

St. Croix  
Hair Sheep  
Breeders,  
Inc.



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[www.stcroixsheep.org](http://www.stcroixsheep.org)

## News & Views

### PRESIDENT'S RAMBLE "AND I DON'T KNOW WHAT ALL"



We had a former neighbor who lived to be over 100 years old. She was one tough lady to have lived as she lived and to have done all she did. She had a habit to end a lot of sentences with a string of sayings and the last one was "...and I don't know what all". You have heard all of the rhetoric and sayings concerning recent history, changes in society, sickness, fires, storms and all of 2020. I think I will just sum it up and move on with the borrowed phrase from Ella, "... and I don't know what all".

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### HANDLING SYSTEM

In the spring of 2020, I decided to bite the bullet and add a handling system to my sheep operation. For the last few years I have worked sheep by running them into a small catch pen and then grabbing the one I wanted and sorting them physically, often with help. This method worked fine when I had 10 or so ewes, but with a flock of 40+ ewes and 80+ lambs, I decided it was time to do things differently. I share this experience to let you know that I think purchasing the facility was worth it for the time I now save and the data I can collect, not to mention my back feels better! For the last couple of years I looked at handling systems, but I couldn't ever bring myself to spend the money on a

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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...

*(Continued from page 1)*

The Directors had picked a location for an annual meeting and that event is canceled. It would not be the wisest to try to group up a part of the SCHSB membership this fall with the unknowns we face. We will try to get a virtual meeting set up. We had made some progress on a really useful and good outreach program. We had a widely known individual selected and they had agreed to help. Again, that is on hold. Safety of our members is a priority.

The demand for St. Croix sheep, especially ewes, has been extreme this year. The concern over the food supply, the desires to have home raised food and the truth that St. Croix sheep are easy to keep for so many reasons have been the reasons. Speaking of widespread demand, it may be a first but Jason Webster has exported a flock of St. Croix sheep to Puerto Rico. That is good news and you can see how they are doing on a newbie option we have set up for SCHSB. Ask Jason about that effort or you can also read a bit about it and see pictures with the following information.

In the past we used a Facebook group called St. Croix Hair Sheep Breeders set up by Yates Colby who is a former director. **Recently SCHSB has created both a page and a group on Facebook called St. Croix Hair Sheep Breeders, Inc.** These are now the *official places* for you to see things like pictures and updates of the new flock in PR, notices of SCHSB activities, links to informative articles and research and such.

You will need to join and please answer the questions that are required to join. Yates' page is still there for her use and interests if you want to discuss a more widespread range of St. Croix or other topics with her but what we are trying to do is serve the whole membership with less distractions if you want to ask or comment. **So look for the one with the "Inc." on the end and you'll be zeroing in on the right spot.** The website is still vital and has been recently updated so don't miss that as a way to learn, register, buy and sell St. Croix sheep.

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*"The demand for St. Croix sheep, especially ewes, has been extreme this year."*

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The thing I want to know, and the directors all share this question with me: What's on your mind? How can SCHSB serve you better, are there things we can improve, are the current ways of communication and member assistance adequate



Photo: Beth Hall, VA

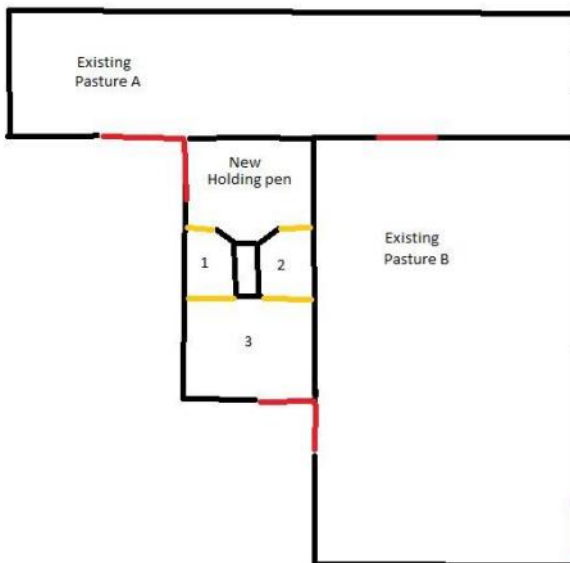
and what you need, etc. If we were to ask you one question that you just have been hoping that somebody would ask you, what

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## HANDLING SYSTEM

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working system. However, I eventually landed on System A from D&S Livestock (with a few minor additions and modifications). I added a scale from A and A Scales LLC, but had to fabricate a platform for the load cells to attach to. This was a great addition that has allowed me to weigh lambs and collect weights on my entire flock in minutes, which helps me make better breeding decisions.



