

American Black Welsh Mountain Sheep Association Newsletter December 2001

To BWMS Breeders

Our handsome young ram was well-bedded in the back of the pickup as we packed to travel into northern B.C. to take him to his new home.

We were happy to be leaving responsibility behind for a few days and eager to bring back a new ram lamb.

Half an hour before we left I washed up the breakfast dishes as Jack poured his last cup of coffee and flicked on the TV. It was 9:00am September 11.

For several days, there and back, we drove through the interior of British Columbia, through the cedar forests, to sagebrush hills and poplar groves; the changing landscape's beauty almost unnoticed and unappreciated amid the terrible saga enveloping us from the truck radio – we were unable to turn it off.

We spoke of BWMS friends, unmet, yet somehow connected through our unusual sheep and the ram traveling with us. We talked of Tom Wyman with his New York address and felt so sad for us all.

Finally, back home again, our new ram lamb settled in his fresh stall, I went across the road to see my girls. One by one they wandered up to me for cheek and chest rubs. The sun was streaming across the hay and a hundred red wing blackbirds whooshed overhead. I was overwhelmed with the solitude and the peacefulness.

Again, you were in my thoughts and I prayed you, too, could find peace among your sheep.

Lorna Kearney

Memberships Due

Your dues for 2002 are due now. Please send them as soon as possible so you are eligible to vote for our officers and board members. Details on how to send in your membership and vote are below the officer candidate statements.

Officer Candidate Statements

President Candidate – Tom Wyman

Tom is the original importer of Black Welsh Mountain sheep into North America. He maintains the largest flock in the US and has been an active supporter of the Association. He has served as the Association president since it's founding. In addition to his considerable monetary donations to the Association he provided his entire database of every sheep from importation to the present to assist the Association in recreating the registry database. This has enabled us to recreate the pedigrees of the purebred BWMS in North America.

Vice President Candidate - Ed Lutkewich

"I live on a very special rolling eighty acre farm in Pennsylvania. I look at the ridge of the Appalachian trail everyday. The farm is in total grass pasture and is divided into seven near equal paddocks for rotation purposes. These paddocks required 18,000 feet of board and seven wire high tensile fence, the fence has three hot wires. In addition to the BWMS I raise Belted Galloway Cattle and Tennessee Fainting Goats. I chose the Belted Galloway and the BWMS for the same reasons, very self reliant individuals, very easy keepers, no winter housing required, low fat and low cholesterol when feed only grass and hay, easy calving and lambing, docile in character, and of course attractive to the eye.

I am dedicated to promoting and preserving these two breeds for the very qualities I previously mentioned. Without getting to philosophical and opening a major can of worms, I believe that feeding corn and grains to animals that will finish out on grass and hay is a sin. The corn and grain that we are feeding commercial beef and lamb today should be feed to the humans of this world when we have fantastic animals like the Belted Galloway and BWMS that don't need it. The flock of ewes (Wyman purebreds) I have are all to fat and all they get is grass and occasional hay, granted you need good pastures to accomplish this but not much labor or the cost of grain. This year's spring lambs all finished out over 100 pounds this early fall. The quality of the meat has no equal, without question the chops are the benchmark for every other meat breed of lamb in the business and by the way not only the tastiest but also the healthiest! The scale of economy when you judge your bottom line at the end of the year is dramatically different and in the correct direction. These two breeds with the characteristics that favor them to finish out on grass and hay alone

is omnipotent to preserve for the future of the human race!

I am totally against this miniature sheep business talk, all this is fashion that I will not tolerate when talking about this wonderful breed of BWMS sheep. I love the BWMS breed and would be honored to serve the BWMS Association in any capacity needed and to promote the breed for it's true earlier mentioned values and as the best tasting grass feed lamb in the world. "

Secretary/Treasurer Candidate – Oogie McGuire

"I have served as the Association Secretary/Treasurer from the beginning and I enjoy the task. My efforts for the Association are primarily focused on the documentation and registration of the various "lost" flocks. I am actively working to verify our entire pedigree database and if re-elected as your Secretary would vow to publish the entire flock book data sometime within the next calendar year.

