

American Black Welsh Mountain Sheep Association Newsletter

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In Search of the Great American Black Welsh Mountain Sheep

Claudia Pettis

Mutiny Bay Farm

I am sure that those of us who attended the First Annual General Meeting at the Wye Heights Plantation, Maryland, came home more inspired and charmed by these little sheep than any of us had been before. Tom Wyman's knowledgeable breeding program provided the sheep and Will Workman's "imported" presence brought the expert guidance needed for these three days of discussions and sheep observations.

Robin Morse has quite poetically described the event as "somewhere betwixt-and-between a Black Welsh Institute and a Wordsworthian reverie." Tom and Babe Wyman shared with us their "little bit of heaven" in Maryland and we all learned from Tom's great efforts at animal husbandry over the last 30 years. The Wyman's extended enormous generosity constantly over these days to help achieve the common goal of setting the course for a successful future for these sheep in America. We came for the sheep — and Tom gave us the opportunity to observe lots of sheep.

The sheep were separated into groups for easier evaluation: ewe lambs; ram lambs; best ewes; and mature rams. Will Workman and his wife Sam helped with the selections and led the evaluations. I panicked at one point, seeing the group of ewe lambs, thinking — "they all look identical!" In fact, that was the point. Tom had very successfully produced a fine consistent group of ewes and he was congratulated for this. According to Oogie McGuire's acute record keeping there are only two traceable sire lines in the U.S.(excluding the recent British A.I.) both of which began with Tom's flock importation. We were seeing the results of what a successful program could produce. Actually, Will did not expect this and he acknowledged he was surprised and pleased.

The Wymans' rams, however, varied from the present British standard. Or as Tom put it, the British standard

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The First ABWMSA General Meeting: My Impressions and Thoughts

Suzanne Correia

Fire Ant Ranch



Will Workman and ewe friends

Considering how quickly this all came together, I was extremely pleased with both the content and the turn out at our first general meeting. Twenty-seven members and guests were in attendance, this including our most gracious host, Tom Wyman, and our Welsh guests and speakers, Will and Samantha Workman. Will Workman is a fine sheep man who most definitely knows his subject. In addition, he is a good teacher and can readily pass the knowledge on, and do so in a way that anyone can understand.

The beautiful eastern shore area of Maryland also cooperated with good weather (for the most part), and the most glorious fall color imaginable. Then, of course, there was the food — oh yes, the food!

If the attendees at this first meeting were a fair representation of our membership as a whole, we are certainly a diverse group. But we have one thing in common: we like our Black Welsh Mountain Sheep.

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has varied from the standard of his rams. The large heavy wide horn has given way in Britain to the "teacup" horn — a tight horn, spiraling closer to the head and with less size and weight. The coarse mane quite magnificent in Tom's rams is also discouraged in the British standard.

"Hardy," as a term used to describe the Black Welsh Mountain Sheep, means predisposed to survivability. These are necessary qualities for the sheep to have to survive in the mountains of Wales. Some of these characteristics are the following: aligned jaw with good teeth placement; legs neither sickle-hocked nor cow-hocked (see www.katahdinssheep.com for illustrations of these terms); tight healthy wool (no break); small ears; firm stance and alert demeanor.

Characteristics to be discouraged are ginger in the face (usually a brown shiny area in the eye area), scurs or horn buds in the ewes, white wool anywhere, irregular tufts of wool in the forehead area between or directly above the eyes. Slight tail irregularities were tolerated as well as variations in length and softness of fleece, as long as the fleece was dense, preferably even, and black. Excess kemp in the wool anywhere is not good whether in the mane or in the hock. Abstract terms such as "feminine head" or "masculine" took on new meaning as Will pulled out sheep exhibiting those characteristics. Such descriptive phrases as "feminine boxy ewe with wide ears" now correlates to qualities I can actually identify in a sheep. In fact, I have a perfect example of that in my own flock but didn't notice it was her EARS!

