



Raising sheep the EASY way!

Barbados Blackbelly Sheep Association International

Blackbelly Banner

Lambing—Supplies, Practices, and Births on Our British Columbia Sheep Farm

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

For us, January is when we refresh the lambing and medical supplies that we'll need for the year. Today, it's minus 25 C° outside and the north wind is blowing fresh snow into drifts that we'll be shovelling our way through before nightfall. It seems untimely to be thinking about lambs now since we lamb in the spring, but this gives us ample time to receive items that have to be ordered.

Our lambing supplies are kept in caddies and tubs. They're easy to pack around and everything stays clean. Following are the contents of kits we put together for lambing season:

Pocket Lambing Essentials—for three months, I have these items in my pockets: paper towels, disposable gloves, nasal syringe (infant), notepad/pencil to keep track of the time (keeping notes really helps if a vet is called in and electronic devices can get goopy!).



Just born, this lamb is still covered in birth fluids, already lifting his head beginning the bonding process with his mother. The ewe will lick the fluid until the lamb is clean, while he works at standing up then finding the udder.

Assisted Delivery Kit—disposable surgical gloves, disposable arm gloves (these go up to shoulder), paper towels, large garbage bags (can be slipped under ewe for a clean surface), flashlight, rags and towels, watch/clock, paper, pencils, surgical lubricant, iodine (for use with animals), alcohol (for cleaning instruments, containers), prolapse truss, lamb puller.

Warm-up Kit Essentials—old wool sweaters and blankets, towel, hot water bottle, hair dryer

with extension cord. We keep all this in a tub that can be dumped out and used for submerging a cold lamb in warm water.

Newborn Lambing Kit Essentials—iodine (navel dip), disposable surgical gloves, scissors, navel clamps, cotton balls, paper towels, small metal cups or disposable mouthwash-size cups for iodine, clipboard with chart for birth weights, or a recording device. We have a baby scale nearby.

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Twin coming! Another newborn lamb is being licked by the ewe. Hanging under the ewe's tail is a dark-colored fluid ball; this is the first lamb's afterbirth (placenta) starting to move out. The clearer ball of fluid above it and closer to the ewe's tail is the beginning of the birth of the second twin.



These twin ewe lambs are almost dry. The ewe is still licking them, and they've both had a taste of milk. The afterbirths from both lambs can be seen hanging from the ewe.

Lamb Feeding Kit Essentials—

feeding tube, syringes to attach to tube, eye dropper, baby bottles with nipples (some with large holes), regular lamb bottles and nipples, colostrum powder (can be pre-made and frozen at half strength then diluted quickly with hot water), and new for this year's lambing season for us is a milk pump to make it easier to obtain colostrum from the lamb's mother.

Based on dates our lambs have arrived in the past, we base the start of our lambing season at 5 months less 5 days from the first contact ewes have with rams. A few weeks prior to lambing, we bring all the ewes that are expected to give birth in the first month up to the lambing barn, where they can choose to be inside or out. From there, they come into lambing pens in the same barn as they get close to delivering (we watch for signs of lambing such as swollen udders, sunken hips, restlessness, and the due dates of any breedings we observed).

Permanent lambing pens in our barn are 6' x 9' (with optional dividers to create two pens 6' x 4.5' in the space). We also have 5' wide light-metal dog kennel panels that join together quickly to make 5' x 10' (or 5' x 5') pens. Blackbellies seem to appreciate the space in the larger pens.

A ewe and her new family stay in the lambing pen for at least four days enjoying 'room service' delivery of food and water. On the fifth day, another pregnant ewe moves into the lambing pen and the ewe/lamb family moves into a group pen, or nursery, with about a dozen other ewe/lamb families. We keep a close watch on the nursery groups for a few weeks before they join a larger group of about

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Typically, after the lambs are clean and their tummies are full of milk, the lambs and the ewe are all tired and snuggle together for a good rest.



Later that day or night, when the lambs are well practiced at drinking whenever they need to and the ewe is back to her usual routine of eating and chewing her cud, the lambs will lay away from the ewe in a safe area—twins and triplets almost always lay touching each other.



