



BBSAI NEWSLETTER

March 2019

IN THIS ISSUE

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.

Inside this issue:

- ✓ Getting Acquainted –
A breeder interview
- ✓ Reminder about BBSAI
Google group. JOIN!
- ✓ Life Long Learning
 - a. New Biological
parasite control
 - b. Ram anti-
breeding shield
- ✓ Member Survey
- ✓ Welcome to new
members!

Get Acquainted

Bridgett and Bruce Leslie
BNB Farm
New Waverly, Texas





Get Acquainted An interview with a Breeder

Bruce and Bridgett Leslie
BNB Farm
New Waverly, Texas

When and how did you begin raising Barbados Blackbelly sheep?

We were looking for a way, besides mowing, to keep grass and brush down on our ten acres of pasture. We were also starting a vineyard and had heard that sheep could be helpful in “mowing” grass and brush there as well, particularly below the trellis lines.

Due to the heat and sometimes wet conditions that prevail here in Southeast Texas, we wanted a breed that could do well in those conditions. We researched a bit and thought that hair sheep might work well on our property. After more extensive research, we chose Barbados Blackbelly sheep based on their reputation for hardiness, brush clearing abilities, good maternal instincts, and the mild flavor of their meat.

In 2015 we purchased five Barbados Blackbelly wethers from Lone Star Farm as a test case to see how the sheep worked out without adding lambs to the mix. Within two

months, we were hooked on the breed. We loved their looks, their personalities and antics, and the voracious way they ate the yaupon bushes that grow like weeds throughout our 18 acres.

We bought our first ram (Lone Star Deacon) and five ewes from Mike and Becky Lannon a few months later and have been through three breeding seasons since then. Our fourth season will start in April 2019.

What animals do you have now?

We have three rams purchased from Lone Star Farm, each one very robust and with distinct looks from each other. There are also 15 breeding-age ewes, assorted youngsters, and four wethers that will be sold later this year for meat. Oh, and one boy from our original 2015 flock of wethers who is such a love that we cannot part with him. Rounding out the menagerie are 1) an opinionated, alert, very protective guard llama, 2) two small, spoiled-rotten dogs, and 3) a flock of brown leghorn hens that free-range all day with the sheep.

What is your philosophy about breeding your sheep?

We have only three breeding seasons behind us and are still developing our plans and philosophy. Because our flock is small, keeping a low inbreeding coefficient is one of our concerns. Another focus is keeping the Barbados Blackbelly's natural worm resistance intact.

We always have to contend with heat and rain, but the past year has been especially wet and has provided a lot more data about which sheep consistently do well against parasites with little or no chemical help. We track everything about our sheep, including health-related checks, deworming, etc. in Excel. This data is

one important element as we decide which sheep to breed and cull.

Tell us about your facilities (barns, sheds, fencing, and livestock guardian animals)

We have a three-acre wine grape vineyard, four pastures of varying sizes, and an 8.5-acre wooded area at the back of our property. Field fencing with top and bottom barbed wire surrounds the entire property perimeter. Each pasture has a small shelter for protection from rain, sun and winter winds – which our sheep rarely use.

Our guard llama stays on the outer and back pasture with our rams and wethers, and during the day the boys and llama often browse in the wooded area. Our ewes and lambs stay in the pastures around the house and, in the winter, the vineyard in front of our house.

Plans for 2019 include clearing the underbrush in the back woods and leaving the largest hardwoods for shade. This will give us more options for grazing management and pasture rotation.

What about management and feeding?

Rams and wethers are kept together and eat only grass, leaves, and brush. We have lots of good pasture and forage available for them, although we did have to supplement with coastal hay last winter when we had abnormally severe freezes that killed the grass. All of our sheep get free choice sheep minerals.

Our ewes get a good quality sheep feed three times a week (daily during their last month of pregnancy and first two months of nursing), and we are experimenting this year with daily feeding during March to flush them for April/May breeding. They

also have good pasture and browsing available.

From November through February, the girls also have free rein in the vineyard while it is dormant. They definitely keep the winter weeds down in there! We've learned that they are a little too interested in the grapevines once bud break starts, but their three months in the vineyard are still great for them and the vines.

A new approach we are trying this year is planting Sunn Hemp for the ewes to browse on for an hour or two per day. This legume crop is supposed to grow well in our area and provides about 30 percent protein. We'll see how that goes, but we're optimistic.