Now the true test came when I tried to apply my newfound knowledge to my own sheep. I have a small flock on about 80 acres on an island off the northwest coastline of Washington State. Here the sheep do quite well on organic pastures, which fortunately are still undergrazed and overgrown. My flock is small but diverse including 2 ewes from Artificial Insemination, a ram grandson from A.I., and ewes of mixed British and American Black Welsh descent from Oogie McQuire's and Joanie Livermore's breeding. In greeting me, they run the distance of the field kicking dust. But as I see them, they come flying "trailing clouds of glory." Quite frankly, I like my sheep. The sheep provide me hours of pleasure and entertainment. Economically, they pay their way but there are no extra monetary bonuses for me.

I have only one ram at the moment and I evaluated him first. Bedwyr's horns follow quite nicely the British standard, a tight spiral that clears his face. He is a blocky, solid ram, with only a few white hairs on his nose. His wool shows his British genetics by a lush thick coat. His head is masculine. I fault him for his mane, which is too bulky. Bedwyr is from Cynfab, Oogie's ram rated Number 3 by Will Workman and he

is the grandson of British ram, Hounsley Jack.

I singled out three ewes but will comment on two. I would like to do this here to illustrate how patterns can be found in the genetics of these animals. Melle is a very balanced small ewe with consistent dense wool with no white and the best wool of any sheep here from American lineage. She has a fine feminine head and small ears. Her loin is a nice width for her small stature and she is always alert and aware of her surroundings. So I checked Melle's pedigree. Sure enough Will's comments confirmed my evaluation. Melle is the twin to Mwynwen. Mwynwen is Number 2 on Oogie's top ewe list selected by Will Workman. At this point, I was feeling more confident in my ability to evaluate the sheep. Melle is the only sheep here known to be QR at codon 171, supposedly the scrapie resistance indicator gene. Suddenly her value just increased.

Without a question, the British A.I. daughter, Heulyn, is a strikingly fine looking sheep. She looks as if she is dressed in her wool rather than it growing out of her and her fleece is baby soft. Heulyn is from Joanie Livermore's A.I. from the British ram, Ravenstone Harry. Heulyn's twin is in the McGuire's flock and is ram rated Number 2, named Morthwyl, on Will Workman's list. It is getting easier to spot the qualities I could not identify at first. She is a good ewe because her legs are well placed, loin is wide and deep, she has a feminine face and nice ears. She has healthy set of teeth and to my surprise will actually hold still for me to check them. She does have a horn bud on her right side, which is not a positive, and I will check and see if her lambs have this also.

QuickTime™ and a TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor are needed to see this picture.

Mutiny Bay Farm's Heulyn

Temperament I was told is also inherited. Joanie described Heulyn's dam as "having a calming effect on the more nervous ewe's and usually would look around when something spooked the more nervous sheep,

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McGuire Flock Evaluations

After the main General Meeting in Maryland Mr. Will Workman traveled with me to Colorado to evaluate and rank my entire flock. Here are the number one ram and the number one ewe in my flock at this time according to Mr. Workman.

My top ranked ram is a UK sired ram bred by Joanie Livermore. Double J Lionel 5025 is by Ravenstone Harry UK-003 and out of Nee-Hi Molly 4325 (Gardarian's Baby Bo 4244 x Burp Hollow Yolanda 4323). According to Mr. Workman, he is of excellent type with very good horns but would be faulted for the white on his nose and poor teeth.

My top ranked ewe is a UK second generation animal. Desert Weyr Olwen is by my UK sired AI ram Desert Weyr Cynfab 4165 (Hounsley Jack UK-010 x Burp Hollow Suzy 4092) and out of Bennett's Aerfen 4099. Olwen has good size but a coarse head and some grey in her britch.



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As Black Welsh breeders, we have done an amazing job with our flocks, given the narrow genetic base we started from. Credit should definitely go to Tom for his astute choices for his original flock and his breeding strategy since then. The current Wye Heights flock is magnificent.

