



Duos: Two are better than one

by Eddie Martin



We have the biblical wisdom of “two is better than one” and we have duos that are part of our heritage and memories. Lewis and Clark, Batman and Robin, Conway and Loretta and the pairs of names go on. Two folks that I would like to introduce as a duo are Dr. Frank Craddock and Mr. Clinton Hodges. These two gentlemen spoke, provided demonstrations, handouts and samples for a part of the Friday portion of the annual members meeting in Palestine, TX. The notes do not do full justice to

the information presented by these two men, but I can only hope that we can catch a glimpse of the opportunities ahead of us as a unique breed of sheep.

If we heed their instructions, learn the skills that they recommend and return our sheep to the qualities that the breed had 30 years ago we will have even more answers to some of the problems of the national sheep industry. I do believe that these two gentlemen provided the most stimulus for action from the most attendees that I can remember. I hope that you can find that energy in their presentations. **NV**

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News and Views

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Purposes of the St. Croix Hair Sheep Breeders, Inc.

The purposes of the St Croix Hair Sheep Breeders, Inc are very clear because we want you to be successful, enjoy your sheep and be profitable in your business. Some of the basic purposes are:

- Let you decide how you want to maintain your flock
- Clearly document the traits of each individual sheep on the registration papers
- Maintain a strong genetic base for the breed
- Let you grow and select sheep that will bring you the most satisfaction and profit
- Make the breed a useful and growing portion for the US sheep industry **NV**



St. Croix Membership

St. Croix Hair Sheep Breeders, Inc.

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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.

Eager to Hear from You!

Many of us live in very rural (sometimes remote) areas where we don't have neighbors who raise any kind of sheep, let alone St. Croix, whom we can turn to for advice. Vets can be a long way from you and, unfortunately, may not be as knowledgeable about sheep as they might be about other domestic animals.

This is only one of many reasons why joining our St. Croix discussion forum (chat group) can be such a valuable tool. Here are a few more:


-  You have a question or need advice about lambing, weaning, nutritional needs, routine health care, marketing your sheep, or other concerns.
-  You have (or are seeking) ideas for such things as feeder design, shelters, lambing jugs, fencing.
-  You are looking to sell some of your sheep or purchase more (think of it as free advertising!).
-  You have other livestock for sale.
-  You have access to the latest Board news.
-  You'd like to chime in with your thoughts for improving ways the Association may better serve our membership.

Ours is the only St. Croix forum that will enable you to reach all board members and registered members at the same time.

As a heritage breed, we are relatively small in number (as opposed to larger and more common breed associations), and this forum provides us a wonderful opportunity to get to know each other while at the same time sharing All Things St. Croix.

So let's get started! Go to the official St. Croix website, www.stcroixsheep.org, then click on "Chat Group" in the left column. On the chat group page, in the upper right-hand corner, click on "Register". After reading "Terms & Conditions", click on "I Agree", which will take you to the registration page. There is an extensive FAQ page (a link you can click on right beside the "Register" link) that will tell you anything you might wish to know that isn't covered here.

The registration page will walk you through entering your user name, email address, password, etc. Then click "submit." You will receive an activation link at the email address you provided.

Once you become a registered member of the group and log in the first time, I suggest you click on "User Control Panel" (located in the upper left corner) and then click on "Board Preferences". While most are already set by default, you may wish to do your own customization. If you want to receive notification of new posts by email, be sure the "yes" circle is enabled. If you make any changes, click "submit". 



Important Notice to all SCHSBI Members/Breeders:

You may know about or have been asked to consider joining another St. Croix Association. This splinter group is NOT the official organization for the breed, and is NOT linked to or sanctioned by the St. Croix Hair Sheep Breeders, Inc. It is an effort by a few to divide breeders and segment our breed. These few do not represent the membership as a whole, are not sanctioned by the Board of Directors, and have no access to your registrations, member info, fees, etc. In short, that organization exists in name only, save the seven breeders representing themselves on its behalf.

