



GERALD KRAUS, AMERICAN BLACKBELLY SHEEP

# BBSAI NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2019

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**The Barbados Blackbelly Sheep Association International is a non-profit organization, which has defined the following goals as its corporate mission:**

- Raise, preserve, improve, promote and publish facts pertaining to American Blackbelly (horned) and Barbados Blackbelly (polled) sheep.
- Register and keep on file all records of registrations and transfers of American Blackbelly and Barbados Blackbelly sheep in the United States.
- Support and promote the interests of American Blackbelly and Barbados Blackbelly sheep breeders.
- Work together and exchange information and ideas that will be helpful in raising and preserving American Blackbelly and Barbados Blackbelly sheep.
- Improve the genetics of each generation of sheep, including artificially inseminated sheep.
- Develop better markets.

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## Get Acquainted

Gerald Kraus  
White Lake, WI





Gerald Krause

White Lake, Wisconsin

***When and how did you begin raising American Blackbelly sheep?***

My first experience with American Blackbelly Sheep was the purchase of a wether lamb in 2002. I found out quickly their need for companionship as BoBo the wether immediately adopted Georgie, a Lab mix. They became inseparable, spending time in and out of the house together. Three ewes and a ram were soon added to the flock.

After retiring from the Federal Natural Resources Conservation Service in 2004, the flock increased to about 25 ewes and 3-4 rams, with the total flock including lambs numbering 60-70. A guard llama named Nilla was added in 2004. Nilla enjoyed the sheep and tolerated the lambs using him as a jumping ramp. He also soon learned to enjoy chasing the chickens into the coop at night.

***What animals do you have now?***

Downsizing the past few years has brought the flock to 8-10 ewes and 2-3 rams.

Chickens, ducks, geese, and guineas were a part of the farm as well through the years. Right now we have 80-100 laying hens. Some eggs are sold but most are given to the local food pantry.

***What is your philosophy about breeding your sheep?***

I aim to select for rams meeting the American Blackbelly criteria with medium to wide horns. Efforts have been made to select ewes strongly meeting American Blackbelly criteria for breeding. Both polled and horned ewes are in the flock.

Initially efforts were aimed at having spring lambs. The past several years I breed for both spring and fall lambs to reduce the number of lambing pens needed. Lambs not meeting American Blackbelly criteria are culled as meat sheep or pets to certain buyers. Most of the lambs have been sold as breeding stock to new breeders. Sheep from the farm have been sold to buyers in Missouri, Georgia, Louisiana, Colorado, Montana, Wyoming, North and South Dakota, Minnesota, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, and Wisconsin.

***Tell us about your facilities and land.***

The farm totals 100 acres but the sheep farm is 20 acres. It is made up of about 1/3 woods, 1/3 pasture (4 mini pastures) and 1/3 marsh

with a pond and creek running through it.

I have one main barn dedicated to the flock. I have divided it to separate the rams from the ewes and lambs. The rams get about 1/4 of the building. Both sides have homemade bunk feeders. I also utilize commercial troughs and buckets for grain, salt, minerals, and baking soda. Water is provided in buckets and is changed daily. Major cleaning out of buildings is done at least twice a year (spring and fall). I have installed a power vent with climate controls in the main barn which reduces moisture and temperature related problems both winter and summer.

I have 3 dedicated lambing pens in adjacent buildings and do add up to 6 more temporary pens as needed.

Most of my fencing is 4- 5 foot woven wire. I have begun replacing it with 5 foot chain link. Rams can get horns occasionally caught in woven wire and need to be rescued. I have had rams get caught in each others' horns which is a much more difficult rescue than woven wire.

Trimming hooves is not a favorite chore of mine. I nearly avoid doing so by putting 3/4 inch rock in walkways between buildings. Only rarely do I have to trim a hoof. I think the sheep appreciate not being flipped on their butts

and at my age it reduces the aches and pains felt after trimming a flocks' hooves.

### ***What about management and feeding?***

Quality grass legume hay is the mainstay of the sheep diet. Loose and block salt, mineral, and baking soda are available free choice at all times. Some grain is available year around with increased amounts before breeding and lambing and through the first 3 months after lambing. Grass legume pasture is utilized as available in Wisconsin. Sheep are provided treats of saltine crackers and animal crackers daily (just enough to spoil them). All triplet lambs are provided supplemental bottle feeding.

