hole to provide the outer stop for the pivoting slat.

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Vertical pivoting slat opens and closes against a stationary slat

## Round Bale Feeders

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flipped up to form a solid end. We leave the ramp up and drop 4' round bales in with a tractor and bale fork; or when we use it as a fence-line feeder, the ramp stays down and we push bales into it. The horizontal bars are 8" apart for the two bottom spaces and 11" apart for the top space. The whole feeder is bolted together for easy dismantling.

### Round Metal Feeder

We bought this feeder second-hand and don't know the manufacturer name. It works well for 4' round bales. American Blackbelly rams have more difficulty eating hay from this

design, but it works well for all others. We've found Blackbelly lambs do go through the bars even though they're on a slant. They climb on top of the hay to take flying leaps off the top of the bale!



Round Metal Feeder—Slanted Bars

The round feeder is 5.5' diameter and 3' high with slanted bars of ½" round tubing spaced 6" apart. Two metal rods join the halves. These rods can be removed easily, and the two main pieces moved to a new location by hand. We haven't noticed much difference between these slanted bars and vertical bars in terms of waste. ❖

## Stanchion

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Sheep can lie down, eat, and drink while in the stanchion

### Using the Stanchion

Put the ewe's head through the stanchion and lock in its place. Place a tub of hay and a bucket of water just under her head so she can always eat and drink. The stanchion bars should be tight enough so that she cannot pull her head out, but she should be able to move her head upwards and downwards to eat, drink, and (if needed) change to a lying down position. Keep a watch on whether the lambs are getting milk from her. She will try to kick them at first with her back legs, and they may be discouraged at first.

Don't let her out of the stanchion unless her lambs are fully nursing and she is not trying to prevent them from nursing. This may take 3 to 5 days or sometimes as long as 2 weeks. Don't feel sorry for her and let her out too soon. More time, rather than less time, is better. Provide fresh bedding under where she is standing so that she has a clean place to lie down if she chooses. When you finally release the ewe from the stanchion, keep her and the lambs in a lambing jug for a few more days to make sure she has really bonded with them.

Bottle feeding lambs to weaning is a huge task that I try to avoid if possible. The stanchion gate has worked for me many times, turning "psycho" mothers into dedicated moms who support and nurse their lambs fully up to weaning age. ❖

# Pregnancy Toxemia in Ewes

By: Dr. Meredith Johns  
Reprinted from Pipestone Sheep & Goat Newsletter, January 2015

As lambing season approaches, it is important to review a condition that can cause considerable economic loss. Pregnancy toxemia is also known as lambing sickness, twin-lamb disease, pregnancy disease and ketosis. This often fatal disease occurs during the last month of pregnancy and is the most commonly occurring metabolic disease of sheep and goats. The good news is, that with careful attention, pregnancy toxemia can be prevented.

## Cause

Pregnancy toxemia most commonly occurs in ewes pregnant with twins or triplets. The underlying cause is hypoglycemia (low blood sugar). Unlike other species, sheep and other ruminants do not absorb much glucose from their diet. The glucose they need for brain and muscle function must be made in the liver from other compounds. The growing fetuses also require large amounts of glucose, further stressing the ewe's metabolism. If the ewe is under-conditioned and/or underfed, they are more at risk. If the ewe is of adequate condition, but becomes stressed or goes without feed for whatever reason, they are also at greater risk.

## Symptoms

Early symptoms of pregnancy toxemia include isolation from the flock, going off feed, becoming unsteady, and having small fecal pellets and a dull appearance. As the disease progresses, symptoms include impaired vision, blindness, convulsions, teeth grinding and labored breathing. Severe cases progress to coma, and death occurs about 80% of the time.

## Diagnosis

Most of the time, the above symptoms in a late pregnant ewe are enough to make a diagnosis and start treatment. Late pregnant ewes who go off feed can be tested for ketones in a urine sample. Test strips are available that will turn purple if ketones are present in the urine- indicating ketosis/pregnancy toxemia. If the ewe is down and unable to get up, the prognosis is grave.

## Treatment

In mild cases where the ewe is still eating, feeding concentrates may be sufficient to reverse the condition. Oral propylene glycol or corn syrup can be used for quick sources of energy. The dose of propylene glycol is 60-200 mL given three times daily. An oral electrolyte solution can be added at a rate of three-four liters per day. In more severe cases, intravenous dextrose can be used to correct low blood sugar. Intravenous fluids may be necessary for treatment of severe dehydration. If it is suspected that the fetus may have died, antibiotics should be used.

If the ewe's condition does not improve with medical management, induction of lambing or a caesarian section may be done in an attempt to save the ewe. If the animal is still responsive, and at least day 139 of pregnancy, lambing can be induced with 20-25 mg of dexamethasone. Induction will take approximately 48 hours, which is too long for the severely affected ewe. In those cases, caesarian is the only remaining option.

## Prevention

Studies show that late-pregnant ewes require about 50% more feed with a single lamb and about 75% more feed if carrying twins. An appropriate amount of protein and energy needs to be supplied without causing grain overload. A high quality supply of forage should be supplemented with one pound of grain per ewe daily during the last four to six weeks of pregnancy. It is important to feed yearlings separately to minimize competition. Grain should be introduced gradually with ample space at the feeder.

