

# Black Welsh Mountain Sheep Club Newsletter December 1999

## Board Meeting Minutes

Minutes of the Board Meeting held December 5, 1999

Board Members Present  
Mr. Tom Wyman, President  
Mr. Luke Vaughn, Vice-President  
Ms. Oogie McGuire, Sec/Treas  
Dr. Patricia Mazarella  
Ms. Niki Sawyer

Guest Present  
Mr. Pat Hoctor, Owner of the Black Welsh Mountain Sheep Registry

Absent were  
Ms. Mary Mondello  
Ms. Sandie McDonald

Meeting handled via Telephone Conference

1. First topic was the Secretary/Treasurer report.

McGuire reported that the club has 20 1999 members and we have received 1 2000 membership. 2000 membership renewals will go out this month as will a newsletter. The club bank account balance is currently \$208.13. This includes \$150.00 from McGuire that was needed to meet the bank minimums for opening an account.

The budget for 2000 was presented.

Mailbox and Office \$125.00

Bank Fees \$120.00

Ads in Sheep, Shepherd and Black Sheep Newsletter \$110.00

Quarterly Newsletter postage and copying costs est. \$160.00

If all current members renew for 2000 we will still have a shortfall of \$305.00 for the year. Mr. Wyman's fleece donation to the wool pool will result in income of \$293.00 once processing costs are covered.

Currently McGuire is covering all the expenses to copy and mail the newsletter directly as the club has not had the income to cover it.

Additional items that should be considered for 2000 include

Non profit status \$250.00

Currently we cannot accept tax deductible donations.

Wyman pointed out that people may still be able to donate money even if we are not a legal non-profit.

Vaughn indicated he was willing to send in some extra money to help defray club expenses.

Breed and club information was sent to 9 new people in October and November.

McGuire pointed out that our bylaws require 2 signatures on checks. The banks will not allow a 2 signature requirement unless we maintain a minimum balance of \$5000.00 in our account. Vaughn will prepare a bylaw amendment that will be sent to voting members to change this to a single signature requirement.

2. Second item covered was the breed standard. It was decided to use the UK breed standard for the US sheep. Some discussion concerning the problem of white spots and sheep who do not meet the standard. No resolution of whether to prevent the registration of these animals. Agreement that everyone should attempt to cull these animals as much as possible.

Wyman has indicated he will be bringing a judge from the UK over to the US to inspect his flock. He will be doing this at his expense. McGuire requested information on when this might happen so west coast breeders could consider joining together to cover expenses to have the same person come out west to inspect flocks here as well. Vaughn indicated his appreciation for the effort to have UK inspectors look at the US stock.

3. UK Semen status

Hoctor stated that he would accept for registration the lambs sired by the imported semen provided that the semen was collected by a vet and inseminated by a vet. McGuire pointed out that the Federal Rules under which the importation and inseminations have been done are more restrictive than that. Semen was from rams who were in quarantine for nearly a year. Semen must be placed into ewes who are part of

flocks who are in the Federal Scrapie program. All F1 or first generation offspring must not be sold except to other Federal Scrapie monitored flocks. Additionally the rams whose semen was imported were selected by the breed council, and are heterozygous for genetic scrapie resistance at codon 171. There was some additional discussion with respect to what USDA is considering in regards to scrapie. McGuire is the only flock currently enrolled in the Federal Program and the only one that has actually used the imported semen. Several breeders own semen doses.

#### 4. Crossbreeds

Everyone agreed that the registry should not register crossbreeds. Mazarella and McGuire mentioned that the use of Black Welsh rams to produce black wool from other ewes is both a viable and a lucrative market. McGuire pointed out that the UK Association promotes the use of Black Welsh rams as terminal sires. Discussion will be continued at a future meeting.

#### 5. Development of our registry

Wyman asked whether Hctor would continue to volunteer to register the sheep. There is confusion as Hctor has in the past stated he owned the registry. It is not clear we have any jurisdiction over the registry, especially as Mr. Hctor is not a member of the club. Wyman said he would pay for Hctor's membership.

McGuire started to present items that members have requested she bring up at the board meeting. 12 people contacted her regarding problems with the registry. 9 wished to remain anonymous and 3 no longer have Black Welsh Mountain sheep because of problems with the registry. McGuire pointed out that she is not the only person who has experienced significant problems with the registry. There was no resolution of these issues and the discussion was tabled until a future meeting.

