



News and Views

Volume 2, Issue 1

January/February/March 2013

From the President

by Eddie Martin



I have more potential hobbies than I have time. Most of you can relate to this, too. Each holiday season when I know that there will be a little more down time I try to get a book through interlibrary loan that has caught my eye during the year but one that I knew that I would not have time to read at other times. This year it was a book written by a Mr. Calhoun on old southern apple varieties. Much of the early culture in the southeastern US and other parts of the country was tied to apples. There were early commercial varieties but there were a lot more “family apple varieties”. If Grandpa Smith planted a seed or found a tree growing on his farm and it was good it might be named the “Smith apple” to make up an example. Nobody really knew if the parents of such a tree were a cross between a Limbertwig, a Baldwin, a Ben Davis, an Early June or something else. This

tree was just a tree that did great where it was found. Family members and neighbors would dig root sprouts and start their own “Smith apple tree”. Later, grafting moved trees farther and in greater numbers. As with many things, over time many of the sources and stories of origin were forgotten. But if you can find some of these good old local varieties today you are in for a good apple that fits your environment and meets your needs.

We’re not too far from that example with our St Croix sheep. We know where they originated in our time from the island, but the details of their genetic origins are a little sketchy. Our sheep are decedents of sheep imported to the mainland at different times which were outwardly selected as white polled sheep. Nobody knows what was in their full genetic makeup since they were selected phenotypically (observed physical traits of an animal) for the dominant traits of white hair

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News and Views

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St. Croix Membership

St. Croix Hair Sheep Breeders, Inc.

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641-942-6402

All membership dues will be collected by Associated Registries. A membership application/registration/transfer worksheet can be found on our web site at www.stcroixsheep.org. Call the registrar for clarification or to ask a question concerning registration or transfer. Please mention our association name and ask for Karey.

and polled males. Some of their ancestors most likely were part of any of the other sheep on the island which are various colors, horned, scurred and polled. We would only know exact ancestry and have a genetically pure white polled sheep breed if the original sheep had been genetically selected or if early importers had sorted exclusively for white polled sheep by the means of genetic selection and testing in the development of the breed here in the USA.

So, today we see reminders of the full genetic origins of our phenotypically created breed. We deal with color, scurs, and occasionally some horns on pure St Croix sheep from registered St Croix parents. These were all genetic traits which were a part of the original animals' DNA but could not be seen by the eye of the selectors. This can be viewed from two sides as either good or bad for the breed. I hope that our current newsletter presents both sides of this ongoing discussion to you. Talk with one of the Directors closest to you about the future breed standards of the St Croix breed as the board of directors look at potential changes. Make 2013 a great year and support the association. Until next time, Eddie. **NV**

Breed Standards Discussion

The St. Croix Hair Sheep Breeders, Inc. Board of Directors is considering modifying the current breed standards. A committee headed by Bob Bokma has been investigating the origins of the original breed standards and the genetic realities of the breed. An article supporting modifying the standards was submitted by Eddie Martin, SCHSBI President. An article supporting continuing the current standards was submitted by Linda Barnes, Director and Committee member.

We encourage you to read the articles and send your thoughts/comments to Bob Bokma (bobbokma@gmail.com); Billy Hearnberger (bfhearnberger@hughes.net); Joyce Keibler (joyce@hemmerhillfarm.com); Bill Wire (wireranch@sti.net); Richard and Kathy Bennett (rbr15863@hughes.net); Richard Pomeroy (richard@chventures.com); Rob Bass (rbass07@yahoo.com); Linda Barnes (dl2311@hughes.net); Malia Miller (sheep4brains@yahoo.com); Lynne Vanderlinden (van@cavenet.com); Yates Colby (welshjrt@hotmail.com); Eddie Martin (theebenezerfarm@gmail.com) . **NV**

2013 St. Croix Hair Sheep Breeders, Inc. Annual Meeting

Rob and Joy Bass have put together an exciting agenda and gourmet menu for this year's meeting.

Rob asks that attendees arrive on May 16th to be ready for an early start on May 17th.

Registration deadline: May 1, 2013

Registration fee: \$25/person. This covers snacks, beverages and a catered lunch immediately following the Saturday meeting. Send your registration fee (check to St. Croix Hair Sheep Breeders, Inc.) to Rob Bass, 1047 ACR 413, Palestine, TX 75803. Please include your email address.

