

# October 2023 BBSAI Newsletter Blog

---



## 1) **BBSAI NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING**

**The 2023 ANNUAL Meeting for the Barbados Blackbelly Sheep Association International (BBSAI) will be held by Zoom on**

**November 8, 2023, at 8:00 PM Eastern Standard Time**

**The purpose of the annual meeting is to**

- Receive current operating reports and committee updates of pending Association issues;
- Receive the Nominating Committee's list of candidates to fill open Board positions; and
- Discuss agenda issues and identify any member-initiated issues to place on the mail-in ballot.

**If you would like to attend the meeting: Notify the secretary by November 6, 2023 to receive dial-up instructions and the meeting agenda. Long-distance phone charges for this event are each member's responsibility.**

**Email: [secretary@blackbellysheep.org](mailto:secretary@blackbellysheep.org)**

**Phone: 413-433-4794**

**Mail: BBSA1 Secretary, PO Box 503, Thorndike, MA 01079**

**If you would like to put a topic on the meeting agenda: Notify the Secretary in writing by November 1, 2023.**

## 2) **President's Notes: from Bridgett Leslie**

### **Board Affirms Member Vote Favoring E-Ballots**

The Board of Directors has approved the use of electronic ballots for BBSAI Board elections and other votes by the membership. Members can opt into or out of e-ballots on their membership renewal form or by emailing BBSAI at [info@blackbellysheep.org](mailto:info@blackbellysheep.org). Those who do not specifically opt into e-ballots will still receive paper ballots by postal mail.

The Board approved the e-ballot option based on members expressing a desire for e-ballots on two separate surveys in 2023. On the Member Outreach survey (sent to members in early 2023), 53.1% of the members responding to the question about member benefits checked online annual elections as a desired new option. On the BBSAI Electronic Voting Survey (sent Aug. 29 to all 113 current members as of that date), 97.1% of the 70 respondents approved the use of e-ballots for BBSAI elections/voting – and 95.7% opted in to start receiving e-ballots themselves.

### **Announcement: 2024 Board of Directors Candidates**

The Nominating Committee is pleased to announce the slate of candidates listed below for the 2024 Board of Directors. Ballots will go out after the Nov. 8 BBSAI Annual Member Meeting.

#### **Candidates:**

- John Carlton, Alabama
- Elaine Haas, Missouri
- Pam Hand, Virginia
- Sandra Hession, Massachusetts
- Courtney Irwin, Saskatchewan
- Constance (Bru) Katzenbach, New Jersey
- Bridgett Leslie, Texas
- Israel Villacorta, Texas

The Nominating Committee Chair, Bridgett Leslie, would especially like to thank committee members Bonny McKay in Manitoba and Sundi Prechtl in California for their assistance in seeking out candidates for the 2024 list of nominees.

### **Board Votes to Increase Number of Directors**

At their August meeting, the Board of Directors approved increasing the number of Directors to make it six to ten Directors instead of six. The change will facilitate adding new Directors to the Board and letting them get up to speed in an At Large role before moving into a specific Board Officer role.

3)

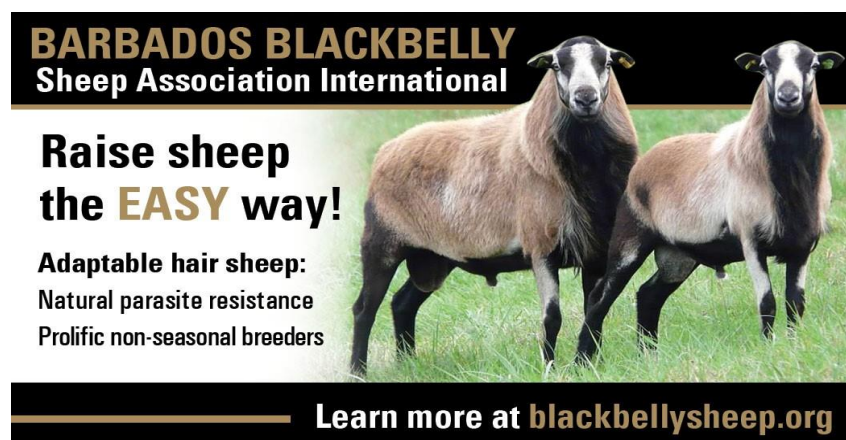
## BBSAI COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE NEWS



