

Black Welsh Mountain Sheep Club Newsletter May 2000

Mrs. Brain Inspects US Sheep

Mrs. Brain, the Chairwoman of the British Black Welsh Mountain Sheep Breeders Association recently came to the US and inspected Mr. Wyman's flock of 120 ewes, 40 shearlings, 100 lambs and 20 rams. Video was taken and as soon as it is edited and copied it will be made available to club members. I have written o Mrs. Brain to ask for a report and hope to have more information on her findings for a later newsletter.

2000 Wool Pool

No one has contacted me with information on the amounts of wool they have to add to the wool pool or what they would like to see done with it this year. If you are interested please contact me ASAP. As of this writing I personally do not have enough wool to do a pool by myself. If we cannot get more participation we will not have a 2000 wool pool.

Articles Needed

We need articles and notes for the newsletter. Please send in your news and comments and articles on things related to our sheep.

Also, there has been a request for an article about Black Welsh Mountain Sheep for Small Farm Today Magazine. Anyone who wants to write the article please contact either myself or Luke Vaughn for details.

Club Donors

Here is the ongoing list of members who have graciously donated extra to help the club.

I MESSED UP and forgot to add in the last newsletter. Sue Goetz donated \$50.00 my sincere apologies.

Lorraine Vissering donated \$10.00.

Chris Spitzer donated \$10.00.

Ed & Bonnie Lutkewich donated \$10.00.

Vice President News

Hello everyone!

Happy 2000. I think most of us are done with, or finishing up with lambing. Whew! Try as we might sheep do seem to have a mind of their own. To the best of my knowledge Oogie is the first person to use the semen from the British sheep. Numbers wise, it's a pretty low average of conception. But quality seems high. I don't think we can judge A.I. from just one try either. I am planning on using it this fall with new ewes I hope to purchase from Mr. Wyman's flock.

It occurred to me recently, that we are like our sheep....well our club is. Small and resilient. From reading the onelist and hearing from members on occasion, we all seem very committed to these wonderful animals. I think we all will learn a great deal from the visit of Ms. Brain to Mr. Wyman's flock. For those of you who might not know, she is from the British club and Mr. Wyman flew her over to evaluate his flock. Maybe we can get some picture up on our web site of some of his better sheep. It's my feeling that this might help us all in our breeding programs.

As I believe you all know we have a web page the address is www.blackwelsh.org. Please send me pictures! I WILL return them. They must be of good quality and clarity to scan in well. My new address in California is Luke Vaughn, 1483 Mark West Springs Road, Santa Rosa CA 95404.

My best to you all!

Luke

2000 Census

In this census year for the humans in the USA I'd like to propose that we take a detailed census of all the Black Welsh Mountain Sheep in North America. If we can find and document the orphaned flocks, the pet sheep, the crossbreds and those purebreds who never got transferred when sold and get every purebred Black Welsh in and documented it will be a great boon to breeders working to conserve all the existing bloodlines. Until we know what we have we can't effectively work to conserve it.

Data we need for an accurate census are the name, identification or registration number, birth date, birth type, breeder and current owner for all purebreds. If you can also provide data such as birth weight, and where all the offspring have gone (sold and to whom, butchered, or

whatever) it would be helpful. Even better if you can provide data on the birth weight, 60 day weaning weight, grease weight of each fleece, staple length and micron data it will be incorporated into the record. This is the type of data required to calculate accurate EPD's for these important commercial traits. All data received will be published in the newsletter or in a separate flock book.

It would sure be nice if we can track down where every purebred Black Welsh Mountain sheep has ended up since the original importation. With your help we can perform this monumental task.

Letters to the Editor

The following message was posted on the Black Welsh e-mail List at eGroups.com. It is from Lorraine Vissering

Hi Oogie and list-

I know how you feel! I am also the editor for an ag-related newsletter. I don't know if this will help at all, but as a *prospective* (read: wannabe) BWM sheep owner, the things that I would be interested in reading about are: Specific to BWM:

"Personality" traits- are the rams "dangerous" or "gentlemanly" ? (Those terms are taken from the Icelandic and the Border Leicester info packets) Do these sheep come running to their owners and wag their tails or do they run away at the sight of a human? What is their flocking instinct like? Strong or nonexistent?

Crossbreeding with other sheep breeds? Which ones have people tried and what do they end up with in terms of wool/carcass/sheep etc.?

Spinning/felting/knitting BWM wool- ideas, projects, characteristics of the wool, etc.

Breeding for preservation of a rare breed. I know there are whole books written on this subject, but for those of us who aren't quite ready/willing/able to do the research, maybe some information on how to get started on the right foot with this. When people talk about "lines", how will I know which "lines" my (future) animals are from? How are lines defined and how do you keep track of them? How "unrelated" should animals be or how "related" can they be to still be doing a good job with breeding for preservation?

Who has the oldest BWM ewe out there? How old is she and how many lambs has she had over the years?

Not specific to BWM: - does anyone out there run sheep and goats together? What are the pros & cons of doing so? good or bad experiences?

This stuff is just off the top of my head. If I put some thought into it I could come up with more I'm sure. If this stuff has already been covered in recent newsletters, does anyone want to tackle it on the list? Can't wait to get the newsletter!
Lorraine lvissering@pshift.com

Anyone want to tackle these questions?