Newborn lambs are processed soon after birth. Navels are trimmed and treated with an iodine solution. They are given "baby lamb strength" which is mainly a fat solution. They are also given ProBios (a probiotic paste). The baby lamb strength may be used daily for a week on weaker or small lambs. At birth I give them a shot of penicillin and CD/T at a rate of 1 cc per 10 pounds body weight. At 3-4 weeks of age they are given 2 cc CD/T. Rare orphans find they get to spend most of the first 3 months of their lives in diapers sleeping in the house



(often in bed). Stairs become jumping areas and halls become raceways.

All sheep are wormed after the first heavy frost in the fall and in the spring when put on pasture. Formerly drenching was solely used. I now have gone exclusively to injectables. I vary the injectables to reduce worm immunity buildup. All other medical treatment is carried out on an as needed basis.

### ***What climate conditions work for or against you?***

Winters in Wisconsin can create a limitation on outside activity for sheep. I snowplow trails in the pastures so the sheep can enjoy their daily romps in the winter. There is a "deck" on one side of the main building which the sheep enjoy jumping off. I have also built a mound in one of the pastures which is a favorite spot for the animals.

Because we have numerous predators (even with a guard animal), the sheep and chickens are locked up at night. Main sheep predators include coyote and wolves. In addition, the chickens contend with fox, fisher, mink, weasels, raccoon, and

hawks.

### ***What makes you unique?***

I am not sure I am unique. Maybe my background of being raised on a small dairy farm and mink ranch that instilled a work ethic and a love for animals makes me a little unique. I left the farm for 35 years as I spent my career in conservation agency that served people. I am now back in farming in a small way that enables me to contribute and get joy from doing a little of what my parents taught me as a child. Not unique but very satisfying.

### ***Anything else you would like to add?***

Visitors who see our strange "goats" are frequent. Many return to enjoy playing with the lambs and overly friendly ewes. One of my biggest joys is providing information to new breeders and I have had many after-purchase chats with buyers over the years. Even though it is a business the sheep are treated as pets. They all have names and personalities that add to the joy of raising them. The sheep look forward to daily walks with their shepherd. They go "crazy" at least once a day racing up and down the pasture frolicking with jumps and spins. They expect tree branches to be pulled down so they can enjoy browsing.



## The American Sheep Industry

The American Sheep Industry Association ([www.sheepusa.org](http://www.sheepusa.org)) publishes a monthly magazine called Sheep Industry News which contains market reports for wool and meat, features about growers and producers, state news, photos, and advertisements. You can sign up to get it free at their website.

You may find interesting information in this magazine. For example, in the recent issue from May 2019, Bennie Cox, the president of the Association had this to say: "I am the sheep sales manager for the largest sheep and goat auction in the United States. Producers Livestock Auction in San Angelo, Texas, is an ethnic-driven market and has been for some time. Texas was once the largest wool producing state in the country, but those days are long gone. We still have the most sheep – many of which are hair sheep. The last report available showed 2010 was the last year we sold more wool lambs than hair lambs. Now it is more than four-to-one in favor of hair lambs. The hair sheep males are generally not castrated, and for the most part go directly to the ethnic slaughter channels and not to the traditional feedlots."

In the April 2019 issue, Dr. Cindy Wolf of the University of MN explains a vaccine scheme for tetanus and clostridium. [For these and other questions, you can find a list of veterinarians

interested in sheep medicine online at [www.AASRP.org](http://www.AASRP.org)]



### Photo Contest

The American Sheep Industry Association magazine has a yearly photo contest and this year they are including a category of working sheep dogs including livestock guarding dogs. Deadline for the 2019 ASI Photo Contest is August 1, 2019. The top three finishers in each category will receive a cash prize and be featured in the October issue of the Sheep Industry News. The 5 categories are Action; Scenic (East); Scenic (West); working dogs; and Open. The working dog category 'should show livestock guardian dogs and herding dogs in their natural environments and must include sheep in some fashion, as proof that these are truly working dogs.'

The rules for the photo contest appear in Volume 23, issue 6, June 2019 issue of the magazine and can be accessed via the website under the News Tab, and scroll down to Sheep Industry News, past issues.

I hope that all of you who have photographs of our lovely BB and AB sheep, scenery of your farm and animals, and of your livestock

guardian dogs or herding dogs will submit photos to this contest. It would be lovely to see our breeds highlighted in this magazine. Good luck!



*Photos above by Becky Lannon*

*Photos below by Cecilia Richards*



## Could you use an extra \$2000 for your sheep?

Pam Hand, DVM

I'd like to introduce all of you to a valuable resource which has several benefits for all Barbados Blackbelly sheep breeders - The Livestock Conservancy ([www.LivestockConservancy.org](http://www.LivestockConservancy.org)).