Since the spring, we have been busy with new advertising to help promote our breeds. We have begun to run ads in American Sheep Industry News, in the Breeders Directory, and the service ad shown above. "The American Sheep Industry Association (ASI) is the national organization representing the interests of more than 100,000 sheep producers located throughout the U.S. From East to West, pasture-based flocks to range operations, ASI works to represent the interests of all producers." Their website has links to educational resources, webinars, podcasts and more. If you are a member of your state's sheep organization, you receive a print copy every month. The online version is available free to anyone, here's the link: <https://www.sheepusa.org/newsmedia-sheepindustrynews>

Starting September 2023, this ad will appear in Heritage Livestock Canada publications, the Moos (quarterly online) and Genesis (annual, print & online: <https://heritagelivestockcanada.com/genesis> thanks to the work of Bonny McKay, of Seven Bells Fold Farm in Manitoba, Canada. She also helps administer the blackbelly sheep Facebook page.

Both beautiful ads were designed by Leah Matzke, Storybook Farm Minnesota, who also helps administer our official BBSAI Facebook page. Starting with the 2024 Livestock Conservancy Annual Directory, and in the quarterly TLC Newsletters, this new ad will appear:



The Communications committee needs more members, especially those with knowledge and experience with social media platforms like YouTube, so if you can join in and contribute your ideas and skills, please email Bru (Constance) Katzenbach at [recordingsecretary@blackbellysheep.org](mailto:recordingsecretary@blackbellysheep.org)

## **BBSAI Group Forum News: Don't miss out on the conversation!**



**Barbados Blackbelly Sheep Association International Group Forum**  
BBSAI@groups.io

BBSAI invites all members to join this exclusive members-only Groups.io Email group forum, to provide an opportunity to communicate with each other. The group's purpose is to encourage and facilitate the free flow of communication among all members.

***Is Email Fatigue keeping you from joining the Forum? No worries!*** All subscriptions are set to **Summary**, so only 1 message/per day is sent, and only when a new message is posted. If your invitation got lost or expired, email Bru at [recordingsecretary@blackbellysheep.org](mailto:recordingsecretary@blackbellysheep.org), to join the group. We have 43 members, but that's still a minority of total BBSAI membership.

There are already many interesting discussions going – on feeding hay and minerals, with innovative DIY systems and designs; new marketing opportunities; sheep shows; record keeping software; educational webinars; white markings in BBs & Abs; when to stop breeding older ewes, and fascinating case studies on sheep diseases and treatment. Every member is free to post their questions and share their ideas.

### **4) Research Highlight: Landmark Genomic Study of Caribbean Hair Sheep**

**Whole genome structural analysis of Caribbean hair sheep reveals quantitative link to West African ancestry**, Published: June 29, 2017, Rev. 2022 Open source article.