This division has been born out of controversy. As a unified Board of Directors for the St Croix Hair Sheep Breeders Inc, we believe that each and every one of you should be able to raise and register your sheep in a way to help you and to keep the breed strong and growing. There is no value to any breeder or prospective new member to split the breed and increase the rate

of inbreeding of any of our sheep. The standards of our association are actually heritage standards since they provide a full and true reflection of the genetic representation of our sheep as they were originally found on the island of St Croix where color and scurs existed naturally throughout the landrace island sheep.

You, as a breeder, retain the right to raise all white and polled sheep or to include the occasional representation of color or scurs in individual sheep that might be superior in market traits. Allowing the full range of the original genetics of our sheep is the basis of a sound and long view conservation breeding program. This approach will strengthen a genetic pool that has been weakened under past practices and falls into the recommendations of the ALBC and their technical specialist.

Please contact your Regional Director or any officer of the SCHSBI if you have comments, concerns or questions. 




Puppies and lambs, what more can you ask for? It doesn't get much cuter. The photos were taken on the first day of introduction between the new Pyrenees pups and a couple of lambs.

SCHSBI Code of Ethics

Members of our association are held to the highest standards in their interactions with buyers and other breeders. As an organization, we adhere to the following Code of Ethics.


As a member of St. Croix Hair Sheep Breeders, Inc., I will:


- Demonstrate a high standard of integrity in all activities related to my sheep;
- Extend to all sheep under my care the benefit of a high standard of animal husbandry;
- Maintain orderly and clear sheep identifications and birth records that insure confidence in the pedigree of animals submitted for registration and recordation;
- Offer for registration only animals of good quality meeting the standards specified by the association bylaws and rules;


- Deal in all transactions regarding St. Croix sheep with fairness and consideration, including a willingness and commitment to make restitution as agreed to between buyer and seller for any animal that fails to perform as specified in sale negotiations or for which permanent registration or transfer, or both, as a condition of such sale, is rejected;
- Be prompt in registering, recording and transferring of all breeding animals sold;
- As a representative of SCHSBI, educate breeding stock customers about the characteristics of St. Croix sheep and the policies and services offered by the association, including accessing SCHSBI website information;
- Make decisions which support long-term viability of the St. Croix breed, its producers, and their customers;
- Support and uphold the bylaws and standards of St. Croix Hair Sheep Breeders, Inc. 


Items You May Wish to Include in Your Bill of Sale


As a buyer of St. Croix sheep, there are a few things other than the sale price of the animals you may wish to have included in writing in your Bill of Sale. Not all will apply to your particular transaction. However, it's a good idea to keep the following in mind when you purchase.


 A statement that, to the best of seller's knowledge, the animal is healthy. As seller cannot guarantee health of an animal after it has left his premises, buyer may request that a health certificate, at buyer's expense, be obtained.


 If an animal is to cross state lines, a health certificate is required.



 If seller explicitly represents an animal as having been tested for certain health issues (Scrapie, Johne's Disease, OPP, etc.), ask for copies of test results.

 A statement that the animal(s) is either eligible for registration or is already registered, and the seller will transfer ownership to you in a timely manner, usually within 6 weeks.

 If you are given the registration papers at the time of sale, be sure the seller has signed the back and that you expediently send them to the St. Croix Registrar with applicable transfer fees.

 Should you purchase a ewe that seller represents as having been exposed to a ram, be sure to obtain a breeding certificate from seller.

 Any other representation made that was contributory to your purchase.

 A statement that seller will make restitution or other agreed upon remedy if items specified in the bill of sale are not adhered to. 

Keeping Our Furry Ranch Hands Healthy for Le\$\$

by Lynne Vanderlinden

Either through good advice or learning the hard way, most of us have come to realize the wisdom of raising our sheep by employing vigilant guardian animals. Some prefer and have good results with llamas or donkeys. As I use and am most familiar with livestock guardian dogs, they are the focus of this article. Caution: The following are practices I use on my dogs and are only suggestions. Always contact your vet before making any medication changes.