The city of Palestine will email you regarding **local attractions** to enjoy during your visit, discounts for local merchants, and a will provide a welcome bag for all attendees.

Accommodations: Holiday Inn Express has offered attendees \$89/night rates and has blocked out 30 rooms. The rate is under St. Croix. Phone 903-723-4884. www.hiexpress.com/palestinetx

*When: May 17th and 18th
Where: Palestine, TX
Hosts: Rob and Joy Bass
Just Right Ranch*

Friday, May 16th: Dinner at the Sabor A Pasion Country House and Bistro. This will be a special dining experience. Plan to join us!

May 17th agenda:

- Dr. Frank Craddock from Texas A&M will talk about abortion diseases in sheep and about animal selection
- Clinton Hodges, owner of Sterling Lamb will speak to us about lamb cuts and marketing our lambs for meat
- Speaker from the National Farm Bureau
- Demonstration on gathering blood samples for gene and disease testing
- Possible speaker on software for flock management
- Wine tour at Sweet Dream Winery (check out their jalapeno wine!).

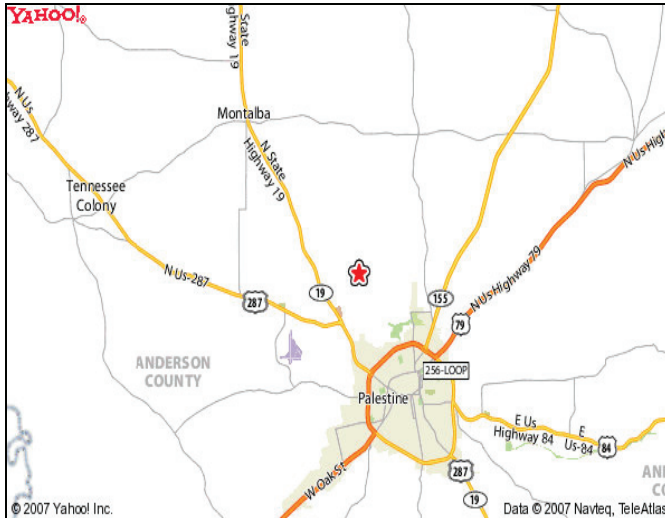
May 18th agenda:

- Business meeting
- Catered lunch
- Adjourn

DIRECTIONS

JUST RIGHT RANCH

Rob & Joy Bass
1047 Anderson County Road 413
Palestine, Texas 75803



Routes to the Ranch:

From Dallas: US Hwy 175 South to Athens; Junction to Loop 7 West in Athens; West (right) on Loop 7 in Athens; take State Hwy 19 exit South to Palestine, TX; South (right) on State Hwy 19 to Montalba, TX and then continue south to Anderson Co Rd 413 (on the left, approx. 3 miles south of Montalba) *2 hours*

From Ft. Worth: US Hwy 287 East to Palestine; Junction to State Hwy 19 North in Palestine; North (left) on State Hwy 19 to Anderson Co Rd 413 (on the right, approx. 5 miles north of US 287) *3 hours*

From Houston: US Interstate 45 North to Huntsville, TX; Junction to State Hwy 19 North in Huntsville; North on State Hwy 19 to Palestine, TX; Junction to Loop 256 West; West (left) on Loop 256; take State Hwy 19 exit North to Athens; North (left) on State Hwy 19 to Anderson Co Rd 413 (on the right, approx. 6 miles north of Loop 256) *3-4 hours*

From Tyler: State Hwy 155 South to Palestine; Junction to Loop 256 East (right); East on Loop 256; take State Hwy 19 exit North to Athens; North (right) on State Hwy 19 to Anderson Co Rd 413 (on the right, approx. 6 miles north of Loop 256) *1 hour*

From Waco: US Hwy 84 East to Palestine, TX; Junction to Loop 256 West; West (left) on Loop 256; take State Hwy 19 exit North to Athens; North (left) on State Hwy 19 to Anderson Co Rd 413 (on the right, approx. 6 miles north of Loop 256) *2 hours*

Once you turn onto Anderson County Road 413, the ranch is approx. 1 mile on the right.

The address is 1047 Anderson County Road; look for a black pipe entrance.