Hctor will prepare a statement regarding his view of what the difference is between an open registry and a closed one. Hctor mentioned that he would be willing to sell the registry to the club or an association but when asked for what the price would be did not answer.

#### 6. Marketing of meat and wool

There is significant variation in the success people have had marketing their sheep products. McGuire has successfully sold all of her wool crop for 1999 at prices ranging from \$8-16/pound for greasy wool. Mazarella has sold

much wool and roving through her shop as the dark black color is prized by handspinners. Wyman reported that he still has years of the wool clip stored. McGuire to prepare an article for the newsletter about the 1999 wool pool and how to improve the marketing of the wool as a speciality item. Mazarella will take yarn and offer it for sale in her shop.

7. Prices for stock vary considerably Hctor reported that prices in his area are typically slaughter prices and there is no premium for purebred stock. McGuire has sold breeding stock for between \$200-\$300 per ewe and slaughter animals for between \$50-100 each. Wyman has sold breeding stock at \$250 each. Vaughn reported similar prices in the northeast. Hctor stated that the only viable market is selling them as pet or exotic animals. McGuire pointed out they are a viable commercial breed for niche markets. Consensus is that there is a good niche market but we may not be reaching it. This will be discussed again at another meeting.

#### 8. Certificate of Club membership

A request has come in for a membership certificate. McGuire is to purchase a suitable certificate paper and provide these to each 2000 member. Price for a box of certificate paper is estimated to be \$25.00.

The next board meeting will be after the first of the year.

McGuire to provide minutes to all board members by the end of the week.

Respectfully Submitted,

Oogie McGuire, Secretary/Treasurer

### **Club Dues**

2000 dues are now due. Please send your \$10.00 payments to

NA Black Welsh Mountain Sheep Club  
PMB338  
1672 Main Street, Suite E  
Ramona, CA 92065

### **Breed Standards**

I have copies of the UK breed flyer that has the breed standard in it. Since the US club uses the UK standards it is important that all members know what these standards are. If you want a copy let me know.

## Black Welsh Mountain E-Mail List

There is now an e-mail list set up for breeders of Black Welsh Mountain Sheep. To join send a message to [blackwelsh-subscribe@onelist.com](mailto:blackwelsh-subscribe@onelist.com). The list is geared to people aged 10 and above and can cover any topic related to the keeping and marketing of Black Welsh Mountain sheep and their products. See you on-line!

## Wool Pool Yarn DONE!

The first Black Welsh Mountain Wool Pool yarn has been received. It is wonderful sport weight 2 ply yarn perfect for machine or hand knitting. I am including a sample of the washed yarn with this newsletter so everyone can see how it turned out. We did have a very low yield due to problems and contamination of the fleeces sent in. Our yield was less than 30% by weight. Typically we should see yields in the 40-50% range. More on how to correct this is included below.

Mr. Tom Wyman graciously donated some raw fleece and the proceeds from the sale of that portion of the yarn will go to fund the clubs' promotional efforts.

Yarn is available in either a full cone for \$2.00 per oz or for smaller amounts the price is \$2.25/oz. Prices are plus shipping.

Send your yarn orders to the Club mailbox.

## Preparing Wool for Sale or the Wool Pool

We learned a lot with the wool pool this year. The mill has provided much information on how we can better prepare our wool so we have better quality yarn.

The yield was low in part because the mill had to skirt additional fleece off before washing and processing it. For best results send only clean, well skirted wool in. There was considerable vegetable matter contamination and some fleeces had considerable second cuts. Fixing this will take several actions.

Preventing contamination of the fleece with the hay and grains is difficult. Alfalfa hay is the worst offender of fleece contamination. One good way to prevent this is to coat or cover the sheep. Additionally wool from coated sheep does not sun fade and is much darker in color. If you are serious about selling wool to hand spinners coating is almost a necessity. For those

interested in just the wool pool coating will improve the quality of the wool and the yield and will cost us less per pound for processing.

Second cuts are a different matter. This is usually the result of a shearer who does not take care with the fleece. I understand the difficult problems of finding qualified professional shearers. When you do schedule shearing make sure the sheep are clean and dry. If you did not coat them then using a livestock blower before shearing will remove much of the dust, dirt and some VM contamination and make it easier for the shearer to get a clean wool clip.

