

American Black Welsh Mountain Sheep Association

SPRING 2012 NEWSLETTER



Mutiny Bay Ram Fares Well At County Fair

August 2011 Clark County Fair, Mutiny Bay Onyx and Frodo won champion and reserve. The judge was very complimentary of them and said their horn placement was perfect and that they were beautiful representations of the breed. It was so fun being at the fair with them, they are so very sweet. Mutiny Bay Ebony was not able to come to the fair because of a mix up with the vet, but I was so very excited about the boys.

I do hope to own BWMS in the future. They have been so wonderful to have, what marvelous animals they are.

by Janelle Wilson

Note: The Wilson family have moved and Janelle has said good-bye to her sheep. Thanks for the great work in promoting BWMS Janelle. Best wishes to you and your family.

(more photos on Page 6)



New Registration Procedure and Fees

Starting in 2012 we are changing both the procedure and the fees for registering lambs. These new fees are only effective for lambs born in 2012 and later.

The new fees to register are:

\$5.00 per lamb if the lamb has not been properly Birth Notified

\$3.00 per lamb if the lamb has been properly Birth Notified

We no longer charge different amounts for rams and ewes. We are also eliminating the additional PayPal fee for any registrations or transfers paid via PayPal.

Transfers remain \$5.00 per sheep

Currently I am spending a huge amount of time dealing with improperly filled out or incomplete birth notification and registration forms. This new fee structure is to encourage breeders to properly Birth Notify all lambs prior to registration to reduce the time required to process registrations.

There is an excel spreadsheet available which can be used to collect all the proper data for Birth Notification and registration.

The items I require to Birth Notify a Lamb are:

Full birth date including day, month and year.

Sex of the lamb, please use M for male, F for female and C for wether

Type of birth, single, twin or triplet

Live birth or stillborn

Sire registration number

Sire registered name

Dam registration number

Dam registered name

If a live birth then I need the following additional data fields:

I need at least one set of tag data. It can be either a farm tag or federal scrapie tag or Canadian tag. Full tag data includes the individual ID number, the color of the tag and which ear the tag is in. If you enter in a federal tag number I automatically use your official Federal Flock ID as the flock ID on the tag. Please ensure that I have your proper Federal ID number.

The name of the lamb. All lambs will have the breeder Flock Prefix as part of their registered name. If you do not provide a name I will use the tag number as the name.

However, bear in mind that once a lamb is named it cannot be changed. If the sheep loses the tag and you put in a new tag and then send in progeny data with that new tag as the name of the sire or dam I will not be able to figure out who the parents are. A common problem is that when I register a sheep without a name the official name becomes the tag number. Breeders who use tag numbers as name

often do not keep track of the original tag number and send in lamb reports and registrations using the current tag number for the parents. Sometimes I can verify who the parent is by searching for a history of tag changes for an animal but if I cannot figure it out then the registration is put at the end and I send a message asking for correct data.

The only unique identifier for any registered sheep is the official Registration number. That number is the 6 digit number in the upper left of the registration papers. If there are conflicts between that number and the name as entered in on lamb reports I use the registration number.

If you wish to provide it, additional data can be provided including birth, 50 and 100 day weights, fleece micron, Codon 171 and Codon 136 genotype. Please see the next article about weights if you plan to send any in.

