

Black Welsh Mountain Sheep Club Newsletter

June 1998

Welcome

Hello folks. Welcome to the first of what I hope will be many issues of a newsletter designed to introduce people to each other. I've spoken to each of you on the phone but let me tell you a bit about me. About 5 years ago I started the search for a breed of sheep to add to our farm. I'd had sheep in 4-H as a kid and wanted to raise them again. As a long time member of the American Livestock Breed Conservancy I wanted to raise a breed that was in danger if I could find one that met my requirements. I wanted small size, color, hardiness and gentle nature. My sheep needed to be dual purpose providing spinning wool and meat for our freezer. My investigation led me to Black Welsh Mountain sheep. The search for animals to purchase began. Finally, in 1997 my husband and I purchased our initial flock of sheep from Mr. Busman in Georgia. With considerable effort we got them to my mother's farm in Colorado and succeeded in getting the entire flock re-registered with the Black Welsh Mountain Sheep Breeders Association in the United Kingdom.

All purebred BWMS here in the US are descended from 3 rams and 13 ewes imported by Mr. Tom Wyman in the 1970's. This has resulted in significant inbreeding. As soon as I had sheep I began contacting other breeders to arrange for purchasing more animals and swapping rams to conserve the scarce genetic resources we have.

My conversations with other breeders convinced me to attempt to import semen from the UK for use on our ewes. I also came to realize that the US registry was not assisting us in the way they could. Accordingly I have been helping other flock owners by providing them the forms to attempt to get their sheep documented with the British Association. This newsletter and hopefully a club is a direct result of this effort. I look forward to visiting with each of you in person and welcome your submissions to this newsletter.

Oogie McGuire, Desert Weyr

Club Name

I just picked something out to put on the top of the paper. Comments, suggestions etc. are welcome. Personally I'd like us to form a more formal club but have done nothing more than to collect names and information.

Breeders Listing

I've asked each person to give me a listing of animals owned, animals for sale and prices so that we can all know who has what. I have tried to be accurate but cannot guarantee that I got the information down properly. Please verify animals and prices yourself. In most cases trades or leases are available for rams especially to cooperating breeders. The registration status of these sheep varies. Some are registered with the British Association, some are registered with the North American BWMS Registry and some are as yet unregistered with either society. In all cases the prices reflect properly documented and registered sheep. If the animals cannot be documented the prices will

be reduced. As always verify the health and identification of any animals you purchase and consider a written sales agreement to protect both buyer and seller. We are all friends and written contracts will help ensure we stay that way.

Desert Weyr
Ken and Oogie McGuire
551 Gem Lane
Ramona, CA 92065-3770
(760) 788-6671
oogiem@dsrtweyr.com

7 Ewes NFS

2 Ewe Lambs NFS

1 Yearling Ram on loan from Mary Mondello NFS

2 Ram Lambs One is already spoken for but the other is for sale \$750.00

1 Yearling Ewe \$1,000.00

My original flock is British Registered. I have 1 US registered ewe. The 1998 lambs are not currently accepted by either registry.

Mondello Miniature Ranch
Mrs. Mary Mondello
3110 Vineyard Canyon Road
San Miguel, CA 93451

(805) 467-3206

21 Ewes NFS

3 Rams NFS 2 are US registered, 1 is Desert Weyr Cadfael from my flock.

1 Ram, Barry John, on Loan from Oogie McGuire

4 Ram Lambs some will be for sale \$750.00 each

12 Ewe Lambs some will be for sale \$1,000.00 each

Mary's sheep are US registered but her 1998 lambs are sired by my British registered ram, Barry John, and are not going to be accepted by the US registry. She is working to get her sheep registered with Britain.

Perigord Farmstead
Mr. Luke Vaughn
Mr. Eric Edelstein
1120 Valley Road
Mason, NH 03048
(603) 878-1195

2 Ewes NFS

1 Ewe Lamb NFS

1 Ram, Carpathian, 3 years old for sale \$750.00

I believe these sheep are US registered. Luke is also going to try and get British registration.