This single lamb's mother didn't take any chances and covered her for the first few days whenever she lay down.

How to Make an Inexpensive Emergency Milking Tool

Reprinted from
http://www.tvsp.org/sheep_milker.html

A small flock farmer cannot afford an expensive vacuum machine to milk a little colostrum for a stressed lamb. Milking by hand is hard for many beginning flock owners. A vacuum milker costing hundreds to thousands of dollars is not possible to justify financially.

This is a simple home-made vacuum milker that even a novice farmer can use. This milker will only cost a couple of dollars and make milking easy.

When we wean lambs or have a ewe that lost their lambs, we milk the ewe for colostrum or milk to help in the current lambing season or another year. The saved and frozen milk are an investment that maximizes next year lamb crop.



1. Purchase a syringe to fit the size of the animal you are milking. 50 mL syringes are good for sheep and goats. Smaller syringes would be good for cats and dogs.



2. Disassemble your syringe.



3. Cut the end off of the syringe.



4. Use a knife to smooth the inside edge of the tube so the plunger can be inserted into the tube from the top.



5. You now have a new sheep vacuum milker for less than \$2.00. Simply place the vacuum milker over the animal's teat and seat softly against the skin. Now pull back slowly on the plunger and watch the milk flow.

Caution: Overuse of vacuum can damage the ewe's teat.

New Registration Policies and Fees

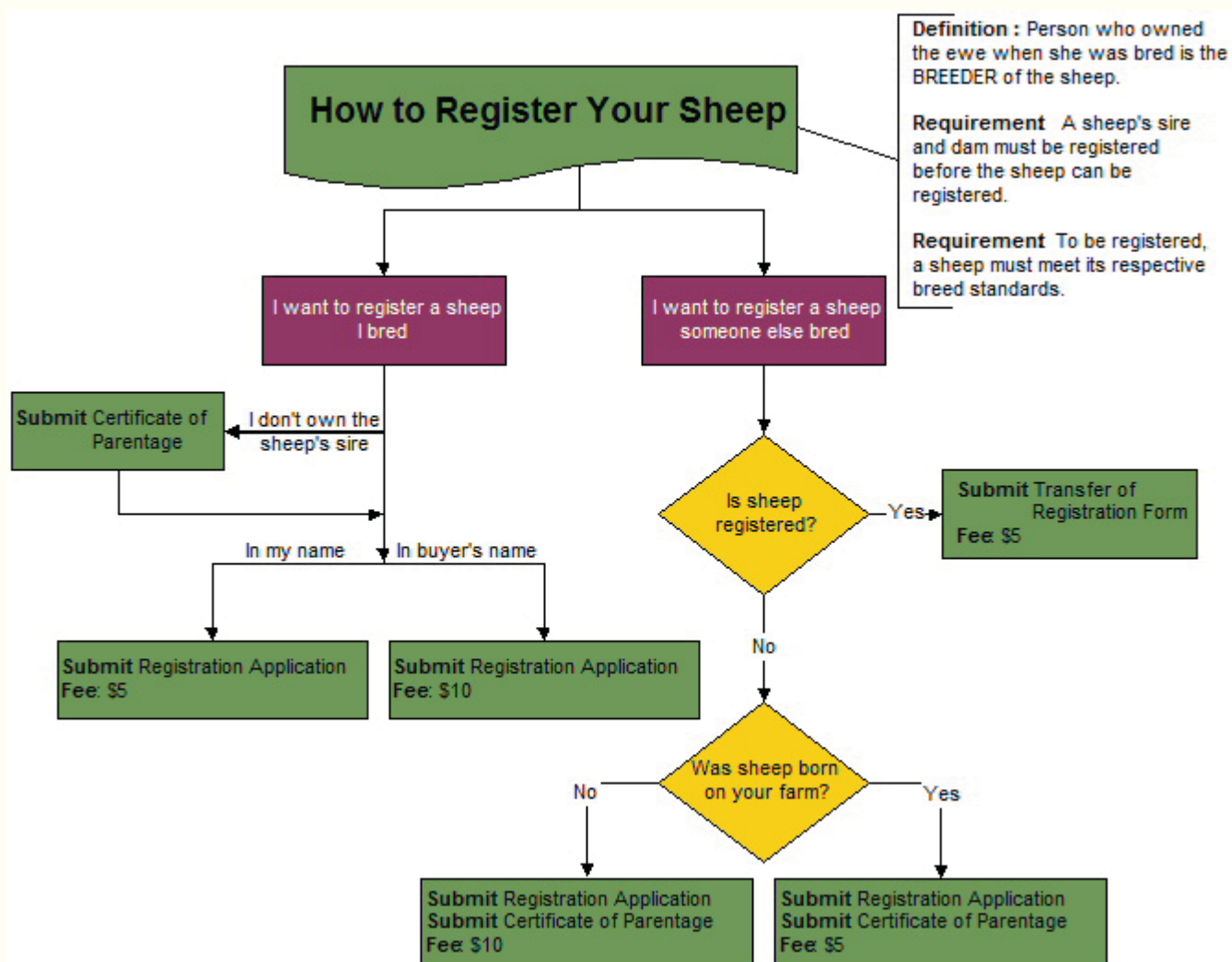
The BBSAI Board of Directors has revised the fee structure for registering sheep and has made it easier to understand BBSAI's registration policies. A new flow chart at <http://www.blackbellysheep.org/registration> helps members determine which forms to submit for a number of different situations and how much the registration fee will be.

