

St. Croix
Hair Sheep
Breeders,
Inc.



Volume 20
Issue 2

www.stcroixsheep.org

News & Views

PRESIDENT'S RAMBLE *VIRUS OR NOT, HERE I COME...*



It's that time again; The time to write a lead-in article for News and Views and try to sound somewhat intelligent! It's a real chore for me to sound and look intelligent but if you don't know me you can give me the benefit of the doubt! Anyhow, the most worn phrases of late have included something about the unbelievable changes we have experienced in recent months due to "19". We all have doubt that it is as bad as they say and then have doubts if they are over-saying and over-doing things. The unknowns leave us uncomfortable.

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HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?

And how much is too much? No, I'm not counting calories or monitoring your intake of ice cream. I'm talking sheep breeding. We often hear the question, "**Can I use a ram lamb that I raised to breed sheep in my flock?**" That's a good question and there are various answers:

- Some of it has to do with the basic math
- Some has to do with the genetic merits of your sheep
- Some of it has to do with your desires and intentions.

A mentor used to ask folks who wanted to practice tight breeding

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NEWS & VIEWS

News & Views is the membership newsletter of the SCHSB, published three times per year.

If you are not a member and are interested in becoming one, please contact us using the information on the back cover.

HAPPY READING!

PRESIDENT'S RAMBLE...

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But in all of this time of uncertainty there has been a strong push for self-reliance and a growing demand for something sure to stand a lot of pressure if the public parts of life collapse. The solution for many has been St. Croix sheep. The demand is high. Just like folks calling for freezer beef, fresh produce and such (we'll skip the toilet paper jokes and stories) there is a virus panic that has driven the self-reliance thoughts of so many. Not many folks can see themselves killing a 300 pound hog or milking a Holstein in the backyard but a sheep flock that can easily yield meat and milk WELL now ... "that was easy"!

.....strong push for self-reliance and a growing demand.....

A lot of things have happened, are happening and will happen beyond the virus. An annual flock spreadsheet is available to SCHSB members and can be fully filled out with your flocks ewes and rams from the registrar for a small fee. A committee is setting up details of a second registry for St. Croix influenced sheep. Speaking of demands – there is a de-

mand for % St. Croix ewes. This will allow the recognition and verification of that group of sheep which are being sought by commercial breeders and, for example, the industrial application of grazing solar panel farms. And % St. Croix ram lambs sired by terminal type sires are well received, too.

An annual SCHSB meeting site was selected before the virus changed the options of travel and gatherings. We'll certainly have some sort of teleconference or other means to meet this fall if the virus holds us down.

The SCHSB advertising committee is looking into means to advertise the benefits of the breed beyond the printed pages. As you have noticed, there are less and less printed magazines and fewer subscribers. The committee will learn where folks look and get a presence there. Give us a hint if you know of a great place to get the word out. Thank you.

Stay safe, I pray that we all stay well and please pray for a vaccine to come sooner than expected. And if you dislike getting shots like I do, pray with me that the vaccine will be one that you and I can puff up our noses! Giving shots – that's OK. Getting shots, now that's different!

Eddie

A huge thanks to Beth Hall from Virginia for all the WONDERFUL photos she submitted this month and are scattered throughout this newsletter for your enjoyment.

***Have photos of your own that you would like to share?
Please send to: secretary@stcroixsheep.org***

HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?....

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or inbreeding a basic question: “Why?” He actually asked it differently to make the point clear. He’d ask, “What is your planned use and the purpose of the potential animal(s)?”

Let’s look at the math side first. A sire is 50% of a lamb and the dam is 50% of the lamb. That is the theoretical 50/50 split theory. If you have a crop of lambs and they are all by the same ram, then each are half siblings except for the full sibling twin of the ram lamb you are considering. This is where the question usually comes to us in the form of a call, email, Facebook post or whatever the carrier- “Can I use a ram lamb to breed to his half-sisters?” That’s a good question. The math tells us that if a ram lamb of “Ram A” breeds his half-sisters, also sired by “Ram A”, the resultant lamb crop from that cross will still only be a 50% influence of “Ram A”. Ram A contributes 25% influence as a grandsire from each half sib parent to let the lamb crop be about the same breeding influence as the grandparent as far as concentrating Ram A’s influence.

“You are linebreeding but not inbreeding.”