I strongly feel that the BWMS is a viable niche commercial sheep and have been actively promoting them for the places where they make sense. We have developed a good market for our wool and yarn and are working to develop the meat market as well. I am particularly enthusiastic about the UK semen sheep, and with the first group of second generation animals born this past spring I am seeing huge improvements in body shape, fleece quality and meatiness.

My husband and I moved to Colorado last year and moved our entire flock of 100 BWMS. We have finally sold or butchered all the remaining sheep of other breeds so we can concentrate on the BWMS. Our flock currently numbers 110 purebred registered sheep. We raise our stock out on pasture year round with no added grain inputs. We also lamb out on pasture and the BWMS are remarkable for their ability to make that difficult transition with a minimum of effort. We also have started a program to ultrasound the loin eye area of potential breeding sheep and will be using this as a way to measure carcass traits for our flock.

As a spinner, weaver and knitter I value the wool my sheep produce and feel that it can be successfully marketed if promoted in the right places. I vow to continue the promotion of the purebred BWMS sheep and would welcome your vote of confidence in this election."

Board of Directors Candidates

Suzanne Correia

"I've been raising fiber sheep and goats for the past nine, going on ten, years. I've always had an interest in the heritage breeds. My goal has been to develop a flock that is self-sufficient in a SMALL farm atmosphere. They have to be climate hardy, thrifty, disease-resistant, and a true livestock animal rather than pet - having to produce something other than "cuteness." Shetlands, and now, Black Welsh Mountains, fit the requirements admirably.

My goal is to promote the BWM breed as a true dual-purpose breed, and I have many avenues available currently to do that. I do several major wool festivals each year including the Taos Wool Festival (since 1995/96), Estes Park Wool Market (1998/99), the new Pagosa Springs Wool Festival (2001), and others in and around my own state of Texas. I am currently active in the development of a new Fiber Producers/Enthusiasts group whose goal is to promote natural Texas fibers. I write for an OnLine Wool Enthusiasts Magazine on occasion and have a relatively active website of my own that features not only my wool products but also my livestock.

I would like to see our BWM breed come back to the British standards of conformation and wool. I believe that the more medium fleeces are more useful overall than the "next to the skin soft" fleeces that are so much in style right now. I would like to see all BWM breeders "come back to the fold" so that we do not lose any current U.S. bloodlines while achieving the above goals."

Jodi Milske

"I live on a small farm on the Door peninsula (the "thumb") of Wisconsin. I began raising sheep six years ago, thinking they would be the ideal small livestock for our rocky, windswept location. I knew I wanted a dual purpose breed, and that I wanted to help conserve and promote rare breeds. My research led me first to Lincoln Longwools, and upon acquiring my little starter flock, I fell completely in love with sheep. Within a year I learned to spin, knit, felt, and weave, and have never looked back! Three years ago I decided to add a second breed, and after more research I discovered the Black Welsh Mountain. They seemed to fit all my requirements: small and easy to handle, an interesting handspinning fleece with a character very different from Lincoln, hardy and adaptable, and with high quality, lean meat. AND, they were obviously in need of preservation. I bought a ram and two ewes from Connie Whan in Illinois, and

have since added lambs from Thomas Wyman's flock. I currently own seven BWM ewes and one ram; four of the ewes are bred for March/April lambing.

I find the BWM to be a very enjoyable breed to own. I am struck, however, by the variability and rather poor quality of the fleece compared to what I expected from reading the breed standard and seeing examples of British wool. I have one ewe whose fleece my shearer half jokingly says I should market for scouring pads! I hope to see improvement through the introduction of a British AI grandson next year. With so few animals, I have so far only been able to cull for severe faults (bad tempered ram; infertile ewe); I look forward to seeing my flock grow to where I can do some serious selection toward the British standard in both fleece and conformation. I feel that with our new registry, and the current core of dedicated and conscientious breeders building on Mr. Wyman's excellent foundation, there is great potential for this breed in North America.