The BBSAI increased the registration fee to \$10 for sheep being

registered by other than the sheep's breeder. In other words, if a BBSAI member sells you an unregistered sheep, you will pay \$10 to register it. Had the BBSAI member registered his sheep before selling it to you, you'd pay only a \$5 Transfer of Registration fee. The BBSAI strongly believes that it is the breeder's responsibility to register ALL breeding sheep before they are sold, and we hope this will encourage breeders to do so.

An exception to this is if you purchase a registered bred ewe and her lambs are born on your farm. In this situation, you'll pay only \$5 to register each lamb. You will still need to pay \$5 to transfer the ewe's registration to your name.

We have updated our Web site to reflect these new policies and designed a helpful flow chart that you can use to learn what forms and fees you must submit.



Examples:

You want to register a sheep that you bred using a registered ram that you borrowed: Follow the arrow on the left side by "I don't own the sheep's sire." You'll submit a Certificate of Parentage, a Registration Application, and \$5.

You want to register a sheep that you bred directly in the name of the buyer: Follow the left side of the flow chart down to the arrowed line that reads "In buyer's name." You'll submit a Registration Application and \$10.

You purchase a registered sheep: Since you aren't the breeder of this sheep, follow the right side of the flow chart. Because you can answer "yes" to "Is sheep registered?" you'll submit a Transfer of Registration Form and \$5.

Sheep Gestation Table



Sheep Gestation Table

based on 147 day gestation period

January Service	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
May / Jun. Delivery	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
February Service	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28			
Jun. / July Delivery	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23			
March Service	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
July / Aug. Delivery	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
April Service	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	
Aug. / Sept. Delivery	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	
May Service	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Sept. / Oct. Delivery	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
June Service	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	
Oct. / Nov. Delivery	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	
July Service	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Nov. / Dec. Delivery	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
August Service	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Dec. / Jan. Delivery	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
September Service	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	
Jan. / Feb. Delivery	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	
October Service	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Feb. / Mar. Delivery	24	25	26	27	28	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
November Service	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	
Mar. / Apr. Delivery	27	28	29	30	31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	
December Service	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Apr. / May Delivery	26	27	28	29	30	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

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Source: <http://www.raisingSheep.net/sheep-gestation-calculator-and-table.html>

Health Check for Newly Purchased Sheep

By Carol Elkins

If you are thinking about purchasing sheep to add to your flock or to form the basis of your new foundation flock, it is important to ensure they are healthy before introducing them to your farm. This article assumes that you are able to inspect the sheep on the seller's farm before you purchase them.

If you can't examine the sheep at the seller's farm, then it is important you do so as soon as you can after unloading the sheep at your farm. If you are purchasing sheep from out of state, make sure that the inspecting veterinarian includes these checks as part of issuing the sheep's health certificate, which is required for interstate transport of sheep.