Phone Numbers You Can Call: 903-948-0509 or 214-679-9879

Comments on the Missouri Drought from Persimmon Creek

by Jason and Miranda Pelzel

If you didn't already know, we had a pretty bad drought here in South Central Mo and the Midwest. Locals around here compared it to the worst drought since the 1930's. We grew up in Texas and felt like we back there again. Of course, TX's drought last year was nothing we've ever seen before. I had never seen so many dead trees and so few livestock; if they did have livestock, they were skinny and poor on dirt "pastures." Some TX residents had to feed all year long. Missouri wasn't quite that bad, at least in our area, but it sure was brown and crunchy and some had to feed yearlong because of insufficient pastures.

So how did our St. Croix fare? Let's just say that we were fortunate enough not to have had to supplement the majority of our stock. We bought six bred ewes from Oklahoma this summer and these were the only ones who required supplemental feed in July/August. Supplementing these ewes didn't cause much of a dent in terms of cost so we are pretty thankful. Ewe lambs look well and will be ready to breed spring 2013.

The lambs born in April weren't given any supplemental feed, although in hindsight, we should have and will do next time. Overall, they did well considering the situation. Some



didn't fare well and were sent to slaughter. All our St Croix browsed like goats. They were seen eating blooms/berries off of those pesky night shades and even ate the tops of dove weeds all while keeping up a decent appearance. They

lost some weight, but not enough to warrant supplemental feed.

We employed some unique strategies to s-t-r-e-t-c-h the pasture including using more intensive rotational grazing, and grazing the road ditches where the grass was plentiful. We also sacrificed our hay patch. In doing so, we are now relying on last year's hay to supply us through the winter. This means putting off winter-feeding as long as possible without compromising the condition of our girls. Thankfully, rain came in the middle of August so we moved the girls back to the hillsides. In doing so, we were allowing the hay patch to recover for late fall/early winter grazing. As of this writing, our hay patch could be utilized until January 1st before we start feeding, however if the price is right, we may temporarily rent some pasture instead. Here recently, we had one particular hard frost that knocked off what was left of the green leaves on our pecan trees in the front yard. Ever being opportunistic, we turned the girls in for a smorgasbord.

Looking back, we really can't complain considering the circumstances. All our ewes took when exposed, had no spontaneous abortions/still births, and the only infant mortality we had was our fault and happened while we both were at work. It equated to an 8.5% mortality, which meets our goal of less than 10%.

Feel free to send your thoughts/feedback to us at emailus@persimmoncreek.net or visit us at www.persimmoncreek.net 

St. Croix Hair Sheep Breeders, Inc. Opportunities for Youth



Attention all youth members:

St. Croix Youth of the Year

The St. Croix Hair Sheep Breeders, Inc. has established an annual “**St Croix Youth of the Year**” award. All youth members who participate in 4-H, FFA, Open shows, exhibit or promote their St. Croix Sheep in any way are encouraged to send in an essay of 500 words or less and photos (if possible) of any of their above activities to be selected for the “**St Croix Youth of the Year**” award.

A St. Croix belt buckle plus \$100 will be awarded to the winner.

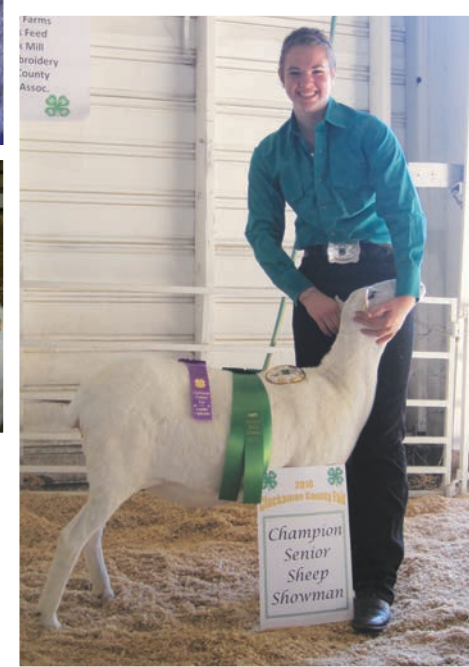
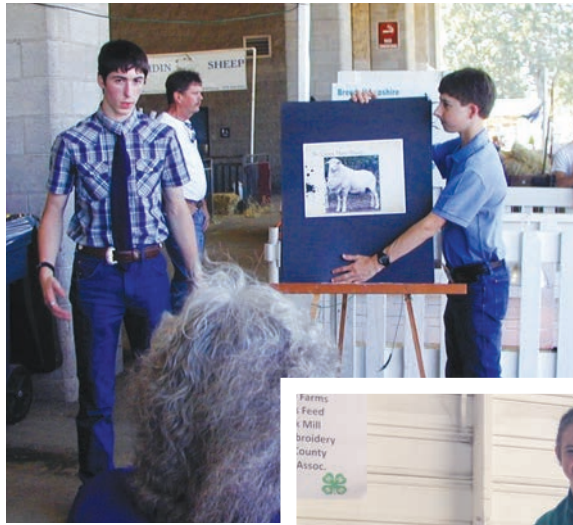
Mail all entries by October 31, 2013 to :
Linda Barnes, Youth Promotion Director. 16529
NW Pauly Rd., Portland, OR 97231. Phone:
503-629-5587