PLEASE include ALL lambs born to a single ewe at the same time on a single form. Currently to prevent errors the system does a number of checks and verifications when I enter in a lamb birth. One of these is to ensure that I do not enter in 2 lambs to the same dam at different times. What has been happening is that I get a form to register a lamb. The data says it is a twin but there is no information on the other lamb. When I enter in the information I have to change the number of lambs notified or registered to be 1 out of a twin birth. This works fine for the first lamb but the problem comes when weeks or months later I get a registration for the twin. Now when I enter in the data for this new lamb I get an error message that the ewe gave birth the same day. To fix this I have to go out and verify the progeny by running a progeny report for the ewe. I have to verify that the first lamb was originally sent in as a twin birth. If that fails I cannot continue. If the first lamb was properly registered as a twin then I have to go back into the birth notification system, enter in all the individual data on that lamb a second time while manually overriding the error messages that come up. Then I have to run a procedure to clear up the problems this causes in the database. I have to clean up the database after every such lamb entered, I cannot wait and do a single clean-up at the end. It typically takes me 30-45 minutes to process the second of a set of twins when they are not sent in at the same time. Because of the hassle and the risk of significant errors when I do this, any that come in that way get automatically dumped to the back of the list and they generally take me a lot longer to do. I just completed fixing a series of lambs that were the second twin to lambs previously registered and it took 5 hours to do 7 lambs.

There is no charge to birth notify your lambs.

In addition if a lamb is to be transferred we require full federal scrapie tag or official Canadian ID tag. No sheep will be transferred without full accurate Federal Tag data.

If you have questions about this new procedure please feel free to call me (970) 527-3573 between 8 am and 5 pm Mountain Time and I can go over it with you. I can also be reached via e-mail at info@blackwelsh.org.

New Weights 2012

One of the items we can include on your sheep registrations are the birth and early weaning weights. There are several things that are changing with respect to weights as of 2012. If you plan to send in weights please take note of these changes and enter in the proper data on your registration or birth notification form.

Previously we entered in weights as pounds and ounces. Starting in 2012 all weights must be sent in as decimal pounds. I am sending the database off for conversion of all existing weights to the new format.

The other big change is that the second weight will no longer be 30 days. When we initially set up the registry the US and the UK both had separate systems for calculating EBVs or Estimated Breeding Values for various commercially important traits. In both cases the early weight for lambs was 30 days and this weight was used to calculate the maternal genetic characteristics of the sire and dam and the average daily gains for the lambs. Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Europe used 50 days as the early lamb weight. However, in the last few years there has been additional research and now it is known that the most accurate date to use for tracking maternal characteristics is either 50 or 100 days.

Based on this new data both EBLEX and SIGNET in the UK adopted this new date for all their EBV calculations. In the US the National Sheep Improvement Program, NSIP, changed their entire system and now use Australia's LambPlan program to do all EBV calculations. LambPlan uses 50 and 100 day weights. To keep our data consistent with what is tracked in the UK we are therefore changing the date printed on the registration papers to be a birth and 50 day weight.

For all lambs to be registered in 2012 or later the weights need to be reported as birth and Adjusted 50 day weights. Use the calculation to adjust the actual 50 day weight to account for the sex of the lamb, age of dam birth type and rearing type according to the standard formula printed in the Sheep Production Handbook published by the American Sheep Industry Association, Inc. 2002 Edition, Volume 7 page 47 Table 10. If you need assistance please contact me and I'll be glad to help.

To edit the existing database I will be contacting every breeder who has furnished 30 day weights and asking them if they have a 50 day weight. If they do not have that data, the 50 day weight will be calculated based on the average daily gain of the animal in question between birth and 30 days using the ASI formula for calculated ADG. This new 50 day weight will be entered into the individual animal record. While not totally accurate it is the only way I can see to update the old records. At this time I do not anticipate printing new registration papers that show the new 50 day weights unless asked to do so by the breeders. There will be no charge to replace papers due to this

change if you require it but unless there is a real need we'd ask that breeders keep the old papers to reduce the Association costs for reprinting papers.

With the change to NSIP and their use of LambPlan to run the EBV calculations Black Welsh Mountain Sheep can now be recorded. BWMS are run using the US Maternal selection index as well as providing all the standard individual trait EBVs for the various data items LambPlan can accept. My own flock, Desert Weyr, is currently the only flock of Black Welsh Mountain Sheep that is recording under this national program. If you are interested in the NSIP program please contact me. I'll be glad to share my experiences and help you get started doing performance recording. On my initial data run we had sheep with index numbers ranging from 96 to 106. Larger numbers are better and the top USA Maternal sheep in the country across all breeds had indexes of 118.7. For information on the NSIP program you can start at nsip.org but be warned that the web site is confusing and hard to navigate.

