

American Black Welsh Mountain Sheep Association Newsletter

Paonia, Colorado

December 2002

Notes from the Lambing Pen

Stanley Ward

Tilden Little Farm

Last spring was my third lambing season with Black Welsh Mountain Sheep at Tilden Little Farm. The foundation stock ewes arrived in August 1999 and seven ewes lambed in April 2000. The first year I encountered considerable bad luck during lambing season. A total of twelve lambs were born (both dead and alive) and I raised only seven lambs. The result was a lambing percentage of 100% with a survival rate of 55%.

In March 2001, I did much better, successfully raising thirteen lambs from nine ewes, which equals a 140% lambing percentage and 100% survival rate. There were seven ewe lambs, all of which were good to excellent quality. I registered the ewe lambs and plan on breeding them in the fall of 2003. The six ram lambs were castrated and sold.

In October 2001, I placed my three rams with four ewes and five yearlings. (The yearlings were twenty-four months old at lambing). The two younger rams were each placed with two ewes and the main stock ram was placed with five ewes. Last March four ewes and four yearlings had a total of fourteen lambs. (There were six twins and two single lambs; eight male and six female lambs.) The lambing percentage was 180%. All fourteen lambs did well and grew very fast. Most lambs weighed between five to six pounds at birth. My five year old ewe had an eight pound single ram lamb from the main ram. She had an excellent pair of female twins last year, so I hope the ram lamb will develop into an excellent stock ram in the future.

I had only one difficult birth this past spring. It was with a yearling who had also been born under difficult circumstances in April 2000. She was the very last sheep to lamb, about two weeks after the rest of the

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Association Update

Registry Update

As of December 1, 2002, we had registered a total of 5,019 sheep since the importation. We currently have 856 alive sheep, either registered or birth notified. Oogie expects some of the birth notified sheep to never be registered since they are rams and are likely to be butchered. Of the living sheep, there are 230 males and 626 females. There are 72 sheep with a status of "other." Oogie is seeking information on whether they are still alive, or have been butchered or died. Lastly, Tom Wyman donated \$500 to assist in the production costs of the first full flock book. Members will be getting the flock book as soon as it is published. We'll keep you posted.

Officer Candidates & Voting Rules

On page 3, you'll find a listing of all those who have been nominated for Officers and members of the Board of Directors of the Association as well as details regarding voting rules and casting your ballots.

Send in Your Dues

Dues are due at the end of each year. Remember to send in your dues for 2002 if you want to vote.

Secretary/Treasurer Notes

Our current club bank balance is \$734.37, not including costs for producing this newsletter.

Flock Census and Annual Report

Included with this newsletter is a listing of all the sheep that are currently recorded as alive along with the registered owners. If you own sheep, please review the document and correct any mistakes. Please return the list to Oogie so she can use the information to compile the annual census.

Web Site

All members will be listed on the website unless you specifically request otherwise. If you do not want your email included, let Oogie know. Also, the new email address, info@blackwelsh.org, is now active. ❖

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ewes. The second lamb of twins presented with one front leg backwards. The ewe was getting very tired — the first lamb had taken two hours to be delivered — so I assisted her with the second one.

With the ewe on her side, I pulled on the one extended leg with one hand and eased my fingers of the other hand into the vagina and pulled, in time with her contractions. I pulled on the shoulders not the neck of the lamb. When I say pull, I mean a gentle even pressure on the lamb's leg. Never pull on the neck. If pulling on the head is necessary, only apply pressure, with a lambing rope, on the crest at the back of the head. Pull downward not backwards in relation to the tail.

(Some people think in these circumstances that a snare rope should be attached to the protruding leg and a second to the crest of the head, then the lamb pushed backwards until the retained leg can be hooked forward. In my opinion, this makes things very complicated and risks damaging the ewe.)

Both lambs were very small, about four pounds each. Since I had placed my fingers in the ewe's vagina, I gave her 1.5 cc of LA200 antibiotic subcutaneously just to be on the safe side. The pulled lamb was very weak, so I milked the ewe and fed him 15 cc of colostrum and repeated this feeding at two hour intervals for six hours. The ewe had a very light, open, loose, flaky fleece and very poor conformation, so given her history she was culled this autumn as were both of her lambs.

FYI: The best book that I have come across for help with lambing problems — as well as every sheep disease you can think of — is *Sheep Ailments: Recognition and Treatment* by Eddie Straiton (The Crowood Press, 2001, 7th edition).

After the ewes have lambed, I use iodine on the naval cord of each lamb. Next, I ear tag the lambs at a week old and worm them between two and three months old. While worming the lambs, I worm the mothers, too. I like to worm the ewes at tugging time and again halfway through pregnancy. While worming the ewes during pregnancy, I also vaccinate them with an 8-way vaccine. I revaccinate the lambs at the same time as worming them. I do not castrate males until about three or four months of age or even later by which time I hope to have a better idea of their breeding potential.

To castrate I prefer the burdizzo bloodless emasculator method. I strongly believe that there is much less set back to the growth of the lambs when castration is performed late, rather than just after birth. The elastrator method is much slower in taking effect and much more painful.

The one yearling that did not breed last fall I will keep. She has a good tight fleece and an excellent conformation. She also cost me a fortune to transport from Virginia, so it would be nice to get some return on my investment. Hopefully, she will prove to be a late developer and produce twins in the future. I believe that with a rare breed such as the Black Welsh it is important to keep as much "good" genetic variation as possible. At the same time it is of the utmost importance to consistently cull any animals that have inherent problems such as infertility and poor lambing performance. With such a small population of animals, it is tempting to want to keep every one despite their faults. This would prove to be a big mistake and be a disservice to the breed as a whole. ❖

Black Welsh Yarn Reserve Champion at Taos Wool Festival

Michelle Walden's 8-ply cabled handspun yarn skein made from purebred Black Welsh Mountain Sheep wool took Reserve Champion at the Taos Wool Festival in October 2002.