Check each sheep's...	for signs of...
feet	foot rot or scald. Watch the sheep walk around the pen and note any limping. Inspect the hooves for failure to trim. This is easily rectified but will tell you a lot about the seller's attention to his animals' health.
udder (if a ewe)	hardbag or mastitis. Make sure udder is soft, supple, and healthy.
testicles and sheath (if a ram)	cryptorchidism (only one descended testicle) or "pizzle rot," which is the result of acidic urine, often the result of a diet too high in protein, which creates sores at the prepuce opening.
nose	discharge (due to pneumonia or other upper respiratory infections)
mouth	soremouth (a contagious sore on the lip or other soft muzzle areas close to the mouth)
eyes	pinkeye
neck	lesions or abscesses
overall body	injuries
skin	hair loss, indicating external parasites (mites, keds, lice)

It is always a good idea to quarantine your new sheep for 10-14 days upon arriving at your farm before you expose them to other sheep or livestock. Many diseases can show up during that time that would not have been evident during a pre-sale examination.

Lambing

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two dozen families with outside access that eventually head out to pasture together. The lambs form bonds with other sheep in these groups that can last forever. (Our Blackbelly flock is small and is integrated with the rest of our flock except during breeding season and when they're in a nursery. As lambing season progresses, we have up to four nurseries going at the same time – the Blackbelly nursery is always the most active!)

In the experiences we've had with our flock, American Blackbelly ewes give birth with ease, have strong maternal instincts, and the lambs are born with superior survival instincts—they're up and drinking almost right away.

For further reading, some of my lambing field notes are shared on my Black Moon Sheep blog at <<http://blackmoonsheep.blogspot.ca/>>

New BBSAI Members

Douglas McCarty	Eugene, OR
Lynn & Lisa Wiley	Easley, SC
Suzanne Wright	Talking Rock, GA
Reuben & Debra Smith	Charles City, VA

Ask the BBSAI

Q: Is there any reason I shouldn't feed my sheep bread? I have a bread outlet store near me and old bread is cheap. I can get 20+ loaves for about \$3.



Could this take the place of grain/feed during the winter? I've given them a little of it and most of them like it somewhat.

A: Most of what I've read indicates that although bread can be given as an occasional treat, bread contains fats that are harmful for sheep if you overdo it. Additionally, although bread is made from grain, the grain is finely ground into flour. When the flour-fine grain particles are ingested by the sheep, their natural gut bacteria will easily and rapidly consume the fine particles, multiply rapidly, and thereby produce large quantities of gas and toxins in the intestines, causing bloat and/ or toxemia.

However, I did find one journal article entitled "The Use of Bakery Wastes in Feedlot Rations for Sheep" (see <http://tinyurl.com/o4owyb6>) that reported favorably on diets made up of 25% and 50% bread.

If it were me, I'd start off with supplementing their diet with the bread, perhaps 25% of it. That will be hard to compute because I don't know the nutritional makeup of say 1 lb of bread versus 1 lb of hay. Watch how they do, and if there are no problems, increase it gradually. But I wouldn't make bread more than 50% of their total diet.

Q: We have an 8-month-old lamb that is anemic; he started with bottle jaw last week and we quickly de-wormed him and gave him Red Cell and electrolytes. Several days later, a 4-month-old ram lamb died. He had shown no symptoms other than not fighting to get to the grain. I haven't wanted to use wormers, but am torn now. I don't want to lose anymore sheep. I had been using Molly's Herbal, but I didn't give it to the lambs, just the not-pregnant ewes. I'm in the southeast and barber pole worms are a serious problem. I may have no other choice than to treat the entire flock.

A: No one wants to let an animal die if there is anything we can do to save them, so I think you are wise to deworm...this time. However, long-term, you might want to get trained on using the FAMACHA system, which compares the color of the mucous lining of the lower eyelid to a color chart. The color chart calibrates the colors to the degree of anemia the animal is experiencing and will clue you in to which sheep need to be dewormed.



Bright red=no anemia, white=almost dead, with a range of colors in between. You treat only those sheep whose level of anemia puts them at risk.