Shear on a clean board or shearing floor. Skirt the fleeces immediately and then pack loosely. Tell the shearer that the wool clip is important. I've found that because of the low price of commercial wool many shearers don't care whether they do second cuts on the fleece. A little communication can go a long way to improving the quality.

Avoid contamination with baling twine, straw or the worst offenders, sawdust and wood chips. These items can ruin a fleece both for hand spinning and the wool pool.

Several people have indicated they had many pounds of wool stored and were considering sending it in. I do have a caution, wool that is stored in the grease can mold and can also stick together. Before sending in fleeces that have been stored for more than a few weeks please take the time to open each one up on a skirting table and look at it with a very critical eye. Moldy parts can cause fleece breaks and weaken the yarn. If the fleece was improperly skirted then the manure contamination can permanently stain the remaining clean fleece. Also bugs, mice and moths can get into stored fleeces and their spread can ruin a whole mill's production. Poor quality fleece is best used as mulch rather than trying to send it in for further processing.

Hopefully these suggestions can be incorporated into the flocks that provide wool to the wool pool and next year's batch will be of even higher quality.

I will be formulating the rules for joining the 2000 Black Welsh Mountain Sheep Wool Pool in January and will put an article in the next newsletter about how to join in.

## Vice President Report

Hello everyone!

Well I guess among the duties of a VP is to help get people excited and motivated about the club. Any suggestions? Here is my brief tale of one exciting event.

I brought some of my sheep to the New Hampshire sheep and wool festival, held last may. I brought a Scottish Blackface ewe and her ewe-lamb, and I brought a BWMS ewe and her two cross-bred lambs. Well my BWMS ewe stood in a corner and sulked the entire first day! Her lambs hid under her...NOT a good first impression. Meanwhile my "Scottie" ewe was making friends left and right, within an hour her lamb was sold, due to leave as soon as she was weaned.

The next day I brought a different BWMS ewe and *her* lambs. She was only somewhat more animated. But that helped a lot. It was about 9 am when I noticed the best strategy I had seen. A young girl, with her lovely Cottswalds was standing with her sheep holding a lamb to be petted by passersby! Wow! I employed her idea with my BWMS cross lambs. Let me tell you these were ADORABLE little black lambs. They stole the show. I had two with me, and sold four. I could have easily sold ten, I was turning people away. Now these were cross bred lambs, I didn't charge a lot, but I am convinced that I would have had the same result with pure-bred BWMS at usual rates.

I guess the moral of my story is that when people **see** BWMS they fall in love with them. But they have to be seen. I know all the fears associated with exhibiting. I think it's worth setting up a small quarantine pen. Or planning on not bringing home any animal you exhibit. Next spring I will bring some plywood boards, to prevent any contact. But I have to say I had no problems, resulting from exhibiting. In fact I had great time and made some new friends! Yours, Luke

## Breeders Listing

I will be doing a new breeders listing in January after we have, hopefully, received all the renewals.

## Info Packets

I routinely send out information packets to people who inquire about the breed. These packets currently include a copy of the breed standard, a club membership application, the latest club member/breeders list and the latest newsletter. Once a person joins I send them the

bylaws. Any suggestions on what else I should be including would be welcome. I average sending out 3-4 packets per month.

I would also be willing to provide these handouts for anyone who is showing the sheep in any fair or exhibit. Contact me at least 4 weeks in advance so I can be sure to get them to you. I will be charging for the copying costs based on the number of packets you want.

## Out of Season Breeding

**Niki Sawyer** reports that three of her ewes have lambed a second time this year. Feathers and her granddaughter Fortuna lambed in the spring and they have each produced lambs this month. A third ewe lambed just as this was going to the copiers. Niki keeps her ram in with the ewes year round. She would be interested in knowing whether anyone else is experiencing out of season breeding in their sheep.

## News from the UK

Attached is an article that accompanied the UK Association newsletter of November about sheep in Medieval England.

In addition the following prices were recorded from the Annual Breed Show and Sale held in Abergavenny. Prices are reported in guineas.