Since the handling system was an after thought for my operation, I built a pen between 2 pastures. This has worked well as I often keep rams in pasture A, but I can still pull my ewe flock into the working facility from pasture B, which connects to my other paddocks that I rotate in. With the handling system I can sort lambs into 3 groups as shown above. Overall, this handling system has saved me time, allowed me to work sheep alone, the reduced my physical labor greatly,

and is now allowing me to make better management decisions.

*Matt*



## DO NOT READ THIS!

Sounds a bit like Pandora's Box, doesn't it? Like some parents will say, "If you want a kid to do something tell him not to do it". And the unknown is just so tempting for all of us; "... or would you like to have what's behind door #2?" We want to know but then maybe we don't want to know. And like the kid I was: let's take it apart to see how it works. That did not always turn out well.

We still get questions, comments and opinions about polled, scurred and horned sheep. Is one better, is one worse and such? I know that there are preferences just as there are with either colored or solid white sheep. All of these characteristics can show up in St. Croix sheep because of the landrace background of the breed on the island of St. Croix. SCHSB tracks these traits with the input from you, as breeders, at registration. We do not care to perpetuate the horned sheep and they have never been allowed in the breed. Some of the original lambs born at USU were horned. And some horned rams (full curved horns, trophy type rams) have occasionally shown up throughout the breed's history even in recent times. I do not mean to bore you to death but I do want to share some answers to my older questions that I've recently learned.

**A research article from New Zealand summarized the horn/scur/polled issue pretty well.** The results go something like this, in mostly non-scientific descriptions from me, which is all I can muster up from searching information on the internet, including definitions. Horns, scurs and pollness are all influenced genetically at one chromosome location or the scientific term is "autosomal locus". For info, a sheep has 54 chromosomes.

This locus or "spot" is called Ho for 'horns'.

This spot can have different "stuff" attached there by mere random genetic inheritance from the two parents. The scientific term for one of this extra "stuff" is an allele. Sheep have three different alleles which can be inherited and located at this chromosome. They are Ho<sup>p</sup> (p=polled), Ho<sup>+</sup> (horns in both rams and ewes) and Ho<sup>h1</sup> (only rams would have horns). Right off the bat, we can pretty well surmise that St. Croix sheep are not carrying the Ho<sup>+</sup> allele. And if you are already wondering if you should have heeded the title (do NOT read this) there can be another chromosome which can modify the scurs and aber-



Photo: Beth Hall, VA

rant horns (lesser than expected in a complete horn) by an allele located there.

Wow, my head hurts! But what did we learn? This helps me to understand some of what I have seen in St. Croix sheep both here on the farm and in other flocks. When we had the chance to pick breeder rams from our second purchase of foundation breeders from a flock spread between Alabama and Florida, the rams I had to choose from included some with short, weak, brittle and broken off

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## DO NOT READ THIS...

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(aberrant) horns. Yes, they were purebred St. Croix sheep but maybe they had the scur allele? I did not prefer or purchase them.

What has puzzled me is the old unanswered question: when is a scur a scur and a horn a horn? Some say that in cattle a scur is not firmly attached to the skull and a horn is attached. Another article from New Zealand covers the differences in horned to polled sheep with the in-between of “short knobs or scurs that may or may not be attached to the frontal bone”. An older study tries to track the differences and mentions what we see in some St. Croix rams: flat plates of horn tissue, either attached or not.

My experiences are that many scurs are firmly attached to the skull or frontal bone. They appear as a dime to half dollar sized piece of flat “bone” and it is not obvious to the casual observer. You have to feel them. Some have a little point on top and others do not. I do not breed for scurs or against scurs as I prioritize maternal functioning females and quality rams which all have ultimate parasite resistance. The more variables that you select for, the slower the progress of the whole selection effort. So either scurs or pollness are good to know but of little economic benefit and do not impact my selections.