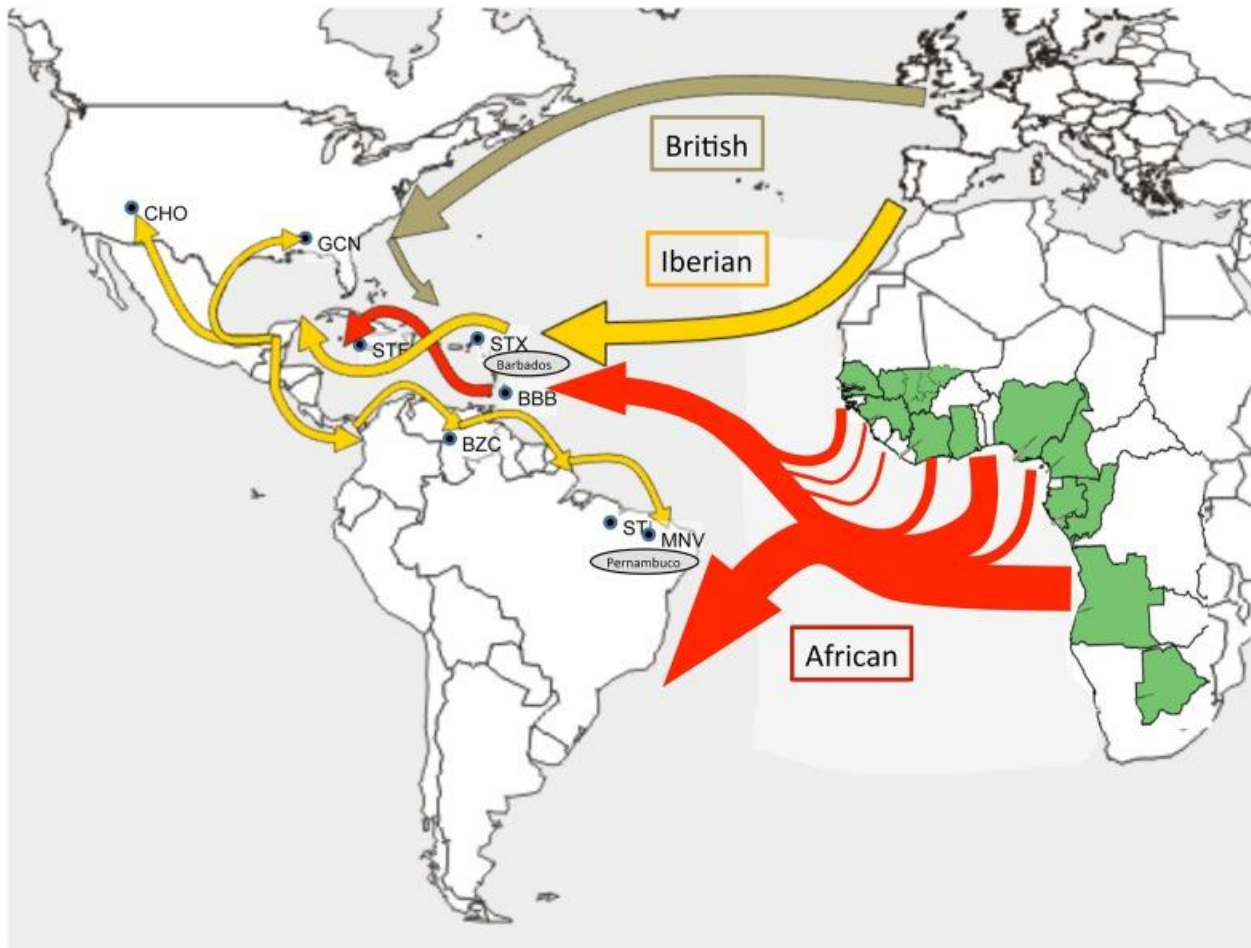
Gordon L. Spangler, Benjamin D. Rosen , Moses Babatunde Ilori, Olivier Hanotte, Eui-Soo Kim, Tad S. Sonstegard, Joan M. Burke, James L. M. Morgan, David R. Notter, Curtis P. Van Tassell

Illumina Ovine 50K data from West African, St Croix, and Bergamesca sheep used in conjunction with data from The International Sheep Genome Consortium to determine the ancestry/origin of Caribbean hair sheep in September 2022.

#### **Article Abstract**

Hair sheep of Caribbean origin have become an important part of the U.S. sheep industry. Their lack of wool eliminates a number of health concerns and drastically reduces the cost of production. More importantly, Caribbean hair sheep demonstrate robust production performance even in the presence of drug-resistant gastrointestinal nematodes, a rising concern to the industry. Despite the growing importance of hair sheep in the Americas their genetic origins have remained speculative. Prior to this report no genetic studies were able to identify a unique geographical origin of hair sheep in the New World. Our study clarifies the African and European ancestry of Caribbean hair sheep. Whole-genome

structural analysis was conducted on four established breeds of hair sheep from the Caribbean region. Using breeds representing Africa and Europe we establish an objective measure indicating Caribbean hair sheep are derived from Iberian and West African origins. Caribbean hair sheep result from West African introgression into established ecotypes of Iberian descent. Genotypes from 47,750 autosomal single nucleotide polymorphism markers scored in 290 animals were used to characterize the population structure of the St. Croix, **Barbados Blackbelly**, Morada Nova, and Santa Ines. Principal components, admixture, and phylogenetic analyses results correlate with historical patterns of colonization and trade. These patterns support co-migration of these sheep with humans.



### Historical and geographical corroboration of the results of whole genome structural analysis.

Map indicates migration routes of British (olive) and Iberian (Orange) colonization and locations of New World and hair sheep breeds used in this study; Navajo Churro (CHO), Gulf Coast native (GCN), St. Elizabeth (STE), St. Croix (STX), Barbados Blackbelly (BBB), Brazilian Creole (BZC), Morada Nova (MNV), Santa Ines (STI). Red arrows indicate routes and relative magnitude of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade taken from Galloway. Gray ovals (Barbados and Parambuco) indicate regions of heavy sugar production and centers of slave importation. Green highlighted African nations indicate range and distribution of the West African Djallonké sheep (FAO).

Note: The full text of this article: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5490989/> It is very technical, but well worth looking at for its remarkable depth and detail.