There can be some genetic influences on the half-sib/half-sib lamb crop that might be different than the parents. The linebreeding of Ram A from both sides might allow recessive genes to come from him on both sides to suddenly show up as something new. But as far as inbreeding, if you do not put full siblings, mothers and such



in the breeding group, there is not an increased percentage influence of a grandparent than is normal 50/50. **You are linebreeding but not inbreeding.**

What if you have a purpose beyond not having to look for a new ram right at breeding season? **What if you know that you have a great ewe or a great ram and you want more of that line of sheep?** We do not have the luxury of highly successful artificial insemination in sheep. We are basically forced to do some things, as an uncle used to say, “Now boy, that’s ol’ timey”. The American Livestock Conservancy published a book coauthored by Dr. Phillip Sponenburg some years back (**Conservation Breeding Handbook**) that explained how to recreate a breed (or a

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HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?....

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flock or a line) if you only had a male and a few females. It lets us see that **inbreeding can have a purpose** and how to inbreed livestock in a systematic way. I will not go into the details here but I only wanted to mention it for those of you who do have a special ram or ewe or a few left over from a dog kill or another tragedy or undesired reduction. But note, again, that this is being **discussed as a planned purpose** and not as a random act.

*.....discuss it on Facebook.
You'll actually be doing the breed a tremendous favor.....*

We only see the outside and the function of the animals. Once you start concentrating the genes from a parent or parents you might find that there were genes that you had no way of seeing that appear in concentration and they are ugly in the form of defects, low performance, infertility and such. But there will be some animals created in the same way that will be superior, unique and a wonderful attribute to your flock and the breed. **You don't know until you plan, use only the best ones, set up breeding groups and see results.**

When you ask me about sheep here on the farm, I go into a long spiel of dull talking that even no-doze cannot rescue you from your deep sleep and boredom. You'll hear Line 1, Line 2, Line 3, 24, 181 and 250. Those are the internal base lines in our flock. **You will not hear about 330, 190, 171 and others that failed.** Each one of these terms or numbers represent a sire or a small group of ewes as starter animals and lines have been built from them since 2006. The reason I mention this has nothing to do with my data or promotion. It is a way to tell you that Dr. Sponenburg's plans can work for you if your selected sheep are genetically capable. If the sheep are incapable you will soon learn. I knew it quickly about the rams 330, 190, 171 and others who went to the meat markets along with any close relatives that had their same problems.

If you want to discuss building a flock of your own concentrated "greats" I'll be glad to discuss it with you. Better yet, ask about it or discuss it on Facebook. You'll actually be doing the breed a tremendous favor to make a semi-disconnected genepool (cluster) of superior sheep.

Eddie



WHICH ONE?

Do you ever wonder about the quality of your lambs? Do you ever wonder why sale barns and/or markets like or dislike your sheep (expressed in dollars)?

How do you sort “the good, the bad and the ugly” in a lamb crop?

There are two references attached. These files represent many similar type files produced for 4H members and adults over the years. How can we use them or information like them?

The most important issue I see in this type of literature is breed differences. A St. Croix is not a Suffolk. **I am actually happy about the differences!** Some of the pictures of ideal market and show lambs exhibit lambs with a shallow depth of body. What we need to know is that body depth in St. Croix sheep parallels the forage based breed. An animal that is shallow in body is better able to utilize concentrates (more costly than forages) and have a higher dressing percentage as a terminal type sheep. Few of us want that in our sheep. A deep bodied sheep can eat the lower cost forages to do well and grow economically. That extra depth of the body in our sheep is really body parts and organs like a larger rumen and more volume of intestines and organs. **It speaks of function rather than waste.**

There are other traits that are breed characteristics that we must remember for St. Croix sheep. The breed is easy keeping and is built on foundation sheep which were easy to keep and productive. Looks, in many ways, were secondary to function except for white hair and lack of horns in the original selections. Like it or not, **two of the typical breed characteristics are shown as faults in the documents for terminal breeds and wool sheep:** broken top line and sloping rump. These two traits are what we are going to have in our average St. Croix. It is in the genes.

A positive: if you do some additional studies, the sloping rump actually increases the ease of birthing lambs for ewes.

I asked the late Clinton Hodges how he would describe some of the original imported sheep that he saw at Utah State University. He came from a wool sheep background but he really liked the original imported St. Croix. I laugh even now at his description of the ewes that he saw at USU, wanted then and wanted later in life; “They were ugly”. He described the “ugly” in telling me of the topline and the rump slope. **He regretted that he had not kept his St. Croix sheep pure after he realized what they could do for him in a crossbred lamb market.** In case you think he was “just another guy”, he and his family grew or purchased, slaughtered, processed and did value-added sales of about 700 lambs per week at the time I talked with him. He used and wanted St. Croix sheep to use in the mix of his flocks.

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WHICH ONE? ...