All entries will be judged by the youth committee.

Criteria for judging the essay material for the St. Croix Youth of the Year

The following is a score sheet for determining “Youth of the Year”:

1. Up to 25 points will be awarded for promoting and or exhibiting St. Croix Sheep in activities other than showing.
2. Up to 25 points for involvement or participation in 4-H, FFA or Open Sheep Shows with St. Croix Sheep.
3. Up to 25 points for maintenance, feed, and care for the St. Croix Sheep.
4. Up to 25 points for the overall content of the essay or composition of 500 words or less.
5. Up to 10 bonus points for submitted photos of any of the above activities.



Attention all NW St. Croix Members: St. Croix Showmanship Class

The St. Croix Hair Sheep Breeders, Inc. youth program is offering a **youth St. Croix Showmanship** class at the Oregon State Fair following the Open St. Croix Breed Classes in 2013. Ribbons and cash will be awarded to the first five places. All youth 18 years of age or under are eligible to show in the showmanship class with either their own registered St. Croix or a member's registered St. Croix. Yearling, senior and junior ram or ewe lambs are eligible for this class. Any questions concerning this new class, call or email Linda Barnes, Director, Youth Chairman. Phone: 503-629-5587 Email: DL2311@HUGHES.NET

Possible St. Croix Youth Open Breed Show

Also the St. Croix Youth Program is researching and potentially applying for a **St. Croix Youth Open Breed Show** at the Oregon State Fair which would be held on the first Saturday of the Fair. The first St. Croix Youth Open Breed Show would consist of four classes. Sheep entries must be the owned and registered to the youth exhibitor. Sheep classes would be limited to: (1) Yearling Ewes, (2) Senior Ewe lambs, (3) Junior Ewe lambs and (4) Pair of Ewes. Final details and entry fees for the St. Croix Youth Breed Show would be listed in the OSF premium book.

Views from You

Association members have unique opportunities to view various aspects of raising and marketing St. Croix. From time to time, we will feature some of those observations and perspectives. Below is an article submitted by Billy Hearnberger, Joaquin, Texas.

Sheep Mineral Feeders



I did not like any of the commercial feeders I found, so I decided to make these. I got the idea from pictures I saw on this <http://edgefieldsheep.com/bb/index.php> discussion board. I've sent an email to the guy who posted the picture asking for permission to use his name for credit. His had been in service for 2-3 years, and he claimed they were holding up well. Mine are different than his in that he used a round base where I used a square base. He also used 2" x 8" lumber across the open bottom where I used 1" x 6", but I think the 2" x 8" would work better. My base is made from thick walled small steel pipe, and the uprights are of similar material only slightly smaller in diameter. I think square tubing would also work well but might not last as long or be as durable.

The barrels are held in place by four small fasteners on each side, and each barrel is cut in such a way as to make two feeders. The barrels are blue plastic that I got from a friend who has a construction company and originally contained either acid or soap. They are readily available and pretty easy to find. They could be improved on by cutting the barrel in such a way that the open corners just above the board are better enclosed to better protect from blowing rain. I plan to get more barrels and do this. They are easily replaced.