Lambs get daily Lamb Bloom until they are four months old, and we generally allow them to wean naturally. Non-castrated ram lambs are the exception to natural weaning.

Deworming is done only as needed, based on FAMACHA and body condition scoring. With the excessive wet weather over the past year, we have gone from doing quarterly FAMACHA checks to doing them monthly on the whole flock, along with body condition scores. CD&T vaccines are done annually on adults, and lambs get them twice before they are two months old.

Breeding (What timing for lambing? What are your selection criteria for sires and dams?)

We breed in April/May for September/October lambs. Due to our small flock size, we stick to the following:

- 1) Maintaining the breed standards;
- 2) Keeping parasite resistance in the bloodlines. We pull reports from our Excel data to help with this.

3) Keeping Coefficients of Inbreeding low. We use the COI calculator on the BBSAI website.

As we grow, we will look at more specifics.

What climate conditions work for or against you (heat, snow, too wet, too dry, etc.)?

We get rain most of the year, except possibly in July and August. In 2018, we had 52.5 inches. It also gets into the high 90s and low 100s in the summer, so providing shade and making sure there's a reliable water supply is critical.

What makes you unique?

We're not sure if it's unique, but our willingness to try new things is what we're all about. Not every idea is a winner, but we keep what works for our flock and aren't afraid to drop what doesn't.

On the humorous side, we're not afraid to be "those people" – the ones with sheep, and a llama, and a VINEYARD! Most everyone else for miles around has cows or goats, and the only grapevines are wild muscadines.

The llama alone caused quite a stir. When he arrived four years ago, lots of people we didn't even know stopped by to take a gander at him – or maybe they just wanted to see what sort of people would buck the system like that. Yep, that's us.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

We love our sheep. They are a joy to work with and to watch, and we can't imagine our farm without them.

BBSAI offers members an opportunity to communicate with each other via an exclusive members-only Google group. The group's purpose is to encourage and facilitate the free flow of communication between BBSAI members and Board of Directors.

We welcome all members to participate in this opportunity to share ideas, ask questions, and voice opinions. We anticipate that most of the discussion will center on questions and topics regarding the BBSAI — registration policies and procedures, programs, history of the American Blackbelly and Barbados Blackbelly breeds, breed standards, etc. This is not intended to be a place to advertise sheep for sale, nor is it intended to be the place to ask general questions about raising sheep, although we will try to be as helpful as possible in that area. The BBSAI Board members will serve as moderator for this list serve, and our Board role as moderator will simply be to promote the free flow and exchange of ideas, while encouraging members to treat one another with courtesy and respect at all times.

To access this group, go to

<https://groups.google.com/forum/#%21forum/bbsaiforum>

Life Long Learning

Pam Hand, DVM

As a veterinarian I had to take an oath at my graduation in 1979 which included this statement: *"I accept as a lifelong obligation the continual improvement of my professional knowledge and competence."*

As the reluctant editor of the newsletter for the BBSAI, I feel it is my obligation to share some of the new information I obtain by my regular research and readings. Here are two items I hope you find interesting as well as helpful. The first one, a new biological control of parasites, is intriguing and attractive to me but I found it too expensive to try myself. If anyone does try it, would you kindly send a note to editor@barbadosblackbelly.org to tell me your experience? The second item is reasonably priced and might be handy to have for several situations such as transporting rams and ewes together or when you cannot remove ram lambs from females at 90 days to prevent unwanted pregnancies. I may purchase one to try, and again, if anyone reading this has any experience with the ram shield, please let me know. Thanks!

1) New Parasite Control Method Just Arriving in USA: Livamol with BioWorma.

There is a new product called Livamol with BioWorma which will soon be available thru Premier1supplies.

https://www.premier1supplies.com/p/livamol-with-bioworma?criteria=Livamol%C2%AE+with+BioWorma%C2%AE&species_id=0&cat_id=0

Livamol with BioWorma is a 'highly palatable, green, free flowing fine meal' which is fed daily to grazing animals to reduce the parasite contamination of pastures. This is a nutritional supplement which contains the spores of a naturally occurring soil and pasture fungus (*Duddingtonia flagrans*). The spores have no effect on the sheep, pass through the digestive tract unchanged, and exit the sheep in the manure. There the spores germinate and 'kill' the parasite larvae which otherwise would mature and migrate on to your pasture. This non-chemical, biological mechanism thereby reduces the reinfection rate of gastrointestinal nematodes, especially the one of most interest to us which is the blood-sucking Barber Pole worm (*Haemonchus* spp.). The company claims that there is a 68% reduction of infective parasite larvae on pasture with daily use.