Once you stabilize your flock, then the second thing you should consider doing is culling the sheep that show less tolerance to a worm load. Many breeders believe that globally deworming a flock hides the poor performers and allows their genetics to persist across generations. This ultimately weakens the entire flock's tolerance to a worm load. If everyone allows this to happen, then the entire breed is weakened. These breeders promote targeted deworming and culling and discourage routine, scheduled deworming of the entire flock.

But every shepherd must decide for himself how he wants to manage his flock's health.

Q: What do I need to know to get started with showing my sheep at the fair?

A: I showed my Barbados Blackbelly sheep at the county fair. I knew nothing about it, although I showed dogs for years. My neighboring 4H youngsters volunteered to help me, and I was grateful.

Basically, it is exactly like showing dogs except that you use a halter rather than a lead. You wash and brush the sheep, and make sure hooves are trimmed. You train the sheep to walk on a halter. The judge will want to see the sheep front and rear, and will probably want to see the sheep move. He/she will check testicles on the rams. Judges typically comment on the sheep over a loudspeaker. Although the sheep do not need to be well-trained, the judge won't put up a sheep if he/she can't see it. Multiple people are allowed in the ring to help.

The 4H kids aren't allowed to use halters, so they put one hand under the sheep's jaw and one hand behind the sheep's head to move it. They are also not allowed

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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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July Issue – June 15
October Issue – September 15

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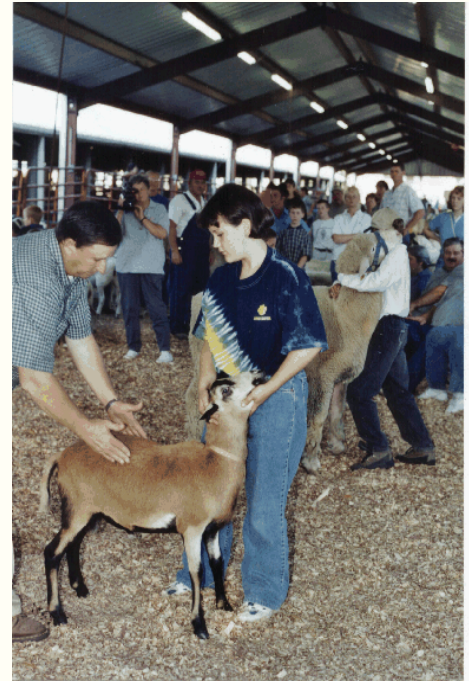
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Ask the BBSAI

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to show intact male animals in 4H (they can show intact male animals in Open, which is what we show in).

We showed in All Other Breeds (meat) and did not have much competition. Ours were the only blackbellies at the fair and there was a fair amount of interest. Since they are meat sheep, it is hard to compete with the Texels, who at 6 months look like our grown rams. I did send in a copy of the breed standard with my entries so the judge would have time to look at it before the fair. We had several classes, but the oldest sheep had to be less than 2 years old. The classes were mostly separated by gender, and were yearling, fall lamb, spring lamb, best pair, young flock (ram lamb and two ewe lambs), flock (yearling ram, two yearling ewes, and two ewe lambs). Sheep had to be entered in a regular class to compete in the group classes, but there was only one entry fee per sheep. Then of course the winners competed for Champion Ram/Ewe and Reserve Champion Ram/Ewe. The premiums were generally money, along with the ribbons. If you enter a certain number of sheep or more, you can get classes just for your breed the following year.



I was surprised that we didn't have to clean up the pens after the fair. We did have to keep them clean during the fair, but we could leave all the straw. Most sheep exhibitors put an enormous amount of straw in the pens at the start, and just kept removing some. We had very nice pens, and I had an extra pen for tack and for me. I was concerned about the effect on the sheep, but they loved it. They came home much friendlier than they were when we left. ❄

Results of the 2014 Annual Meeting Election

The 2014 Annual Meeting convened by teleconference on November 12, and ballots were mailed after the meeting to elect the 2015 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 2015 Board of Directors:

- Eileen Breedlove
- Rita Jean Guill
- Sandra Hession
- Nancy Johnson
- Patrick Kahn

Thanks everyone for taking the time to return your ballot!