My goal is to develop and promote the BWM as a practical and useful dual purpose fiber/meat animal, NOT as a miniature or novelty breed! I feel strongly that "novelty" status has a very detrimental effect, leading to loss of credibility within the rare breed community, genetic damage to the breed itself, and the inevitable involvement of fly-by-night "breeders" looking to make a fast profit. I hope that we, as an association, can work together to diversify our genetic base, promote the versatility of the BWM, and continue to attract responsible breeders who share our goals to improve and preserve this wonderful breed."

Niki Sawyer

"I live on a 50 acre farm in beautiful upstate NY. Five years ago, I learned to spin. I am able to crochet and knit. My fifth lambing season has just started. I have been working hard to improve my fleece quality and I am getting there slowly. We purchased two lovely rams with great fleeces from Lee Morgan Davie. They should throw beautiful lambs. I am a beekeeper and am active in Bloodhound rescue. I have 4 children, 13 grandchildren, 2 great grandchildren."

Niki has been a board member and has actively supported youth by donating lambs to worthy individuals to promote the breed.

Voting Rules, Ballots Enclosed – PLEASE READ CAREFULLY!

If you were a current paid voting member of the association for 2001 then enclosed with this newsletter is a ballot and two envelopes. Please fill out your vote and place it in the smaller envelope marked ballot. Take the sealed smaller envelope and place it in the larger envelope that is addressed to the association post office box. Please include your membership application and dues in this larger outside envelope. Only people who have sent in dues for 2002 will have their ballots count for this election.

As ballots come in I will be checking the larger envelopes to verify that you have paid your dues for 2002. Then I will be taking the smaller unmarked envelopes out and saving them for final counting. That way no one will have their individual vote known and your votes will be anonymous.

I will again take the unopened ballots to the local Notary where we will open them and count them. He will then sign a witness statement on the results, which I will send with the next newsletter.

If you do not have a ballot enclosed, (because you were not a member in 2001) and still wish to become a member of the association and vote in this election you must call or e-mail me immediately. My phone number in Colorado is (970) 527-3573 and my e-mail address is oogiem@desertweyr.com I will send a ballot and voting form to you and will verify it once I receive your membership dues. Ballot requests must be received by 25 December and all valid ballots with membership renewals must be postmarked no later than 15 January. I will wait to count ballots until 25 January to account for mail delays and hope to send out results that next week.

We have had a number of new people join this year and I look forward to you all renewing for next year.

Registry Update

As of December 2, 2001 I have processed registrations for 295 living sheep. This figure does not include the registrations for Tom Wyman's flock. I have processed transfers for 26 sheep. We currently have 4543 sheep registered.

There are several types of registration:

Full registered animals are in North America and fully registered purebred BWMS. They are issued registration papers.

Born Dead animals are lambs that were born dead. I can input their records so they show up in the progeny lists for their parents but there is no charge to document them. They, of course, cannot be registered as full registered animals.

Birth Notified animals are lambs who are born alive and could be registered. If you wish to send me all your birth data then the records for the progeny of your sheep will be accurate. Later you can choose which of these lambs you wish to register and after payment of the registration fee they will be issued certificates and a full registration number assigned. Birth Notified is often used to document all lambs and the ones sold for meat are then not registered.

UK animals are those who never came to the US but who are represented as ancestors here or are the semen donors for AI sired lambs. These sheep are included so we have documentation of their pedigree but are not issued US registration papers. If in the future live sheep are again imported from the UK and some of these animals are among that importation, they will be assigned new full registration numbers in our Association.