They were not cheap, and I ended up paying \$350.00 for three feeders including all labor and materials, but I think in the long run I will be glad I got them. In fact I already am. :-)

Billy Hearnberger, Joaquin TX 



Breed Standards Discussion

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Why We Should Modify Current Standards

Let me start by saying that I like white polled St Croix sheep. When we bought our St Croix, experienced breeders warned us to watch for physical faults like cow hocked individuals, crooked legs or bad bite. But the greatest hurdle for others and me to select improved sheep are the recessive traits which our registered sheep contained when we bought them. ***Recessive genetic traits of scurs, color spots and possibly horns came unseen into our flock just like they came in unseen when the Virgin Island White sheep were imported to the USA.***

What is a purebred St Croix sheep?

What is a purebred St Croix sheep? It is a sheep that has registered purebred St Croix sheep as parents. But, there are some lambs born from purebred St Croix parents yet these lambs have extra color, scurs, waddles or horns. Are they St Croix sheep? ***Genetically they are.*** According to the current breed standard they are not. Why? It goes back to how the original sheep were selected and how our breed has been managed here in the USA. The original foundation sheep were selected only on looks (phenotype) and not based on genetic purity. Color and scur genes and other recessive traits came in the whole DNA of the Virgin Island White sheep from the island to start St Croix sheep in the USA. In case you think this seems odd, let's look at historical photos that document White Virgin Island sheep. Let's check the reference, "Prolific Tropical Sheep", by I. L. Mason, and here are White Virgin Island sheep and a White Virgin Island ram.



We recognize the ram better than we do the ewes because of the colors of the White Virgin Island ewes and lambs. The book is a classic educational reference and we can glean one of the recommendations in the conclusion: "The White Virgin Island should be conserved and ***selected for prolificacy and meat production.***" The author knew that ***a breed that is not of an economical benefit to a breeder or a group of breeders will be discarded.*** I do not want our St Croix breed discarded.

Recessive Traits

Why do recessive traits keep showing up in our sheep? The long term practice of ***culling only the lambs exhibiting excess color, large scurs or horns leaves the registered parents and white polled siblings in the genepool with the same genes for color, scurs or horns.*** No requirement of the association ever existed to remove the parents or the white and polled siblings which carry the same genes that produce these non-allowed traits. It is an unending and vicious circle of useless and wasteful efforts. Selective phenotypic culling (based on appearance) alone has not worked for decades in our breed and it will never work.

Does a St Croix sheep with a spot the size of a quarter have any different amount of color genes than a St Croix that has a spot the size of a jar lid? No. So why do we cull some and

not others? ***It does not make any sense on a scientific or a genetic level.*** Scurs can appear on a ram after he is a number of years of age. IF you used him as a flock sire what can you logically do when that happens? Practically, nothing.

The Purpose

Our breed is a threatened breed with convenience traits that make them a pleasure to own but ***the end purpose for our favorite sheep breed is meat production.*** Does it really matter about the color or the scurs if our sheep all come from purebred parentage and the DNA of foundation sheep from St Croix?

Many ram lambs with scurs/horns are more muscular and grow faster than comparable polled ram lambs. It seems wise to keep them in a breed that is a very limited genepool. They can improve our flocks and our breed in yield of meat and provide a genetic boost when a flock has become inbred. ***Where is the wisdom in culling them from the breed if they are genetically purebred St Croix sheep?***

What does all this mean?

- Color and scurs were in the genetic makeup of the ancestors of today's St. Croix sheep, and those genes are still part of our sheep.
- Culling of animals exhibiting color or scurs for decades has not eliminated those traits.
- The presence of scurs is often associated with rams that exhibit greater muscularity and faster growth than polled rams.
- The St. Croix gene pool is small, and eliminating otherwise quality breeding stock for superficial traits such as color or genes is a risk.
- The St. Croix breed is a meat sheep; there is no other economic justification for their existence.

A Reasonable Response

What is a reasonable response to these facts? We could allow the registration of genetically purebred St Croix sheep with notations on the registration papers such as:

"W" placed on the application for registration tells that the lamb meets the current arbitrary color spot size in the breed standards

"C" placed on the application for registration shows that the lamb has a color spot(s)

"S/H" on the form notes that the ram lamb has scurs or horns and sibling ewes could also carry the same designation.

This system allows the freedom to breeders to keep raising "W" St Croix sheep by the old phenotypic breed standard exactly as they are doing now. It also lets breeders with sheep showing some color or scurs to register pure St Croix sheep as an economic benefit to their flock and the sheep industry.