Michelle describes herself as "a 30-something wife, mom, spinner and knitter." She had been spinning less than 18 months when she decided to work BWM wool. She is also a founding member of the Rowdy Outlaw Texas Fiber League (aka ROTFL).

Pictures of the winning skein are on the web at: <http://www.fysh.org/~slinky/pix/taos> ❖

The purpose of the American Black Welsh Mountain Sheep Association is to advance the public's knowledge and use of the purebred Black Welsh Mountain sheep by promoting the identity and versatility of these animals, conserving and protecting this rare breed.

For information please contact us at 970.527.3573

or info@blackwelsh.org

Officer and Board Nominations

The following individuals have been nominated for either officer or board positions within the ABWMSA:

President –

Tom Wyman

Vice President –

Ed Lutkewich

Secretary Treasurer –

Oogie McGuire: I would like to continue to serve as Secretary/Treasurer and will be running for that office.

Board of Directors (3 candidates) –

Sue Goetz

Stanley Ward: I am running for re-election to the board of the Black Welsh Mountain Sheep Society in order to help maintain and promote this unique, rare and most useful of breeds. Having farmed in North Wales for eight years and worked extensively with Welsh Mountain and Black Welsh Mountain Sheep, as well as closely related breeds, I believe my depth of experience can be of use to the Society.

I have a City and Guilds Diploma in Hill Farming and Grassland Management from College Merioneth Dolgellau in Wales and have extensive knowledge of the sheep industry in Britain. In 1999 I established the Tilden Flock of BWM sheep in California with a purchase of six foundation ewes and a ram from Oogie McGuire. With a further purchase of six Virginia ewes, I have built up the number of sheep in the flock to sixteen ewes and three rams. Recently I purchased a young ram that is descended from imported semen in order to help expand the bloodlines within the breed. My main aim to have a small, very high quality flock that will be a credit to the breed. Additionally, I am keen to recruit new breeders and have sold four rams and some ewes to new sheep farmers in the local area.

During the past two years I have participated in every vote that has come before the board and done my best to keep up with the extensive volume of emails on the numerous issues that have been debated. In the future I think we should concentrate on expanding the breed

among commercial sheep meat producers — both small and large scale. Unfortunately, I think wool will always be of very minor economic value. I will also continue to try and popularize the breed locally and assist in starting up new flocks.

Mark Whitaker

Voting Rules, Ballots Enclosed

(PLEASE READ CAREFULLY!)

If you were a current paid voting member of the association for 2002 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 2003 will have their ballots count for this election.

As ballots come in Oogie will be checking the larger envelopes to verify that you have paid your dues for 2003. She will take the smaller unmarked envelopes out and save them for final counting to ensure that your votes will be anonymous. Oogie will take the unopened ballots to the local notary where they will be officially opened and counted. The notary will sign a witness statement on the results, which Oogie will send with the next newsletter. If you do not have a ballot enclosed — because you were not a member in 2002 — and still wish to become a member of the association and vote in this election, you must call or e-mail Oogie immediately. Her phone number in Colorado is (970) 527-3573 and her email address is oogiem@desertweyr.com. She will send a ballot and voting form to you and will verify it once she receives your membership dues. Ballot requests must be received by January 15, 2003 and all valid ballots with membership renewals must be postmarked no later than January 31, 2003. Oogie will wait to count ballots until 14 February to account for mail delays. We've had a number of new people join this year and look forward to you all renewing for next year. ❖

LAMB PROMOTION, RESEARCH & INFORMATION ORDER

As most of you know, the USDA has established the Lamb, Promotion, Research and Information Order. This Order establishes an industry-funded program for promoting US lamb and lamb products (including pelts) while excluding wool and wool products. Since 1993, there has been a 20% decline in domestic lamb producers as foreign imports of lamb continue to significantly rise. A referendum will be held no later than three years from implementation of this Order to determine whether to continue the program.

The Order applies to: 1) all lamb producers, seedstock producers, feeders and exporters; and 2) all first handlers, primarily packers but anyone who buys or takes possession of lambs from a producer or feeder for slaughter, including custom slaughter. Note: if a producer or feeder markets lamb products directly to consumers, that individual is considered a first handler. All producers, feeders and exporters are required to pay an assessment of one-half cent (\$.005) per pound when live lambs are sold. All first handlers pay an additional assessment of 30 cents per head of lamb purchased by the first handler for slaughter or export. The first handler is then responsible for remitting the total amount of assessments due to the Lamb Promotion Board. On a monthly basis, the first handler is responsible for submitting all fees s/he has collected from producers, along with her or his fees of 30 cents per head, to the Lamb Promotion Board. Assessments are due to the Board by the 15th of each month following the month in which the lambs were purchased for slaughter or export. Anyone who has paid assessment fees and who is not in favor of supporting the promotion program may request a refund from the Board within 60 days following the date that the assessment was paid. One-time refunds will be made at the time of the referendum. By the way, a lamb is defined as "an ovine animal of any age, including ewes and rams." Assessments began July 1, 2002.

Of course, there are required forms for submitting assessments or requesting refunds. (Each form is one page). You can access the forms — along with additional information — from the following website: www.ams.usda.gov/lsg/mpb/rp-lamb.htm or you may also call the USDA Marketing Branch at 202-720-1115. The program is expected to raise \$3 million annually for promotion and research. ❖

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ABWMSA

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