Description	Avg	Max
9 Full Mouth Ewes	33.36	42
5 2/3 yr old Ewes	24.78	32
59 Shearling Ewes	61.18	150
61 Ewe Lambs	43.10	170
3 Rams	194.25	225
18 Shearling Rams	178.79	420
13 Ram Lambs	137.87	390

A guinea is 1.05 pounds. The exchange rate to US dollars on the day of the sale was 1.6953 dollars per guinea.

The UK Association is also starting an inspected flocks category. Members may have breed panel judges come and inspect their flocks at their expense. Inspected flocks will be designated as such.

A unanimous resolution was made that any females whose "Horn material has broken the skin" would be classed as a fault.

The 2000 Show and Sale will be held at Abergavenny 7 September.

US members with UK registered flocks are encouraged to get their flock returns in promptly as overseas mail can take weeks during the holiday season.

## US Registry Issues

As reported above in the board meeting minutes there was some discussion of current problems with the registry. Reported problems have included the following issues:

1. Inaccurate Papers (names or numbers missing or wrong)
2. Length of time to process registrations and transfers
3. Duplicate registration numbers used for different animals born in different flocks in the same year.
4. No flock book published as per handouts which state a flock book is available.
5. No census of the population.
6. Animal names, numbers, breeder and pedigree information changes when animals are transferred.

Please if you are experiencing problems with the registry please contact your board members and make your concerns known. Suggestions on how to correct these problems are also welcomed.

**Even more important**, if you have had no problems at all then also please contact your board members so we can document when the registry is doing things right.

## Web Site

There will be a major update of the web site hosted at [www.desertweyr.com](http://www.desertweyr.com) in January. At that time all members will be added to the breeders list. If you have a web site and wish to be included then please send e-mail to Oogie with your link and it will be added. I am currently restricting the listing on my web site to club members.

## Breeder Turnover

We have a problem with the Black Welsh Mountain breed. Many breeders get their sheep and then get completely out of the breed within

2-3 years. Clearly we have not done a good job developing the market or explaining the features of our breed so people can make a good decision on whether to work with BWMS.

The sad fact is that when a breeder decides to liquidate we lose many valuable bloodlines. Breeders getting out often send many animals to slaughter. Other animals go to pet homes where they are no longer in purebred breeding programs. These animals are a waste of our precious genetic resources.

If you have any ideas on how to combat this problem please share them with your board members. In addition I'd offer the following suggestions:

1. If you become aware of a flock that is in need of rescue contact your board members. Critically rare bloodlines must be preserved so perhaps we can find a breeding home for those sheep.
2. When selling sheep to new breeders take time to explain both the good and bad qualities of our breed. Informed breeders stick with the breed and stay in sheep.
3. Provide after sales support. Especially for new sheep people be willing to answer questions after you have sold the sheep. In the long run the time you spend now will help both you and other BWMS breeders. Happy customers buy again so lets keep all our BWMS buyers happy.

These are wonderful sheep but our reputation as a breed is tarnished by the huge number of breeders who leave after only a few years. Let's all work together to turn this around.

## New Scrapie Rules Comment Period

USDA is proposing a new set of rules regarding the transport and identification of scrapie positive animals. These rules are long, complex and could affect every sheep and goat producer in the US. Some of these rules could seriously affect the continued survival of rare breeds.

I would encourage all BWMS owners to look at the rules and prepare a letter with your comments. Specific items I am including in my letter are:

- 1 A live animal scrapie test is available and should be included now. It has been proven in the UK and here in the US. We should implement the use of this test immediately.

2. The genetics of scrapie susceptibility are well documented in Europe and the UK. Animals which are QR or RR at codon 171 are resistant to scrapie. Other codons control the onset of symptoms and the types of scrapie that can affect susceptible animals. The USDA should encourage the use of 171 QR and RR rams and promote the breeding of genetically scrapie resistant sheep. Animals which are RR at 171 should be considered free of scrapie and not be restricted in movement.

3. The payment for animals slaughtered under the program is inadequate to cover the costs of purebred breeding or rare breed stocks. The USDA should use a sliding scale based on the value of the individual animals not a blanket payment based on the average for all sheep in the US.