Flock Census and Annual Report

If you own sheep then included with this newsletter is a listing of all the sheep currently shown as alive and that are listed as owned by you. Please check this document, correct any mistakes and send it back to me. This is our annual census, and the information will be used to update the flock records prior to publishing the flockbook next year.

If you wish to provide data on born dead or birth notified animals please include it and they will be added at no charge. If you need to see a listing of all sheep, which are reported as bred by you, let me know and I will be happy to provide it. Similarly if you wish to see a list of sheep, owned by you but who have since died or been butchered I can provide that as well. If you have any other specific requests contact me and I will try to accommodate you.

How to Transfer Your Sheep or Document Deaths or Meat Sales

There is a new procedure for transferring sheep and documenting the deaths and sales to meat

of registered sheep. Once you have the new certificates in hand on the back you will find a transfer certificate.

To transfer ownership of sheep the SELLER of a sheep needs to circle "Sold" and the date of sale and also sign and date the back. The BUYER needs to fill out the name, flock name and address. If the BUYER is a current member then they should also add their ABWMSA Flock number. If they have been assigned a Federal Flock ID put that number on as well.

The person paying for the transfer needs to return the entire original certificate to the Association post office box with the transfer fee. A new certificate will be issued to the buyer.

If a sheep dies the owner should circle "Died" and fill in the date. If you wish to add a cause of death it can be included in the breed registry records. Just write in a cause of death on the back of the certificate.

To document a sale for meat use the same procedure, circle "Sale for Meat" and the date.

To complete the process please sign and date the certificate. Send in the whole certificate to the Association post office box so the Secretary can properly document the changes.

Flock Prefixes

Keep in mind that once you have selected a flock prefix, and sheep you bred have been registered with that prefix you cannot change it. If the prefix listed is not what you want, and you have not yet bred and registered any sheep then please contact the Secretary to change your prefix. Once sheep have been registered with a particular prefix it is permanent to that flock.

Club Donors

I keep an ongoing list of members who have graciously donated extra to help the club. If you have donated money or fleece to one of the wool pools **thanks**, your support is allowing us to put additional ads in various sheep and farming magazines and is generating interest in the breed. Donations received recently are currently earmarked to pay for the registry software.

Robert Smith and his 2 sons, Steven and Travis Smith \$15.00

New Scrapie Eradication Program

The new program took effect November 19. If you have not already gotten your premises ID please contact your state veterinarian and get your assigned ID. This is your Federal Flock Number and will be included on the registration papers of all sheep you breed.

Once you have gotten your flock ID, if you choose to use the free ear tags as your method of ID, please let me know what sheep you own and what tag number they have. I can update their records in the registry database so that this number is on the papers.

A brief review of which sheep need ID:

All sheep that are either scrapie positive, exposed or come from a high risk or suspect flock.

All sheep which are sold for breeding purposes.

All intact sheep which are shown or exhibited.

All sheep that will travel across state boundaries.

All sheep sold for slaughter who are 18 months or older or who are pregnant or have lambed.

Wethers do not require an official ID if under 18 months of age.

In addition you must keep records of where your sheep are sold to for 5 years after you dispose of them. I am working on an Excel spreadsheet that I will put on the Association web page. This file can be used to keep these records.

I called my state vet the Thursday before Thanksgiving to order the free tags and tagger. Even though I am enrolled in the more stringent Certification program I liked the idea of my farm tags being free rather than me having to pay for them. I received my tags and a free tagger on November 28. The tags are the same ones I was using (small rototags from Premier) but have my Colorado ID and an individual lamb number on them.

Wool Payments Sent

Anyone who requested a Farm Service Agency wool payment for 2000 should have gotten his or her 2001 payment by now. This program was part of the 201 funds and provided a payment to producers of wool to help offset the poor wool pool prices.