I can see where we definitely have an "American style" with our sheep, particularly with our rams and their "strong" (widely spaced, large) horns. What is perceived here as a good horn is somewhat overblown to the U.K. taste. What we have to do now is decide whether to continue in the direction we have, or come back to the more British style of horn, and masculine/feminine type. Overall, our sheep are very good, but probably somewhat larger than the U.K. type, especially with our ewes.

Our fleeces have definitely gone away from type, even with the "good" fleeces. I can see this even in my own flock. Our U.S. flocks, at least of the animals I've observed, seem to have a more open structure to their fleeces. This is definitely away from type, but I'm not sure if it is not climate related, since more of our flocks seems to be in more moderate climates overall. For my own flock, I would like to see the British softness, density, and deep, rich color, possibly with a slightly more open structure (maybe).

We need to cull for good teeth and overall hardiness. There is no way around either of these points. We probably want to stay away from the bearded males too and white on the heads. And yes, selecting for Scrapie resistance (RR) is important, but not the be all and end all. Eventually, we'll have to concentrate more on this factor, but right now we can't really afford to ignore the great animals that may be QQ. We can certainly cut back on selecting for very widely spaced, large horns.

MARKETING: This is where a lot of brainstorming went on, and it seemed that probably as many of us want to do something constructive with our sheep as do not, and that's okay. I got the impression that each of our markets is very different and we're all just going to have to market our sheep (or not) as individual breeders.

I think the one thing that most of us agreed on is that the Black Welsh taste very good and they are easy to manage — good selling points for just about anyone. Part of their appeal is their smaller size and ease of handling, especially by women and children. They will and do appeal to people who want pet sheep, but I think most of us agreed that we really don't want to go that way, although the temptation will always be there!

More Meeting News

At the General Meeting, after we were trained in how to properly judge a Black Welsh Mountain sheep according to UK standards, we all had 2 pens of 4 ewes lambs to judge. Prizes were given for the people that got the order correct.

Here are the results for each pen and for the overall best judge.

Pen One

1st	Robin Morse	50 pts
2nd tie	Mary Ehni	48 pts
2nd tie	Sue Platts	48 pts
4th	Ann Jones	46 pts
5th tie	Stanley Ward	44 pts
5th tie	Tim Huges-Muse	44 pts
5th tie	Claudia Pettis	44 pts

Pen Two

1st tie	Stanley Ward	50 pts
1st tie	Al Granger	50 pts
3rd	Kendra Mabon	48 pts
4th tie	Casper	44 pts
4th tie	Oogie McGuire	44 pts

Overall Combined both Pens

1st	Stanley Ward	94 pts
2nd	Robin Morse	85 pts
3rd tie	Sue Platts	83 pts
3rd tie	Mary Ehni	83 pts
5th	Ann Jones	81 pts
6th tie	Tim Hughes-Muse	79 pts
6th tie	Claudia Pettis	79 pts

If I made a mistake in spelling your name, please let me know. Winners got some lovely prizes, including breed badges and stickers.

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if to say, what's the big deal?" This ewe is the same as her mother, quite tame and easygoing. Unfortunately, as none of the A.I. offspring in this country has shown the scrapie resistant gene at Codon 171. she carries the QQ. Otherwise, without a question, she is number two on my list and a keeper in any case for her British genetics.

Membership Updates

Lambing Reports

I do not have detailed lambing reports from many of our members for 2004. A few folks have not sent in 2003 data either.

What I need ASAP is the following info for EVERY SINGLE LAMB born whether born dead, butchered, kept in your flock or sold for breeding.

Sire name and reg number

Dam name and reg number

Date of birth

Type of birth (twin, single or triplet)

Sex

Federal Ear tag for sheep for breeding. This should include which ear the tag is in, what color the tag is, the federal flock number assigned to your flock and the individual animal number.

Farm ear tag data if you do double tags. Again I need to know which ear the tag is in, what color the tag is and the individual animal number.