4. Rare breed flocks in which an animal develops clinical scrapie proven by postmortem exam by a Federal Lab should not be depopulated. Instead the live animal test should be used and positives quarantined to allow for the breeding to genetically resistant animals and the orphaning of the subsequent offspring. This will preserve rare bloodlines and breeds without risking the spread of scrapie. Once scrapie positive animals have produced scrapie negative or genetically resistant offspring the scrapie infected animals should be destroyed.

The comments I am making are my own and based on my experience as part of the Federal Scrapie Program. While I can offer reasons why I feel these are reasonable additions or changes to the proposed rules I must state that my opinion should not be construed to be an official opinion of the North American Black Welsh Mountain Sheep Club.

I would encourage you to get the new rules and to make your opinions known. The rules are available in the Federal Register dated November 30, 1999/Proposed Rules Section pages 66791 thru 66812. Some state sheep organizations will send you a copy if you are a member.

I will provide a copy of the new proposed rules to anyone who sends me \$5.00 to cover postage and copying costs.

## Welsh Wigs

Lorna Kearny in Canada sends this article for your information. What an interesting bit of history!

Caps were perhaps the first knitted items in England and can be traced to the thirteenth century. Ten years after Joan and Isabella Capper sought licenses to trade as cappers, the Cappers' Act fixed prices in order to stop cap-knitters from profiteering. The satire verse *Cock Lorell's Boat*, printed in 1515 mentions cappers in its catalogue of rogues and tradesmen.

The Welsh border town of Monmouth was a centre for cap-making for about sixty years and Monmouth caps were well known throughout England. Two hundred years later, Daniel Defoe in his *Tour through Great Britain* (1712) spoke of Monmouth caps, worn by Dutch seamen then made at Bewdly in Worcestershire. The Welsh officer Fluellen, in *Henry V* by Shakespeare, describes the Welsh soldiers as wearing leeks in their Monmouth caps. The play was written in 1599 and these caps were worn especially under military helmets and remained in use by the military and sailors for two centuries more.

Regarded as typical headgear for Welshmen, little has been recorded of their appearance except that they were dark brown, round, and topped with a button. A cap found in an old house in Monmouth in 1969, dating to the sixteenth century is now in the Monmouth local history collection.

It was knitted in the round (this form of knitting predates two-needle knitting). Knitted on four needles in stocking stitch the cap was felted and shorn. The dark wool is coarse, thick 2 ply and knitted at a tension of one stitch to a centimetre. The work seems to have begun with 59 stitches. First a hem or brim of double fabric was shaped by increase or decrease at the end of each needle on the third round inside and outside the hem. The hem was eight rounds deep. Above the hem the cap was shaped by decreasing three times in every tenth round, at the end of each needle in the tenth and thirtieth round, the middle of each needle in the twentieth round. After the thirtieth row the remaining fifty stitches were decreased after every third and second stitch in alternate rounds till eight stitches remained. These were drawn together and topped with a button. A loop of fourteen stitches was added at the back. The resulting cap is a closefitting, deep skull-cap, hard wearing and warm. It was about 8 inches deep and 22 inches in circumference.

"Welsh wig" appears to have been another name for the Monmouth cap. Some of the Welsh wigs mentioned by Dickens and other nineteenth century writers were most likely skull caps of the Monmouth type.

Editors note: I would be very interested in hearing from anyone who tries to knit this pattern. Let me know and I'll put a picture of the cap on the web pages.

## Club Donors

Since the club is still running a deficit several members have graciously donated extra to help the club get off to a good start.

**Tom Wyman** donated wool valued at \$293.00

**Luke Vaughn** donated \$100.00

**Oogie McGuire** donated \$150.00 and the newsletter copying and mailing costs for 1999.

## Member News

**Lorna Kearney** writes "We run a honey farm in the Cowichan Valley on Vancouver Island, one hour's drive north of Victoria, B.C. Canada.

Our experience with sheep began, like so many others, with a couple of lawn mowers. The big Suffolk/Dorset cross breeds were a bit overpowering for me (I wear a leg brace) so we approached a heritage breed farm which was soon to be closing its operation to see if they had any Shetland sheep. They didn't but they had four Black Welsh Mountain sheep ewes and a seven year old ram.

They had been fed a diet of brewer's mash, poor quality hay and thus, were quite skinny. We did breed them, however, and retained a magnificent ram lambs and a ewe lamb.