Editors Comment: Ewes that are allowed to become fat in fall are more susceptible. Some work done in Israel showed banamine daily to be more effective than conventional treatment.

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## Simplified Treatment for Hoof Rot

By Joanne Vaughn, BBSAI member,  
Rochester NY

I have read many emails and articles containing valuable information about how to treat hoof rot. I thought I should share my experience because it provides an alternative approach that was successful.

Our ram lamb Gibbs arrived in late fall at a time when we were unable to isolate a newbie from the flock. Within one hoof-trimming cycle, he had developed a severe infection in one hoof. We were able to treat and recover this hoof during our most cold, muddy, wet season in winter/early spring. Foot baths as described in many articles would have been difficult due to temperatures/conditions. In addition we were unable to isolate him, and the infection could have spread to others in the flock and contaminated our soil.

Simply, once a week we cleaned, packed, and taped his foot and did an examination of his other feet. That was it!

### Details

1. Remove tape and packing from previous week.
2. Wash foot with antiseptic solution.
3. Trim any necrotic tissue.
4. Pack foot with No Thrush® (equine hoof product). It's a mixture of clay, copper salts, diatomaceous earth, and oregano.



Footrot on Joanne's ram Gibbs

5. Cover No Thrush with a large gauze pad on the bottom of hoof.
6. Put a latex exam glove over it and tape at pastern.
7. Using silver duct tape, wrap latex glove until a "bootie" is formed that goes up the leg. Ours had to go up about 4 inches because of the boot-sucking mud we have. Make sure every edge of the duct tape overlaps another edge of duct tape. When you are done, it should look like a silver hoof and be smooth on the outside to shed mud and snow. This procedure kept the sheep's hoof dry in boot-sucking mud.

### Advantages

1. This keeps the foot clean and dry all week in 4" or more of mud or in 1' to 2' of snow.
2. It keeps the medication powder in place 24/7, thereby decreasing recovery time.
3. It prevents the soil from coming in contact with the infection site and infecting the paddock and the rest of the flock.

We are so satisfied with how easy this was and we would use this method any time of the year. I would want to keep those organisms from avoidable dispersal.

In addition I would say that we could see a visible and immediate change in the posture of the ram lamb after his foot was wrapped. So we believe that it gave him almost instant pain relief and protected a sore area from constant abrasion and damage from stones in the mud. ❄️



### New BBSAI Members

Pete and Cindy Fannin	Caroline, WI
Jim Isbell	Fayetteville AR
Cheryl Kirkpatrick	Quartz Hill, CA
Victor Mancebo	Miami, FL
Hector Mejia	San Juan, PR
Mike Peters	Llano, TX
Joanne Vaughn	Rochester, NY
Nathan White	Normangee, TX

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.

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

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## Youth Activities

Joan Eubank in Florida continues to work with 4H and FFA students. They did very well this year in their shows.



Joan Eubank, Maddie Shannon, Glory Be

Maddie Shannon and her 3-year-old ewe Glory Be placed First in their class and Reserve Grand Champion in their division.

Will Ward and his 1-year-old ewe Maybelline placed fourth in their class and received a ribbon for showmanship.

Hanna Carpenter and her 1-year-old ewe Zoe placed fifth in their class, received a ribbon for showmanship, and came in second for the obstacle course. (There were about 35 participants in the obstacle course.)

Emma Jordan and her 1-year-old ewe Cherokee placed third in their class, ninth in the obstacle course, and received a ribbon for showmanship.



Barbados Blackbelly winners

Joan is very proud of these students and the work they have done with their sheep. ❁

## Ask the BBSAI

**Q:** What kind of tags do my sheep need in order to be registered?

**A:** To register your sheep, you must have some sort of ID tag in each animal's ear. You may use either the USDA scrapie tags or regular farm tags or both. The ear tag number must be reported on your BBSAI sheep registration application form.

Keep in mind that the USDA requires that you get a farm premise ID number and that any sheep moved off your property must have a USDA scrapie tag in its ear. So it is a good idea to sign up for the scrapie tags soon, so that you'll have a supply on hand. The USDA scrapie tags are free. I suggest ordering a good quantity (i.e., 50-100 tags) so that you don't have to do it again soon.

Here are some tag suppliers:

- Jeffers Livestock Equipment <http://jefferslivestock.com/>
- Midstates Wool Growers Association <http://www.midstateswoolgrowers.com/>
- NASCO Farm and Ranch Equipment <http://www.enasco.com/farmandranch/>
- Premier Equipment Company <http://www.premier1supplies.com/>

To get your farm premise ID and your USDA scrapie tags, contact your USDA State Office. To do this, go to the USDA web site at <http://tinyurl.com/lepikrm>. Call the 1-866-USDA-TAG (866-873-2824) phone number shown on that page to be connected to your local Veterinary Services Area Office or State Office. Once connected, request that a premises identification number and Flock ID be assigned to your flock. You can view a list of state veterinary offices at [http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal\\_health/downloads/vs\\_poc.pdf](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/downloads/vs_poc.pdf)