The LC is a nonprofit tax exempt corporation established to conserve and promote rare breeds of livestock and poultry, preventing the extinction of genetic material from 150 individual breeds from 11 different species. Our Barbados Blackbelly sheep is one of the 22 sheep breeds listed on their Conservation Priority Livestock Breeds 2019. BB are listed in the 'Watch' category because we have fewer than 2500 annual registrations and fewer than 10,000 individuals in the global population. Here are some of the programs and benefits which might interest you.

- 1) You can subscribe for free to the E-newsletter, open to non-members.
- 2) BBSAI members can subscribe for \$10 to be a breeders directory participant, listed in both the online and printed breeders directory.
- 3) <https://livestockconservancy.org/index.php/heritage/internal/breeders-directory-participant>  
The top searches to the website are "xxxxx for sale" and TLC gets about 2 million web visits per year, so it's a great opportunity to get noticed.
- 4) Members can apply for money through the Micro-grant program, which may be used for "improvements for farm animals

and infrastructure, promotion and marketing, improved production efficiency, or farmer education. Suitable expenditures of grant funds include the purchase, production and marketing of heritage breed animals and their products, and agri-tourism using heritage breeds. Examples of expenditures include, but are not limited to, purchase of livestock or poultry, producer training programs, fences, facilities, supplies, and specialized equipment, or product marketing."

The new micro grant program will open for applications this fall so watch for it! Last year's program awarded \$2000 cash to eight recipients. The grants were used to purchase a key stallion to add diversity to a breeding herd; to purchase an ox cart to take to promotional events; to purchase electric fencing and expand operation of a goat flock; to add multiple poultry breeds to expand an educational program; to expand pasturing capabilities; to predator-proof enclosures; and to expand infrastructure. What could extra money do to help you in your sheep business?

- 5) Members can participate in the SE2SE program. Believe it or not but you can actually sell the shed wool from your Barbados Blackbelly sheep. The Shave Em' to Save 'Em project encourages fiber artists to work with wool from any sheep breed (including our BB!) on the Conservations Priority List. The artists register for the program and then contact breeders to obtain wool. As they document their work, they can

receive prizes from the Livestock Conservancy. I have already sent wool to four different fiber artists who have expressed enthusiasm for working with it. I have a waiting list as well, so if you have wool to collect, do so. The program will run for several years so if you cannot do it this year, please consider saving the wool from next year. I gave my batches of wool away for free but next year I will sell it and ask the artist to also pay for mailing it. I will update you in the next BBSAI newsletter about the final products from my sheep.

- 6) Members can attend the annual conference, which has loads of fascinating information. Save the date for the Heritage Livestock Conference: All Things Sheep October 25-26, 2019 in Santa Rosa, California

- 7) To become a member:  
**Basic Member - \$45**

Quarterly full-color, 20+ page print newsletter; The Livestock Conservancy e-News; network with breeders with your **print** copy of the *Breeders and Products Directory* (also online); list your rare breeds and rare breed products in the Directory; free online classifieds postings; technical support for your rare breed's enterprise; discounts on conference registrations and publications; and use of The Livestock Conservancy member logo.

[Editor's note, I do not get any benefit myself from recommending this organization. Just trying to be helpful to you in your endeavor with your sheep. I'd like all of us to succeed.]

In the meanwhile, here are photos from one of the artists who is using wool from my BB sheep.



Cleaned fiber drying



Carders and carded fleece arranged in color gradation

Photos by Carolyn Penny  
Penny for your Thoughts  
Fiber Artist in NC



Color gradation handspun singles yarn on a California spinning wheel

## Welcome to New Members

Jennifer Bentley, Indiana Hills, CO  
Kimberly Boston, Roodhouse, IL  
Charlie Kemmer, Grandview, TN

Steven Bossie, N. Stonington, CT  
Coby Spicer, Rock Island, TN  
Lisa Fugere, Rainier, OR

Jeff and Mellissa Gibbons, St. Augustine, FL  
Amanda Beveridge, Lexington, NC  
Steven Hayes, Belton, SC  
Lisianne Vanharen, Bluevale, ON

## BBSAI NEWSLETTER

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*The BBSAI Newsletter is a benefit of membership in the BBSAI and is published quarterly. Articles, photographs, and business cards that relate to American Blackbelly and Barbados Blackbelly sheep are welcome. Submit your contributions to [newsletter@blackbellysheep.org](mailto:newsletter@blackbellysheep.org)*

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*Back issues can be downloaded from <http://www.blackbellysheep.org/association/newsletters/>*