After a ram year following, we now have had two ewe lambs from each of the original, oldest ewes and a ram from each of these original girls. Sadly the old ram is now pepperoni sausage. His horns have been saved and his hide has been salted in preparation for tanning. I couldn't bear taking home his whole head... with eyes... so the butcher cut off the horns. The Cowichan native Indians where we live carve beautiful ceremonial spoons from sheep horns, so there may be a market for them.

We are trying to use the complete animal. It is a shame that all the sheepskins from the local butchers are thrown into the incinerator along with the offal and bones. There just isn't a market for them, they say. We have had some success in selling tanned hides – black cross breeds and white ones – as many people just do not see them for sale anywhere. The smaller

ones seem to sell better possibly because of price, however I have had two inquiries about black cross breed hides to use for motorcycle seat covers. The long wool absorbs the moisture in our rainy climate and will not show the dirt. A hide draped over the back of a sofa looks just like a sheep shape if trimmed nicely – a great decorator piece. We have received three tanned Black Welsh skins from yearling rams which had been sheared two months prior to tanning. The skin is thinner than the crosses and almost like doeskin.

Our BW wool had a lot of matting through the past winter. What a lot of rain we had, and the hoggets with their longer softer wool suffered the most. I hope to coat some of them this year if I ever get around to making them. I saw some coats in Oregon at the Black Sheep gathering this summer which were made from pack-sack fabric and some people here make them out of woven, plastic type feed sacks.

I have been making felt hats with the BW wool – first knitted then felted. What a beautiful felt, The BW hats sold first and commanded the highest price. What a lot we have to go through to make enough money to cover the next year's feed bill. We have only three to four months of pasture and the rest of the year the sheep have to be supplemented.

For the past century our area has been famous for the patterned Cowichan sweaters so familiar in the Pacific Northwest. The native mill has sold off all its equipment as the bottom has fallen out of their market with "knock-offs" coming out of Japan and New Zealand. There are still a number of native hand spinners and knitters, however most of their wool comes from New Zealand. They cannot get a true black from there however and the natives do not like the imported wool as much as the traditional Suffolk they are used to.

Our cross breeding – Black Welsh/

Suffolk/Dorset is giving a perfect wool for our climate (100 years of native tradition can't be too wrong) If spun softly, bulkily, it retains that downy quality that is warm and water repellent. I love this cross. The crosses begin to grey at different rates: some as older hoggets, some as yearlings and some, not at all. My intention is to retain the "stay-blacks" and breed them back to the Black Welsh. The culling is hard and I love each one of the greying girls more the older they get. My husband is cracking the whip this year and has given me an impossible number to cull the sheep down to before the winter. I wonder if he'd really notice an extra ten or so.

I am of course, keeping the Black Welsh as purebreds.

Last year was my first sheep show season. Oh how I hate carting sheep around! No one knows the breed and even if the judges are given a standard, it is difficult for them to place a BW above a known breed. Our young replacement ram though, placed well and the cross bred won enough awards in the commercial wool categories to make a definite dent in our feed bills. The BW are not a registered breed here yet, so many of the shows will not allow them in the open classes.

Show season is just upon us again... shall I enter? Probably.

For the list of BW sheep we currently have 5 ewes, 4 rams – two of these are yearlings, twins and for sale, 1 ram lamb – for sale and 2 ewe lambs. Also have a ewe yearling to go to a good spinner's home (not for breeding)."

Editor note: Sorry this took so long to get in the newsletter. I'll try to do better next year.

### **Un-Classified Ads**

If you wish to offer something for sale send it to me and I'll put it in the next newsletter. For now

no charge to members to list animals, yarn, hides or other products from BWMS sheep. We may change this if the list gets too large.

#### **Lorna Kearney**

two yearling rams - twins  
1 ram lamb  
1 yearling ewe not for breeding

#### **Niki Sawyer**

1 ram \$100

#### **NA BWMS Club** - 2 ply sportweight yarn

\$2.00/oz full cones or  
\$2.25/oz partial cones

#### **Oogie McGuire**

1 prepared skull with horn caps \$75  
roving \$22.00/pound

#### **Sandra McDonald**

1 ram

### **Editors Notes**

Send info to [ooziem@dsrtweyr.com](mailto:ooziem@dsrtweyr.com)