4)

## Get Acquainted: Simon Riel, Quebec, Canada



Photos courtesy of Simon Riel

My name is Simon Riel and I'm a new American Blackbelly breeder based in Quebec. I come from a family of farmers. My father raised Jersey cows and I've made a career of being a hoof trimmer for 27 years now. I always dreamed of owning a small farm. So, back in 2021, I had the chance to buy a 40-acre piece of land with a small house on it. There's about 30 acres of fields and 10 acres of woods. At the beginning, I was going to raise goats. So, I started searching on the Internet to buy some goats. I came across an ad for Barbados sheep for sale at a Zoo. I was curious about this breed as I had never heard of them before. I drove to the Zoo a few days later and fell in love with these sheep. I bought my first two American Blackbelly sheep from this Zoo and started to do research to find more breeders. I quickly realized that there are not many?! I've been to Manitoba, Ontario and currently, looking into Cape Breton to buy different Blackbelly sheep to grow my herd.

Two years later, I now have a herd of 30 American Blackbelly sheep. I also raise Black pigs, laying chickens and I've been a Beekeeper for 26 years. I have a small boutique where customers can buy fresh honey, eggs, pork, and lamb. On the farm, I also have two working dogs. A female Border Collie named Gypsy helps me get the sheep from one park to the next when the time comes. And a big boy Kuvasz named Tico who always lives with the ewes. His job is to protect them from any predators that may be a threat to them. The sheep are his family. He goes wherever they go. I plan on buying one or two more Kuvasz for my farm. Maybe I'll put one more with the ewes and one with the rams. Now that it's been two years, I understand their behaviour a little more and I can better answer their needs.



I've built a big shelter for the rams (8 X 12 that's easy to clean with a tractor), and one for the ewes. But I will also be building a shelter for the ewes that will be lambing so that they do not have their little ones outside. I've built a park with square fencing for the ewes that have had their lambs to separate them until the lambs are big enough to be with the rest of the flock. I've also built a small park with square fencing to put the rams in back together after the breeding is done. I will also be building 4 different parks, especially for the breeding season with 4-foot square fencing.



The rest of my parks are all fenced with a 2 to 3 step electric wire fence. I will have 20 parks in all so that I can switch them around every few weeks so that they can get the best feed. I've noticed that they do not like the wind or too much mud. So, I will be draining sections of my fields that have tendencies to be too wet. I try to place their shelters in a position where they will get less wind. I've made several parks in a wooded area because they love the woods for shade to stay cool and they feel a little safer. The sheep have adapted very well to the weather here in Quebec.

I feed my sheep morning and night. I give them a mixture of oats and wheat and as much hay as they

wish. I love to sit with them every evening and study their behaviour and all their different personalities. They are such a fascinating breed. Here in Quebec, we do not deworm the sheep on a regular basis. This is to prevent them from building resistance to the dewormer. We have a vet come several times a year to evaluate the flock and treat them as needed. But the vets here do not seem to know much about the American Blackbelly.

I try to have the lambing between May 1st and Mid-May if possible. In Quebec, the springs are much milder, and the snow is all melted by the end of April. I like to keep the ewe lambs that are tall and long, the ones with a more feminine look. I like the ones with a longer nose and a darker shade. For the rams, I choose the ones that are bigger and have the nicest set of horns (wide and thick). They must have the proper markings of an American Blackbelly sheep: the dark line down their neck and around their eyes; black under their bellies and legs and, of course, their behaviour also matters.



In the near future, I would like to have 4 to 5 rams and breed them with my best ewes to try and get the nicest genetics I can achieve for this breed.



I see hundreds of different farms and the different ways of farming. Cows are a lot like sheep. They are ruminants. I get to talk to champion dairy farmers in Quebec and what they do differently than others to achieve the top herds. I will take their lead and expertise in raising the best flock of American Blackbelly sheep with the best genetics and give them the best comfort and well-being as possible.

As far as I know, I'm the only registered Blackbelly sheep breeder in Quebec. I can't say what makes me unique because I don't know what others do. But I plan on traveling to go see other fellow American Blackbelly breeders so that I can further my knowledge and build a good, healthy, genetically strong flock. I would like to finish off by thanking Seven Bells Fold farm who has been such an inspiration and has helped me enormously by answering any of my questions and teaching me so much about this amazing breed. And by selling me the best quality American Blackbelly sheep that I can possibly have.

Simon Riel

smnriel@gmail.com