UK Sired lamb Notes

As the first person to use the imported frozen semen I wanted to report on what I am seeing in the two lambs we got. Overall the UK sired lambs are much more robust and healthy than our other Black Welsh. They are growing faster as well. They have thicker more sturdy legs and their bodies are both longer and beefier. They are not any taller than their age mates but they are very square and blocky. Many of my other sheep are more delicate in structure. The loins in particular are very square and the legs are meaty and thick. The most noticeable improvement is in fleece quality. The UK sired lambs have the best fleeces I have ever seen in purebred Black Welsh. They are dense and very soft.

Based on these results I am even more convinced that we have lost significant breed character in the US population. I have sheep from three different flocks. It is easy to tell which flock a sheep came from by looking at them as they were selected for different characteristics. One flock focused on just meat qualities, one on just wool and one on just temperaments. None of my sheep mix all the important commercial characteristics in one animal.

I estimate that approximately half of my sheep do not meet the complete UK breed standard. In addition to the white noses we have mentioned in previous newsletters it's clear we have also now got sheep with significant kemp in their fleeces not just coarse wool. We have also lost more of the body type than I at first believed. I personally have ewes with horn bumps which is another serious fault.

I realize we cannot automatically cull out every sheep that does not meet the standard right now. To do so would severely limit our gene pool and cause us more problems in the future. However, I do think we can work within the existing population to get back to the correct

type. It will take years of careful selection. It is my hope that the UK genes we are now importing through this semen will help. Certainly in my own flock these two UK sired lambs have raised my standards and many of my sheep no longer look as good as they once did. I would be most interested to have other breeders come and look over the whole flock with me and see if we agree on the differences I am seeing.

I have also asked for an inspection by the UK judges as soon as possible.

Member News

One of our new members, **Chris Spitzer**, writes "No previous experience with Black Welsh Mountain Sheep. Have done a small amount of research on the breed and feel that eventually I would like to pursue a few ewes and a ram for breeding. I am a handspinner and weaver and currently have 18 sheep on a small farm." She also kindly included a nice donation for the club.

Mark Whitaker writes that he got his sheep from Fred Bauer and it appears that the registrations have lapsed. Anyone with information on where Mr. Bauer got his original sheep from please contact Mark.

Lorna Kearney is still searching for information on sheep sold into Canada. She is trying to track down the source of her sheep. There is a report of Black Welsh Mountain sheep being imported into Canada much earlier than the importation by Mr. Wyman. Black Welsh Mountain Sheep are listed as a founding breed for the Newfoundland sheep. Anyone with more information please contact her.

Oogie McGuire has purchased a flock of 18 BWMS plus their 2000 lambs from VA that was being disbursed. This flock has been moved to California and some of the animals will be offered for sale in May so we do not have the entire bloodline in a single place. Several people have already expressed interest in purchasing some of this stock. They represent bloodlines that are very underrepresented here on the west coast. They are scheduled to arrive at Desert Weyr May 12th.

More Yarn Comments

The club has ads out now for the yarn in the latest issue of Interweave Knits magazine. I have already processed several requests for samples as a result of these ads.

I finished my sweater from the yarn we had spun commercially. It is warm and very lightweight. At 8 oz it didn't take much yarn either. No one has reported back yet on how the yarn works for weaving or in knitting machines.

Un-Classified Ads

If you wish to offer something for sale or wanted 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. All ads will also be posted on the www.blackwelsh.com web site.

Kevin Barnhart and James Warren

4 four year old ewes
1 five year old ewe
1 three year old ewe
1 yearling ram
\$1000.00 for all. **Must go by July 30**

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 sizes vary or
\$2.25/oz partial cones

Oogie McGuire

1 prepared skull with horn caps \$75
roving \$22.00/pound
ewes and rams available in May
3 tanned hides from purebreds
1 tanned crossbred hide

That's all the ads I have right now.

Computer Program Ideas

I have been working to find a suitable computer program to handle day to day recordkeeping for my flock. After trying all the various sheep specific programs out there I eventually settled on a dog program from Man's Best Friend Software. While it does require much work and modification to apply to sheep the benefit is that it performs a more accurate 10 generation inbreeding coefficient calculation. The program is designed to run under Windows 98 but I am successfully running in on my Macintosh under Virtual PC. I contacted the company about possibly creating a sheep specific program.

They responded with their willingness to develop and sell a sheep specific program if they received at least 25 orders by credit card all placed on the same day and I was willing to assist them at no charge to make the required modifications. They estimate it will take a month or two after placing orders for them to have the modified software. Price would be \$85.95 each plus \$10.00 shipping and handling. This offer is for US orders only. For my work with them to customize the program I would receive a free copy. While this is a good deal for me I also think it may be of benefit to other shepherds. If you are interested please contact me. If we get together 25 people to purchase the software I will commit the time required to help them make a sheep specific program.

Secretary/Treasurer Notes

Club bank balance is currently at \$436.48 before taking out the costs of publication for this newsletter.

At this time we have 20 Individual Voting members and one Individual Associate member.

Editors Notes

Lambing season is nearly over. Lambs are growing well and things are moving along with the incorporation of the various flocks in our personal breeding program. Please, we need articles and information to add to the newsletter. Whether you are a new person or have had sheep for years, write something and send it in. This newsletter should be the result of all members not just one person's ideas and viewpoints.

Send info to oogiem@dsrtweyr.com