Just to put this reduction in perspective, a single female *Haemonchus* worm can produce 5000 eggs per day, with a life cycle of only about 20 days from egg to mature adult capable of laying more eggs. Warm moist environmental conditions increase larval development and hot, dry or very cold conditions decrease survival.

Note that the product is intended for use only during seasons when temperatures are above 40° Fahrenheit which is when parasite larva can develop and contaminate pastures. Sheep being fed hay in a dry lot would not benefit. Also the product does not reduce the number

of intestinal parasites already in each sheep so it is not a dewormer. Any sheep showing anemia should be considered for treatment with a chemical dewormer.

Livamol with BioWorma would most benefit young lambs and pregnant/lactating ewes since these particular animals usually have less resistance to worm infestation.

The company states that "the spores are safe, non-toxic and residue-free. There are no negative effects on non-target soil nematodes, earthworms, microarthropods etc."

I did a few calculations based on the information supplied on the Premier 1 website about this product, to see if it would be cost effective for what I assume to be our typical sheep flock (less than 50 animals on small acreage).

15 pound tub is \$89.50 and 30 pound tub is \$149.50 (plus shipping). A 15 pound tub is 240 oz. which at the dosing rate of 1.6 oz. per 100 pound animal is 150 doses. So that is 15 animals for 10 days or 10 animals for 15 days, or 5 animals for 30 days. The company states that for an average 100 lb. sheep getting 1.6 oz. per day it comes to \$0.46–\$0.58 per animal per day. The volume (if I have done my calculations correctly) would be about ¼ of a standard coffee mug. It may be mixed with feed or may be added as part of a formulated ration if you have your feed mill or co-op make your feed concentrate.

2) Bacchus-Johnson shield



If you have to transport ewes and rams together, or pasture them together but do not want pregnancies (for example if you are not able to remove ram lambs from their dams or sisters by 90 days) look at this possibility: the Bacchus-Johnson shield. Designed for bucks of all breeds and ages, but it seems as though it would work just as well with ram lambs or rams. The company says it is adjustable and comes in variety of sizes; made of flexible, durable, water resistant fabric.

Prices vary from \$22.50 - \$40.50 depending upon size. With shipping to VA the total cost for a black small (\$25) is \$31.95. The site does not take credit cards but does take PayPal.

<https://www.houseofbacchuspetsupplies.com/product-p/603.htm>

MEMBER SURVEY

Opportunity for Changes to the BBSAI website

The BBSAI Board is extending an invitation to you, as a member of the BBSAI, the opportunity to tell us what you would like to see happen within the Association. We plan to send you a ballot in the future that will let you vote on changes that are important to you. Some examples of what we are trying to accomplish are:

1) In order to have a more accurate head count of the number of Barbados Blackbelly and American Blackbelly sheep in the United States, would you be willing to go into the Book of Registry and update individual sheep records as to whether that particular sheep is still alive? At present, when we do a census, we count every sheep in the registry that is less than ten years old, and assume the others are deceased. You can see how this estimate could be very inaccurate.

2) For those of you who do DNA Codon 136 and 171 testing for scrapie disease resistance in your sheep, would you like to have a field on the registration certificate to fill in the results of each animal's test?

3) Many of us register our sheep as lambs with less than accurate depictions of what those sheep actually look like. Would you consider having a place on the registration application where you could update that photo with an adult photo? It would give buyers a better idea of what your farm produces if they could see mature

pictures of your livestock in the book of registry.

We welcome your suggestions and will give them serious consideration. Come and be involved in the future of your BBSAI Association!

Sincerely,

Your BBSAI Board



BBSAI NEWSLETTER

EDITOR

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Free Union, VA
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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

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

New Members:

Jaime Lavallee
Granby, MA

Jenna Kellerman
Wingina, VA

Leslie Morris
Elk Grove, CA

Kolton Doyon
Crystal River, FL

Wendy Santamaria
Valley Center, CA

Jamie Phillips
Valley Center, CA

WE NEED YOUR HELP

On the Publicity
Committee! Contact
Bridgett Leslie, at
blleslie@outlook.com if
interested.