New Flock Books

I will be publishing the Flock Book Volume 4 this summer once all the weight changes have been made to the database. I expect that to be sometime in late summer or early fall. All current members will get a copy of the flock book included with their membership. Additional copies will be available for purchase. We still have copies of Flock Books Volumes 1, 2 and 3 available. Volumes 1 and 2 were published in a single book.

Purchase a Flock Book Volumes One and Two \$50.00

Purchase a Flock Book Volume Three \$50.00

WANTED

Memberships & Dues

2012 Dues are still \$20.00 a year. Many current breeders are not current and are in arrears with their membership dues. *Please note that your sheep will not be registered or transferred to new buyers until your dues are paid in full.*

Shearing time on the farm

Palisade farmer raises Black Welsh sheep – small, hardy – and rare

Spring haircuts were the order of the day on March 25 at the Chengwatana Farm in Palisade.

On hand was shearer, Brian Fitzpatrick, Crosby.

“He’s too modest to say so, but Brian is widely regarded as a champion shearer,” said Lynn Sue Mizner, the farm owner.

Fitzpatrick is originally from the Foley area, but he and his family now live in Crosby.

“He is in demand for his skills, and has sheared competitively

many times in the past,” added Mizner. Brian’s two sons watch his every move intently. Fitzpatrick joked, “This is the only way I can be sure of having a successor – to train my own.”

Shearing day saw 22 Black Welsh Mountain ewes and their lambs penned up in the barn, ready to have a one-year growth of wool shorn off. Neighbors arrived to lend a hand, and to watch what is a fairly unusual event in this part of the country.

The worldwide population of Black Welsh Mountain sheep is approximately 10,000; numbers

of this breed are increasing in North America due in large part to the efforts of the American Black Welsh Mountain Sheep Association (www.blackwelsh.org). They are found in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland as well as the smaller North American population. A single importation in 1973 of three rams and 13 ewes by Tom Wyman formed the genetic basis of the North American flocks.

In the late 1990s, frozen semen from the UK was also imported adding needed genetic diversity to the breed in North America. Currently there are three rams from the UK whose semen has been imported. The current North American population numbers approximately 800 animals in over 50 flocks in the U.S. and Canada. Black Welsh are small in stature, but they are a hardy breed that has few foot problems and are excellent mothers. Their jet black wool can turn various other colors of

brown and gold when exposed to the sun and in demand by hand spinners. The meat is fine textured and mild in flavor.

“This is a true dual purpose sheep breed,” said Mizner.

Mizner manages two flocks – one is a purebred and registered Black Welsh flock that will be retained for future breeding stock and to increase the size of the North American flock. The other is a flock of crossbred Black Welsh and Blue-faced Leicester (called “mule” sheep) that will be crossed with a terminal sire to produce market lambs.

Chengwatana Farm

Mizner and her husband, Bob Bartz, moved to the farm 12 years ago. Unfortunately, when Bartz died a couple years ago, she was faced with a decision on whether she could handle the place by herself.

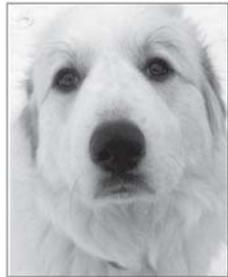
She has a weekday job with the Department of Natural Resources, so “It’s like two full



Black Welsh Mountain ewe with lamb.



Brian Fitzpatrick shearing.



Sophie, one of the livestock guarding dogs (Pyrenees Mountain Dog).



time jobs,” she said.

She chose the Black Welsh sheep because they are smaller and easier for her to handle alone. It’s a good choice right now as the market is up for lambs, she added.

And the other reason she picked sheep to raise is because she is a spinner and knitter and a member of the Dyed in the Wool Spinners group. The wool, which she shares with other spinners, is sought-after because of its color and the sheep are raised organically, although not certified as such.