The two meds most of us administer on a monthly basis are flea & tick control and a heartworm preventive. Whether you have one dog or a dozen, the cost can really add up over a year's time.

Heartworm

Rather than buy the brand name from your vet, ask him to mix up the following concoction: 1 part sterile 1% injectible Ivermectin (usually labeled for cattle) to 9 parts sterile water. Once a month, draw with a syringe, remove the needle and administer 1 ML per 100 lbs. ORALLY. Even ordering pet meds on the internet, a vet visit for heartworm testing and a written prescription are required, so you may as well just get the "concoction" from your vet to begin with. My vet charges \$20 for enough mixture to last my three LGDs almost two years before it expires. Trust me, most vets are well aware of how to do this, but many won't "share" unless asked. I live in an area of the country (Oregon) where heartworm is rampant and have been successfully using this for 12 years. Use

heartworm medicine year-round, even in cold winter months. At this price, you can afford to!

Flea & Tick

So many products out there! I've never had a flea problem here, but ticks are so bad at times I get 'em myself walking in tall grass. Now that the patents have expired on some of the super high-priced meds, several others now offer that same Fipronil/Cyphenotrin combo at a more reasonable price. My latest purchase was Sentry Fiproguard Max from entirelypets.com. Using a limited time discount and free shipping, I paid \$81.50 for a 12 month supply for all LGDs, each tube treating an 89-132 lb. dog. I have also used the Virbac Preventic Collar in the past with mixed results (I haven't found anything

yet that is 100% effective on ticks). If you prefer the collar, definitely buy on the internet. My local vet charges \$17 each, while I have found them on the net for as low as \$6.95.

Internet comparison is the key to flea and ticks med shopping. Go to several of the well known pet med sites and look for two things right off the bat: promo codes for discounts

and free shipping and handling. Then the work begins - comparing prices and ingredients from sites you've limited your search to. Is that discount really a discount? Would it be cheaper to pay, say, \$4.95 flat rate shipping as opposed to free shipping? I may spend an hour doing my homework, but you can bet I'll walk away with the best product and price. And I only have to do it once a year! **NV**



Lynne Vanderlinden is an Oregon breeder.

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.

Who's Your Daddy?

by Yates Colby

I work very hard at preventing Great Ram Escapes into the ewes' pasture, especially in the early fall when the hormones really start flying. Heavy sigh. My extensive efforts were for naught on a fateful day in early August of 2012 when my husband called me & said, "You are not going to like this..." All the rams got in with all the ewes & he was not able to get all of the rascals back out of the ewe pasture. I returned home to find 4 or 5 rams & ram lambs still cavorting with the ewes, but not for long. After the final capture, I went to my shepherd's notebook & wrote down the escape date & the probable due dates.


Fast forward to five months later. Two St. Croix ewes each had twins—a ram lamb & a ewe lamb. Another heavy sigh. Who's their daddy? I did not castrate the ram lambs because I have an ethnic meat clientele that prefer rams. I watched them grow & I was struck by how similar the lambs, especially the rams, looked to a particular ram in my flock that was the first registered St. Croix I had bred. (Nice ram—beginner's luck). These 4 lambs had exceptional growth rate and good conformation. I kept thinking it was a shame I did not know who the sire was.

I had previously set up an account with the lab at UC Davis so I could test my sheep for

Scrapie Codon values. I noticed on the website the lab also did DNA parentage testing. Hmmm. Yes, curiosity killed the cat. Following the instructions on the test sample sheet, I pulled hair samples from the two ram lambs and the ram that I suspected was the sire. The root bulb **MUST** be included on the hair shaft for the test. Hair samples are so much easier to deal with than blood samples—regular envelope, regular postage & done.