If you are not the owner of the dam at time of mating then I need a statement from the owner who will be listed as the official breeder of the lamb.

I need this on *ALL* purebred lambs, whether or not you choose to register them. If you did not breed any of your ewes send me a note stating no lambs produced.

For lambs that were born dead you can leave off the ear tag data. For lambs that were sold direct to slaughter I need to know the date sold and that they went for meat.

For lambs that you plan to register or that will be sold as breeding sheep I also need the sheep's name. If you do not name your sheep then I will assign the name to be the federal tag number. Federal regulations require that all breeding sheep must be tagged and I will be enforcing the Federal rule.

If you have already sold the sheep as a breeding sheep I still need all this data plus the name and flock ID of the new owner.

For any sheep you wish to register please send in a fee of \$10/ewe lamb and \$5/ram lamb and I will send out the registration papers.

I have been very lenient in allowing late reports but this has got to stop. If we expect to get a decent accurate flock book each and every year, I really need this data

the end of July. Anyone who has not returned their report by the end of December will be removed from the membership list and no registrations or transfers will be performed until the reports are completed.

If you have this additional lamb data and wish it to be on the registration papers send it to me:

Birth weight
Average Daily Gain adjusted according to ASI rules for weight up to 30 days
Adjusted 30 day weights
Loin Eye scans
Genotype at codon 171
Genotype at codon 136
Micron count from an approved lab
UK registration number for rams or whether a ewe lamb is UK registered
Any text description or other info you want on the registration paper. Limit to about 30 characters.

Thanks for your cooperation.

Scrapie

You are required to keep accurate records of each and every sheep and who they were sold to for 5 years under the Federal mandatory scrapie program. If you have sent sheep to an auction, you still must provide me with the data on who the buyer was and that they went direct to slaughter. Sheep sold direct to slaughter and under 18 months do not need Federal scrapie tags.

All breeding sheep must be tagged with Federal approved scrapie tags. I will no longer transfer sheep without accurate tag data.

If you do not have your Federal flock number assigned then you must get that number from your Federal vet and send the info on to me.

I use this data to generate the census reports that I send out each year to verify the current status of every registered Black Welsh Mountain sheep in North America.

If you properly fill out the 2 required reports for the Association (yearly census and lambing report) then you do not need to keep any additional data for the mandatory program.

Anyone in the voluntary scrapie certification program has additional requirements that I will be glad to discuss.

Other Announcements

As mentioned at the meeting there are now 3 rams whose semen is available for use in flocks in the US that are in the Voluntary Scrapie Certification program.

Heritage Genetics has the remaining semen from Ravenstone Harry and Hounsley Jack
<http://www.heritagegenetics.com/index.cfm>

There are 36 straws of Harry and 43 of Jack left. Both of these rams are QR at codon 171.

Cost is \$85/straw plus tank rent and shipping fees.

Super Sire Ltd has the semen from Julia Paterson's ram "Boss"
<http://www.toprams.com/>

There are 43 straws available. This ram is RR at codon 171.

Cost is \$85/straw if you use Super Sire Ltd to do the inseminations or \$90/straw if you use another service.

I will be working with the UK Breed Council and Mr. Workman to try to import additional semen from more rams in the next few years.

I strongly encourage all Black Welsh Mountain Sheep owners, breeders and fanciers to join the Yahoo e-mail list.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/blackwelsh/>

This group is open membership and we discuss all aspects of keeping these sheep as well as general sheep information and questions. Often this will be the first place you will hear about new things, like changes to the scrapie rules, predator issues, registration questions as well as listings of sheep for sale or to offer sheep for sale.

We do try to put all critical data in the newsletter but with the paper newsletter only coming out 3-4 times a year things can be out of date before you get them.

Association Web Site

The Association has a web site where all the registration forms, bylaws and soon all the members lists can be found. If you do not want your data made public on the web site you must let me know. If I do not hear from you I will post your address, e-mail, phone as provided to us in our records so that people looking for information and sheep can contact you directly.