Also living on the farm are draft horses, a donkey, chickens (she sells eggs) and some guard dogs to protect the sheep from wolves and coyotes.

To learn more about Mizner’s farm, visit www.chengwatana-farm.com.



Lynn Sue Mizner



Sheep enjoying their cool new haircuts.



Lambs waiting while their mothers are shorn.

Approved North American Inspector for the UK Black Welsh Mountain Sheep Assoc.

I am available to come inspect and consult with members on their flocks. I will evaluate every sheep in the flock with you and discuss good and bad points as compared to the UK standard. A written evaluation of every sheep can be provided.

Fees are \$20/day per flock plus all expenses. I am willing to travel all over the US and Canada to inspect sheep but I will need to time my travels to be after our own lambing dates.

Call 970-527-3573 or email ooigem@desertweyr.com to set up an appointment.



A Farm Widow's Journal

by Lynn Sue Mizner

A BUSY NIGHT

I'd already left my cozy bed under the eaves once tonight, pulling on thick wool socks, grabbing my cell phone, and noticing the time was 1:30 am. Not too unusual considering it was lambing time, and at least one trip to the barn was a normal nighttime routine. Now I was suddenly wide awake again, my heart pounding. I listened. Nothing but the quiet murmuring of ewes calling to their lambs in the night. So, what had woken me? Sighing, I pulled on my socks and, phone in hand, made my way once more down the steep stairs from the attic. I don't even need to turn on a light anymore. My insulated boots, wool cap, gloves, and parka are right where I left them. Perhaps most important, my glasses are there as I pass by the kitchen table. My chore parka is already stocked with a Gerber multi-tool and flashlight, and now my cell phone. I head out across the icy yard, almost skating in an effort to stay on my feet.

At the sheep yard I am greeted by Sophie and Inga. They're sisters, Pyrenees Mountain Dogs and faithful guardians of the flock. They push their silky heads up under my hands in greeting. I flash on my light and scan the resting flock — 21 ewes and almost as many lambs. Everything appears to be normal, and I don't see any ewes who appear to be in labor. I turn around and head back to the house, wondering what it was that disturbed my sleep. As I snuggled down and pulled the covers up around my ears, a "still small voice" persistently nagged at my mind, "Go take another look". I lay there, listening. Nothing, then a high-pitched newborn wail. Sitting bolt upright, I listened again. Again, a

lamb bleating. Lifting the blind I peered across the yard — not very helpful, since my glasses were in their spot downstairs on the kitchen table. A lamb probably got through the fence and was frantically trying to rejoin his mother on the other side.

I repeated the whole midnight barn check routine and found myself by the fence again. Sure enough, a tiny black shadow was running back and forth trying to find the place where he had squeezed through the five-inch square sheep fence. I spoke softly to him, and he ran over to me. Picking him up, I gently dropped him over the fence. I cast a cursory glance around the yard with the flashlight and turned to go back to my bed. Then I heard the plaintive little voice I had heard before, but it seemed to be coming from the far side of the paddock.

I flashed my light and saw nothing. Then I realized, to my horror that the sound was coming from the sheep water tank. Leaping the fence I ran across the yard, oblivious to the ice underfoot. A tiny lamb, probably no more than five pounds soaking wet, was standing in the stock tank with only her head above the water. I scooped her up and hugged her to myself as I ran back to the barn. My jacket wasn't that absorbent, so I placed her under a heat lamp in the barn, where she started steaming and shivering; I ran to the house to get a towel. After I briskly rubbed her down and got her as dry as I could, I wondered if her mother would be able to recognize her scent, after this drubbing. Not a whole lot I could do about that right now, so I said a brief prayer and went back to bed. I guess either a farmer has a sixth sense, or a little lamb has a guardian angel.



A misty morning as Lynns sheep enjoy greener pastures.