Brindle Hill Farm
Mr. James Warren
Mr. Kevin Barnhart
P.O. Box 306
St. Thomas, PA 17252

(717) 369-3275

11 Ewes NFS

1 Ewe Lamb NFS

2 Rams NFS

2 Ram Lambs for sale \$250.00 each

The rams and 6 of these ewes are from Mr. Wyman and James is working to get them British registered. 5 are from Lambchop Farm and will not be British registered.

Gerard and Sandra Zurawski

2005 School Road

San Juan Bautista, CA 95045

3 Ewes NFS

1 Ram NFS

1 Ram Moe on loan from Mary. Moe was sold by me to Mary and is British registered.

These sheep are descended from Mary's flock. I believe they are currently US registered but if Mary is successful then these will also become British registered. I am guessing on the numbers and did not get confirmation before I sent this out.

Lastly there is a flock in Washington state that is descended from Mary's animals that she and I are trying to purchase. This flock consists of 6 ewes, 2 ewe lambs, 2 rams and 4 ram lambs.

Together we control 51 breeding ewes, 18 ewe lambs, 11 breeding rams and 12 ram lambs.

UK Semen

Some of you on this list have already purchased frozen semen from the two UK rams. These two rams, Hounsley Harry and Hounsley Jack are outstanding animals with many show wins for themselves and their progeny. I know we are all looking forward to the lambs from these animals. As I find out any information on insemination dates I will pass them on. Pictures and pedigree information on these rams is on my web site at <http://www.dsrtweyr.com/>

Conservation Breeding Program

I will be attending the ALBC and Sheep is Life Conference in New Mexico in 2 weeks. I plan to talk to Dr. Phil Sponenberg and others regarding how to best use the UK semen. If you are not aware of the Livestock Conservancy's book "A Conservation Breeding Handbook" I heartily recommend that you purchase a copy. In that book there are guidelines for setting up a conservation breeding program that preserves genetic diversity and allows for selection according to the historical development of the breed. It is my personal goal to work within those guidelines to develop self sustaining flocks of Black Welsh Mountain sheep here in the U.S. With our small founding population it will require special care to prevent a loss of bloodlines.

The biggest factor for success in this type of program is the using of many different sires. That is one reason why I am working with the breeders on this list to share and swap rams so that we do not have a significant sire line narrowing of our gene pool. In my discussions I will be presenting the combined flocks as if they are one to get the

ALBC breeding recommendations. It will be up to each individual flock owner whether or not to follow those suggestions. Any comments or specific questions you wish me to ask must get to me no later than June 20. I'll try to get answers to your questions at the conference.

As a reference point according to the ALBC the minimum number of breeding animals necessary for a self sustaining flock that minimizes inbreeding and maintains good variability is 30 breeding females and 9 breeding males. With our combined flocks we are in a good position to maintain the breed especially with the addition of the genetics represented by the British ram semen.

Customer Listing

I have received requests for sheep from people I cannot serve because I do not have enough spare animals for sale. Accordingly I am providing my list of potential customers. I would hope that we can all work cooperatively to place appropriate breeding groups in the hands of new owners to grow our collective flock. I would encourage each of you to add your customer names to this list so that as sheep become available we can place them with other dedicated breeders. By pooling our customers and arranging for groups to include a variety of bloodlines we can improve the long term stability of the total flock.

Vivian Smith
5148 Felter Road
San Jose, CA 95132
(408) 942-5414

Jack and Lorna Kearney
6691 Westcott Road
Duncan, BC V9L 3W8
(250) 7480-5698

Sarah Morse
abercroft@aol.com
Yamhill, OR

Mrs. Nees
Danishpb@aol.com.
606 SE Pine rd
Port Orchard, WA 98367

Importing Semen

The company handling the actual importation of semen is Elite Genetics. If you are interested and have not purchased semen already contact Deb Gourley, Elite Genetics, (319) 568-4551 for information. One requirement is that all flocks must be in the Federal Voluntary Scrapie program before using the UK semen.