With this info and maybe only two or three alleles affecting the sheep for either scurs or pollness, I have a question that I think is practical. How much of one whole sheep’s genetic code is reflected by the two or three alleles? We do the same type questions in water quality when we ask to know the ppb (parts per billion) of some element or substance. Or we ask for fertilizer that has analysis like 10-



Photo: Beth Hall, VA

10-10 or 19-19-19 to know what we are getting. How much of the total potential alleles are these two or three?

We know that a sheep has 54 chromosomes and, particular and unique alleles can or cannot be present or attached to each of the 54 “spots”. Let’s look at a few more scientific references on the study of the number of alleles, pull out our calculators and multiply the average # of alleles at a locus by 54. Research is only done per one breed and the numbers vary in breeds as we would expect. But the average number of available alleles per locus varies from 8 to 16 from current studies I found. So the total alleles might be from 432 to 864. Again, this is per one breed and with current data; I honestly expect future studies to reveal more potential alleles.

The take away for us all as St. Croix breeders: 2 or 3 alleles out of 400 to 900 is not a lot. Also, the St. Croix breed has not been studied specifically to let us know a real number or the actual allele(s) which allow some rams to have scurs. We can deal with all of this with ease: register our sheep with correct in-

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## DO NOT READ THIS!...

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**formation and breed our sheep based on the phenotype we see (polled or scurred). The truth is our breed has diversity. It has had diversity from the origins on the island, to the first lambs born at USU and in our breed up until right now.** But we are not bouncing off of the walls with our sheep going from ponies to poodles without explanation or a pattern. We are talking about very, very minor genetic differences. This knowledge gives me a lot of comfort, to tell you the truth.

Our breed's future: it is in your hands. If you decide to make your flock to be your mini-genetic pool of genetic goodness, I greatly encourage you to pursue that. Our breed does not need 100% average sheep, we need a planned effort of improved sheep (the best that they should be) via selection and planned breeding. If you decide to use only your cur-

rent genetics (a closed flock) then you will see the effects much quicker and have a healthy impact on the breed. Here's why: the number of alleles we discussed can be modified (some concentrated and some eliminated) based on your selections. In time your mini-gene pool will have more or mostly similar alleles in your average sheep. These sheep, when used by other breeders will act a bit like a cross-bred animal as dissimilar alleles are paired in the parents. **It can reduce and prevent inbreeding regression.** It may sound like hogwash but you will have the most positive impact on the breed that you can ever have by breeding at least part of your flock in such a manner. If you want to get information on the references I can send you the links. Otherwise, Do NOT Read This!

*Eddie*



Photo: Beth Hall, VA

## RECIPIES

### BASIC LEG OF LAMB

Cut slits about an inch apart on whole leg. Put sliver of garlic cloves and whole rosemary into each slit. You can also put a dry rub of onion powder all over leg as well. Sit in refrigerator for 2 hrs. Put in a roasting pan with small amount of water on the bottom. Or use a cooking bag instead of roasting pan. We cook at 350 for around 3 hrs.

You can also put a taste of India sauce of your choice on top of the leg for extra seasoning.

### BASIC LAMB CHOPS

These can either be pan fried or broiled. We put garlic powder, powdered rosemary and oregano in a zip lock bag and shake the seasoning onto the lamb. Then broil or fry until meat turns white...do not overcook. You can also add sea salt and pepper to the powder mix. Sometimes we get an organic mint jelly. Just before the chops are done we put some of the mint jelly on top of the chops and let that melt into them for extra taste

***Submitted by Sara Lee, one of our members: James and Sarah Lee of Nocturnal Farms***

## PRESIDENT'S RAMBLE...

*(Continued from page 2)*

would it be? If you could change one thing about SCHSB, what would it be? Please let any one of the directors know of your concerns, questions, needs, ideas ... We really want to know the "... and I don't know what

all" of each of our fellow breeders and members. Thank you for your responses and we will try to put some of your and other questions into a future survey if we can see that being a benefit to the membership.

*Eddie*

## 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](mailto: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 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	3.5" x 2"	\$15	\$40
Quarter Page	3.25" x 4.5"	\$30	\$75
Half Page	7 x 4.5" or	\$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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:richard@chventures.com).*