Importing Semen for U.S.

I am in contact with the folks in the UK who are able to do the freezing and we've also discussed the Icelandic and US protocols for non-surgical AI which requires a different semen freezing protocol. They are able to accommodate either collection protocol for us.

I have also been in contact with several top UK breeders of Black Welsh Mountain sheep and we've discussed having them evaluate sheep over the summer for us and pick out a couple that will be suitable. I've talked to them extensively about the type of animals we need to move our US sheep closer to the UK standard without introducing any more horn problems like those that occurred with Urwin crossed on our ewes carrying heavy horned genes. We all feel we have a good idea of the type of rams we need and also which UK breeders are likely to produce such rams and have them available for sale.

The tentative plan would be to purchase one or more rams this year and have them collected and the semen sent over in time for use this fall using a non-surgical procedure. I have a place to board the rams in the UK before collection and also a place to sell them after the semen has been collected as we would no longer need them. For various reasons it is better if we own the rams than if a UK person owns them.

Obviously this is all very expensive but it is within the realm of possibility with the reduced costs to use the semen on this end. At this point it looks like it will take approximately \$5000/ram to bring in semen and for that we will get around 100 non-surgical AI doses. A non-surgical AI dose is enough to do 2 ewes surgically. If anyone would be interested in participating in this venture please contact me and I can give you more details.

Eugenie (Oogie) McGuire

How many sheep?

ALBC population data for 2010

We registered a total of 170 sheep in 2010

53 rams and 117 ewes

The current living population is 1485 sheep

364 rams and 1121 ewes

We processed 70 transfers of sheep in 2010. These figures include all the Canadian sheep as well as US ones.

I'm trying to get the report to show me how many rams are owned by members whose dues are not current and the SW needs an update before I can get



Spring Youth Fair 2011 - Mutiny Bay Ebony with owner Janelle Wilson won Reserve Champion Colored ewe.

that data. But for now we do have that of the total number of living ewes only 336 are owned by members who have paid up current dues for 2011! The rest are owned by people who have not kept up their memberships, some of the animals go back as far as 2002 and I haven't been able to get either updated population reports nor any lamb reports from those past due folks. I suspect the ram situation is even worse. *Eugenie (Oogie) McGuire*

Lost Flock are Found

I've been working on a lost flock that I knew had been moved around and sold over 2 years ago. I believed the sheep had been found and a new member was trying to document them and bring their registrations up to date. I can finally report that after over 2 years of chasing down the intervening owners, verifying tag data and getting copies of the bills of sale we have again added these sheep to the registered flock.

Sadly, when I started the flock in question was 4 animals and due to predator attacks only a single sheep has survived but she has already produced some lambs to a registered ram so we did gain 3 new sheep plus now have a happy new breeder.

Just by way of reference I estimate that I spent roughly 80 hours tracing this flock over the last several years.

I am still working on several other flocks including 2 that originally started with almost 20 registered sheep each. *Eugenie (Oogie) McGuire*

Are Your Sheep Rooed?

I guess the answer to that depends on your sheep's shedding habits rather than sheep etiquette. I heard recently from a new BW owner that her sheep's wool was coming off in handfuls. She consulted with the former owner, who didn't seem to know what could be wrong. Therein lies my motive in writing this little bit of history and my own experience.

Shortly after having my first little flock of BW sheared, I began washing and carding. What was all the dandruff about and why was there an overabundance of second cuts or neps in my carded wool? After some inquiries I learned that some sheep breeds still have traits of primitive sheep. Back in ancient times sheep were not sheared, instead the wool shed on its own. Early shepherds learned to spot the tufts of rising wool as a sign to catch the sheep and pluck off the wool. Removing the fleece from the sheep by hand plucking the wool is called "rooing". If not rooed, it was rubbed off on trees and rocks, and would be collected by wool gatherers.