Create Success

In a time and day of science and technology, we should not avoid the knowledge of genetics and rely only on tradition to hurt ourselves economically. Last year our association only registered slightly over 1000 sheep and our membership totaled 108. After about 38 years of the breed being in the USA these facts are not impressive. Our nearest competitor is the Katahdin breed, and last year they registered 8131 sheep. We will not be able to keep up and compete with any sheep breed with only a "certain looking sheep" as our priority. To create success, the St Croix breed needs to provide an improved product. I believe that I. L Mason had the right idea: "The White Virgin Island should be conserved and ***selected for prolificacy and meat production.***" Let's use our breed's full genetic base to finally make it happen. 

Why We Should Not Change Current Standards

by Linda Barnes

Attention St. Croix Hair Sheep members:

Some members of the Board of Directors have brought up the issue of changing the original St. Croix Hair Sheep breed standards established some 40 years ago to include color and scurs. Their reasoning comes from the genetic backgrounds of the original Virgin Island White sheep selected in 1975 to be imported into the USA for agricultural study. There is recessive

genetic material in all St. Croix Hair Sheep backgrounds which from time to time presents itself. Since the inception of the St. Croix breed registry, these recessive traits when they occurred have been culled to keep the integrity of Virgin Island White Sheep now known as St. Croix Hair Sheep as pure as possible.

Initial Selection

Dr. Warren Foote and Mr. Cole Evans from Utah State University selected the initial flock to be imported into the United States. Mr. Evans states: "When the St. Croix sheep were first brought to the U.S., one of the main objectives was to follow the description of what was then called the Virgin Island White Sheep. These sheep were described in the book, *Hair Sheep of the World*, by Eric Bradford. In his chapter on the Virgin Island Whites, Bradford characterized them as solid white, polled, of moderate size and muscle. This is what we chose when selecting sheep to be imported...". Mr. Evans also states, "When the St. Croix Sheep Association was formed, we decided to keep true to the characteristics that were used when selecting the first imported sheep."

Standards

Mr. Evans goes on to say, "After the original St. Croix Sheep Breeders Association was formed, there were several attempts made to relax the standards that had been set by the Association, but it was always decided that one way to keep the breed pure was to maintain the strict standards we put into place. It was felt that if we allowed color or horns (of any type) that it would be difficult to tell if other breeds had been infused into the St. Croix."


"In a small or large association, members depend on the honesty of the producers that they purchase their breeding stock from. It doesn't matter how honest one tries to be, if the producer they get their stock from is not honest. I feel that maintaining the white, polled criteria helps keep producers honest. This is not to say that there will never be some "throwback" that appears occasionally, but by not registering the "throwback", it will help keep the breed as pure as possible.", says Mr. Evans.

Mr. Bret Bowman, who managed North Logan Farm at Utah State University and the St. Croix herd for more than 20 years along with Cole Evans, says "Since the flock originated here at USU, I felt it my responsibility and obligation to follow the by-laws and standards set many years prior to my tenure..". "While I was in charge of the flock if there were any that had color, and it was small to almost none, I would castrate males and eliminate both sexes from the breeding stock. Also, to my knowledge, I never had any horned/scurred animals on the place."

Mr. Bowman goes on to say: "If you start allowing color it would be hard to tell if the breed is pure. I realize it is all up to the integrity of the farm flock owners, but as far as I am concerned, the standard should remain as it started in 1975."

Visible Recognition

As one of your directors, I am opposed and concerned about allowing color and visible scurrs to registered St. Croix Hair Sheep. I have spoken with several long time Association members about the purposed breed standard changes that is being suggested by a few board members. All members that I spoke with felt it would be a detriment to the St. Croix Breed to allow these changes. For the past 40 years the St. Croix have been recognized as an all white, polled, medium framed sheep throughout the country that sets them apart from all other hair sheep breeds. Allowing color and scurrs would make it difficult to determine if other breeds had been introduced and registered in the name of St. Croix Sheep.

I hope you feel as I do that it is inappropriate to change our current breed standards. If you have any questions or comments concerning this matter please feel free to contact me by email or phone. There will be a note in the newsletter regarding responding to these pro and con articles on the association discussion board. Submitted by Linda Barnes, Director, Breed Standard Committee. 

News and Views

St. Croix Hair Sheep Breeders, Inc. Newsletter

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www.stcroixsheep.org

- Easy Care
- No Shearing



First in Internal Parasite Resistance

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Sheep That Work Better For You!