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What should we take away with us from these references? Proper hoof and leg structure, general body dimensions, terms used to describe various parts and body sections and carcass terms and cuts. But the biggest take away is the issue of manually judging or assessing the muscling in lambs. The depth of the loin (vertical dimension) and the thickness of the rear leg are the two things to learn to check.



My preferences are to concentrate carcass selection in the ram lambs and to concentrate on maternal and instinct traits in ewe lambs and their dams. And in the big picture, I prefer the legs set out wider (front leg to front leg) and adequate space or width between rear legs so that the sheep are standing “on the corners” of their body. The issue which some St. Croix sheep have is narrow spacing. It is not terrible but it can be improved.

What are they worth? Remember, even with a maternal breed of sheep, our sheep are known as MEAT sheep.

<https://extension.tennessee.edu/henderson/Documents/%2713%20Livestock%20Judg%20Guide%20Module%206%20Sheep.pdf>

https://ohio4h.org/sites/ohio4h/files/imce/books_resources/194RSheepRHRevisions.pdf

CAN YOU BE A FEATURED FARM?

If anyone is interested, we are wanting to add a "Featured Farm" section to the News & Views. What we would like, would be a short narrative, as to who you are, where you are, what your St. Croix flock consists of, management, etc. Also please send a couple of high resolution photos that show your sheep. If we have multiple folks interested, the board of directors and the publisher of News & Views will make an impartial choice for this issue, and keep the others for future issues. Please send to secretary@stcroixsheep.org.

HELP!

We need your help! This is a volunteer organization and we need to receive your ideas for articles to include in this publication. If you have an idea or want to write something, please let us know. We'd also be delighted to get pictures of your flock for inclusion. Just send an email to secretary@stcroixsheep.org.



SCHSB MISSION STATEMENT

Establish a central organization (within the United States) to register, promote, and develop the growth of the St. Croix breed of sheep.

Define the distinguishing characteristics of the breed and establish specific minimum standards for registering individual animals

Insure that individual animals meet specified criteria in order to be registered as members of the St. Croix breed

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ADVERTISING

All N&V publications are emailed to every member on the dates below. You have the option to purchase a mailed copy of N&V (3 editions per a year) for \$15 if you prefer.

Publications will be sent on 2/1, 6/1 and 10/1. Cut off dates for articles and ads are: 1/15, 5/15 and 9/15.

The full color ad sizes available for the publication are as follows:

Name,	Size(s),	Single	Year (x3)
Business Card	3.5" x 2"	\$15	\$40
Quarter Page	3.25" x 4.5"	\$30	\$75
Half Page	7" x 4.5" or 3.25" x 9.5"	\$55	\$140
Full Page	7" x 9.5"	\$90	\$240

Please note these prices assume you have acceptable artwork available for publication. If you do not have artwork available one can be created for you for free (business card text format only) or a fee (see below). Artwork should be one of the following formats: jpg, tif, tiff, png, pdf, ai, cdr, doc, docx, pub, eps. Art should either be in vector graphics format or stored with at least 300DPI. The publication is in color and images will be converted to RGB for web publication and CYMK for paper production. There should be no passwords on any files submitted. We do not accept any responsibility for any errors in your artwork. **Scanned ads are not acceptable!**

You have a couple of ways to request ads. You may use the online form available on our website. This is the easiest way as it also allows

you to pay online using check, debit or credit card via Paypal (you do not need to have a Paypal account). The form is located at: <http://stcroixsheep.org/ad-request>. Alternatively you may send an email to ads@stcroixsheep.org with your request and artwork. If your artwork is too big, we have a Dropbox that you can use to upload your file. When you request an ad by email you will need to send a check and will receive a reminder to do so (with the correct address) via email.

Creation of Artwork for Ads

We can prepare your artwork for you for a fee. Artwork for a business card sized ad will be created for **free** if you only want text. There will be no images and we reserve the right to edit your text to fit. You have room for a short phrase or sentence to describe your business along with your farm name, your name and address a phone number and your email. If your text is too long we will edit it as necessary without contacting you.

If you want a business card ad with images or a larger sized ad created, then there will be a one off charge. Just let us know you want artwork created (using the ads@stcroixsheep.org email or [online form](#)) and the editor will contact you to discuss your requirements. The artwork created can be used as many times as necessary without another charge (even in other publications). The additional one off fees are as listed (Prices may vary depending on your requirements with the additional fee being charged separately):

Our editor also provides website creation and hosting for farms and businesses at a reasonable fee. If you have any questions about these services please contact them directly at richard@chventures.com.