As tools for shearing became possible, sheep were bred to have continuous growth in their wool. An example of a breed who was rooed is the Shetland, but in more recent times they are sheared. Their characteristics haven't changed, but rooing is time-consuming and labor intensive which has been a deciding factor. Like Shetlands, the Black Welsh Mountain Sheep retain a complete or partial tendency to shed last year's fleece growth in late spring or early summer.

This shedding process begins well before spring. I have read that the shedding is triggered by hormones. This makes sense, since there are a lot of hormonal changes during the winter breeding season. From my observations the skin becomes very oily, and begins to sluff off (looking like dandruff, but not caused by bacteria). It is similar to exfoliating your face by rubbing in oil to help lift off the dead skin. As the skin lifts, the hair shafts become weakened and break away as the new hair begins to grow out. Another theory is that the hair follicle is looser because of the oils and loose skin, causing the hairs to fall out. Economically the choice to shear and get the wool in the bags is a necessity. On

the other hand, rooed wool is softer and longer. If one has a small flock and the sheep tend to be shedders, then try your hand at rooing! I am also experimenting with shearing being done in different seasons. For now mid summer is working well.

by Val Fiddler



Ewe lamb Fiona has a half inch new growth under the rooed wool.

North East Youth Sheep Show July 19-22 2012

Mallery Complex, Eastern States Exposition
West Springfield, Massachusetts



Open to all youth 21 years old and under
Events include:

Fitting and Showmanship, Breed Shows, Market Lamb Show, Quiz Bowl, Skillathon, and Fleece Show.

For more information visit our website at
<http://www.nesheep.org/youthshow.html>

EVENTS 2012

SHEPHERD'S HARVEST FESTIVAL

May 12-13, 2012 Fairgrounds -Its a tradition for wildly talented artisans to flock to Lake Elmo, Minnesota on Mothers Day weekend. Set in the beautiful countryside just minutes from Minneapolis/St.Paul, the festival has a history of uniting urban and rural culture through competitions, classes, demos, cel authors and events tha dazzle the eyes and delight the heart. <http://shepherdsharvestfestival.org> more info below.

June 14-16, 2012 in Truro, Nova Scotia

ALL CANADA SHEEP CLASSIC For entry or advertising information contact Stacey White at 1-866-956-1116. More info at <http://www.sheepbreeders.ca/classic.html>

July 19-22, 2012

NORTH EAST YOUTH SHEEP SHOW

Mallary Complex at the Eastern States Exposition Fairgrounds in West Springfield, Massachusetts. website (www.nesheep.org). see page 7 for more details.



May 12 - 13, 2012
Washington County
Fairgrounds
Lake Elmo, Minnesota

Shop at 140 vendors

35 classes offered

Over 20 demonstrations

A first hand look at a wide variety
of sheep breeds

Nationally acclaimed Fiber
artists and authors

ASSOCIATION UPDATES

CURRENT BOARD OF ABWMA 2011

President—Jerry Jones, Rockbridge Farm, 717-235-5097 rock-bridge@cyberia.com

Vice President—Steve Sands

Secretary-Treasurer—Oogie McGuire, Desert Weyr, 970-527-3573, oogiem@desertweyr.com

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Val Fiddler	Kendra Jones Mabon
Becky Bemus	Heather Morrisey
Tim Wyman	Steve Sands

Newsletter Editor Val Fiddler

WEBMASTER WANTED

Help needed in keeping the Association web site current and updated. Looking for someone with WordPress experience or who is willing to learn WordPress who can take over making sure that member data is updated and newsletters and other information are posted on it regularly. We will also be adding an on-line forum and the web person will need to be the moderator.

The current system is hard coded so will need to be converted into a Wordpress design. I can help with that but I'd like someone else to take the lead on making sure it happens. Our server and domain are Linux based so knowledge of Linux systems is helpful.

Contact me for more details or to volunteer.

Eugenie (Oogie) McGuire

Desert Weyr <http://www.desertweyr.com>

Farm Blog <http://desertweyr.blogspot.com>

Paonia, CO USA