Retained Ewe Lamb Program

The US Government is working out details of a program to pay producers for each ewe lamb they retain for breeding in 2001. The program has been proposed and the payment looks like it will be \$18.00 per ewe lamb retained in the flock. Details are still being worked out, we will pass on more info as we find it out. Only info so far is the local Farm Service Agency will be the group administering the payments.

ALBC Article

The ALBC did a nice article on Black Welsh Mountain sheep in their last newsletter and included a picture of some really cute lambs. OK I'm biased, they were our lambs. We have gotten a lot of response to this article and at least 2 new members because of it.

Youth Conservation Program

Attached is a short document with information about the Youth Conservation Program. This program puts rare breed sheep in the hands of youth and has been a great advertisement for the breeds and breeders involved. If any breeders wish to participate please contact them directly.

If anyone can help with transportation of a BWMS yearling ewe from our farm in Colorado to either of the donation sites and present the ewe to the winning youth we would be glad to participate. Unfortunately I can't take time away to deliver the sheep but would donate one if we can get her transported to either MD or MA. Contact me if you can help.

Fiber Frenzy 4H Project Article

By Emilie Wiegler.

Ed. Note: The pictures that accompanied this article are on a separate page.

This project was a 4H project for the Muscatine County Fair in West Liberty, Iowa, eventually

being selected for entry in the Iowa State Fair. It came about as I was thinking about the differences in spinning wools and how that might make a neat poster. It became something much larger!

When we got sheep almost 5 years ago, we needed to learn about raising them. That led us to attend events that looked like they might have useful information. Eventually, we made it to a "wool gathering" during which a family introduced us to using the wool from the sheep, not just the meat.

Since then we have gotten very interested in sheep as fiber animals and have discovered that there are over 400 breeds of sheep. I wanted to see how the wool from different breeds compared to each other.

First I talked to my mom and asked her to email the "Spin-List" which is an email list of spinners worldwide. She asked if anyone would be willing to mail me 1 oz samples of wool from their favorite breeds. The response was overwhelming. I received 56 samples of fiber from self-described fiber-holics.

As wool arrived, I got busy washing, combing, spinning and knitting.

It has been a huge job, but I have learned so much about the characteristics of wool. I also did research about each breed and learned a lot about sheep history and traits.

I discovered that different wools are suited for different purposes, and I have personal preferences for my own spinning. There were so many beautiful and varied fibers, but some were so wonderful that I couldn't help but wish I could add a sheep of that breed to my spinning flock.

My favorite fibers were the Corriedale, Gotland, Merino, Rambouillet and Romney. It is so hard to just pick out a few though, because I also loved the Wensleydale and the Perendales, Shetland and Icelandic

The biggest obstacle was the blessing of many, many more wool samples than I ever dreamed I would get. It quickly became clear the project

was too large for a poster. 4H has definite guidelines that must be followed for posters. There was no way for me to follow those rules. Mom and I wandered around office supply store hoping to find a book big enough to accommodate what I needed to put on each page. We eventually settled on a photo scrapbook album that measures 12" by 15". Even at that size I barely managed to fit in what I wanted.

I have learned so much from this project. It is definitely a life long memory and a once in a lifetime experience. I am so grateful to the many people that helped and encouraged me. I think fiber nuts must be a special caring breed of people.

Ed. note The Association provided breed information and pictures and Desert Weyr donated raw fleece for this project. Congratulations to Emilie!

Web Site

Our new website is on-line. Check out www.blackwelsh.org for info. If you wish to be included on the on-line breeders listing let me know and I'll be happy to add you. We can also take ads for the newsletter and the web site.

Secretary/Treasurer Notes

Lots of ads coming out, we now have yearly ads in the two major sheep magazines, the ASI newspaper and will be getting one in the ALBC newsletter. I missed the publication deadline for the next issue so it will be 2 issues before our ad starts running there.

Club bank balance is currently at \$123.33 before taking out the costs of publication for this newsletter.

Editors Notes

Please send articles, we need them.

Send info to oogiem@desertweyr.com