Scrapie Program

The latest information I have is that the Scrapie program has changed. Once a flock is enrolled it is still possible to add both ewes and rams to the flock. There are different documentation requirements for ewes and rams. I am sending in my application in July so I'll pass on what I find out in the next newsletter. It is also now possible to add animals from non-enrolled flocks but the date of enrollment changes to the latest date you added sheep. This is a great improvement and should help all of us.

Scrapie Genetic Testing

There is a DNA test for the "Scrapie Susceptibility Gene" This testing looks at codon 171. If you wish to get this test done you need to send a blood sample, collected in a purple topped EDTA tube with an ice pack to GeneCheck along with the fee. The rates I have are based on sending more than one sample at the same time. for 5-19 samples the fee is \$22 each. For 20 or more the fee goes to \$20. Testing is provided by GeneCheck, 1629 Blue Spruce Drive Suite 106, Ft. Collins, CO 80524. For more information contact GeneCheck directly at (800) 822-6740. The reason you may wish to consider this testing is that there is a group of breeders working to allow free movement of animals with non-susceptible genotypes. This may affect how easily we can move or add animals to our Scrapie program flocks. There is also a petition before the USDA to allow importation of non-susceptible sheep from scrapie countries. Any relaxing of rules will take years but if we have the data in the background it might be helpful in the future. I personally will be genotyping my entire flock and will make the data public.

Web Site

If you have internet access I have some information on my own homepage on the web at <http://www.dsrtweyr.com> I have included a breeders listing. If you wish to be added to this listing contact me. There are also pictures of the UK rams whose semen is being imported as well as offspring and other relatives. I'll be glad to add pages for each of you if you wish. Simple pages, a picture and some information will be free to post if I get the information already typed. If you want a lot more data up there let me know, I do this for a living and can't do large sites for free but will work with you to get what you need up on the web.

US Registry Issues

I have repeatedly contacted Mr. Pat Hoctor at the US registry. My latest conversation with him was 10 June 1998. During this conversation he made the following statements:

1. My British registered sheep will not be accepted in the US registry.
2. The lambs sired by US registered rams out of my British registered ewes will not be accepted for registration.
3. Lambs sired by my British registered rams and out of US registered ewes will not be accepted for registration.

4. No lambs sired by any frozen imported semen will be accepted for registration no matter the dam.
5. He stated that the problem lies with Britain and that they are unwilling to work with him.

My own discussions with Britain have been most cordial. They have bent over backwards to assist me in properly documenting my sheep so from my own experience I did not find the British registry difficult to deal with at all.

British Registry Issues

Other than my flock and Mr. Wyman's the British registry does not automatically accept all US registered sheep. When I turned in my flock report for 1998 documenting my use of Mary's ram they informed me that the registration status of these lambs is neither accepted or denied. A final ruling is pending their receipt and evaluation of the documentation from Mary regarding her flock.

On 9 June I sent them a letter requesting that Breed Council please evaluate the various registration applications that they would be receiving and stressing our concern for the breed in the US. I also indicated our willingness to work with them to properly document the sheep according to their rules. If I can assist anyone please feel free to contact me. We may not be successful but we can try.

One suggestion and request, if you are considering attempting to document your sheep and join the British registry please do so as soon as you can. I feel that we will be more successful as a group if they receive applications from several different people within a relatively short timeframe. If you need forms let me know, I'll be glad to photocopy some for you.

Pedigree Data

I am collecting pedigree data on all the sheep I can. I would appreciate receiving any pedigree information on your flocks. I am hoping to make this freely available in a format that can be used by various genetic analysis programs. Clear genetic data is also required to properly manage the breeding of the sheep in a conservation program.

Newsletter Items

Please send me any news and information you want to share. Things that arrive via e-mail or already typed in Microsoft Word will make it in sooner. Things I have to retype will take longer. That's all I have for now. Take care and best wishes.