The cost of the three tests was pretty reasonable. They checked the result for the ram's DNA against the DNA results for the ram lambs. Both ram lambs qualified as offspring of the suspected ram without regard for the dams (of course, I knew who they were). I got the results by email 3

days after they received the samples. Wow—fast turnaround! Since I have no other rams related to proven sire, the DNA results show that I have 4 lambs that are purebred St. Croix with known parents instead of 4 commercial St. Croix. And that, my fellow shepherds, is how you make lemonade out of the lemons that were the result of the Great Ram Escape of 2012. The DNA test results for the ram lambs are on the St. Croix Association Chat Group under General Chat so you can see what it looks like. 

Yates Colby, Summit Farms, Creston, WA

Friday Educational Speakers for the 2013 SCHSBI Annual Member Meeting

The first day of the annual meeting was outstanding. Two experts provided valuable information about raising sheep. The first speaker, Dr. Frank Craddock, focused on the basics of sheep breeding and care. Notes on his presentation follow.

Dr. Craddock's education, degrees and positions were many and impressive but he had no hair sheep in his background. In 1996 the mohair support ended and Angora goats began to decline. There were still plenty of Rambouillet sheep. In 1992 the numbers of Boer sheep began to climb. There was initial resistance to these changes, but as Dr. Craddock stated, "People had to understand, 'You do not have to like what I like' concerning wool and sheep." The recent drought has caused the loss of 1/2 of the sheep and 1/2 of the cows in Texas. It will take years to restock the ranches and recharge the groundwater. Dr. Craddock thinks that a lot of the sheep that will come back to Texas will be hair sheep. There is a small acreage landowner program and hair sheep work well there. The best adapted animals for that program are either meat goats or hair

sheep. Relative to resistance to parasites, it would have to go in favor of hair sheep.

"Hair sheep" in his talk are all breeds. All breeds can be selected for parasite resistance but other breeds do not have as much resistance as St Croix sheep. There is a new product (dewormer) in AU and NZ called Zolvix but:

- It will be years before it gets here
- He hopes that sheep breeders learn to use a new product before it gets here
- Breeders need to select for resistance in ALL breeds
- Old saying: 30% of sheep in a flock have 80% of the worms. This is a researched number and not just a saying

There are three divisions/ phases for ewes: 1- Before they are bred, 2- When they are bred and 3-After pregnancy



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.

Living here in SW Louisiana, by far the most important feature of sheep is their parasite resistance. Many breeds have been tried here, but they all die from parasites. St. Croix are the only breed that can survive and thrive in this climate. Not only that, they also produce a great meat product.

These pictures are of 2 pure St Croix ram lambs about a year old. Do you think they were solid white, or at this stage does it matter? For your information, the smaller carcass was from a pure white St. Croix, and the larger one was from a St. Croix with color.

Rene' Vera, Louisiana breeder

Ewes and Rams Before Breeding

- In San Angelo there was 30" of rain in 2007 but 22' fell between March and August. He calls these the "parasite months." Dew on the grass aids the larvae, forage is not that great. The extreme parasite infestations caused problems to ewes prior to breeding.
- People have a lot of worry about females, but the rams are often ignored. You need to spend time with the rams:
 - BSE (Breeding Soundness Exams) are good to do
 - Flush them with feed prior to breeding to get them in better shape and producing more sperm
 - Watch heat sterility – temperatures get too high in testicles and sperm is killed. Hot nights are a big deal. It takes 50 days to develop new (live) sperm
 - If you have a lot of ewes, you might run 15 to 16 rams together
 - If you are a small flock owner you may only have a single sire and he could be "shooting blanks." Recommendations: marking harness to watch for repeats and get a vet to check your ram.

Ewes Are Bred

- Implantation of the fertilized eggs take about 15 to days to settle
- Watch stress on the ewes
- After the 15 to 16 day period, it is safe to work the ewes
- Avoid Valbazen and Prohibit at this point for these ewes because they can cause abortions
 - Valbazen: Use as needed but not at this stage of gestation for ewes and it will control liver flukes and tape worms
 - Prohibit: It was gone for 30 years. It is dose specific and they mean it.
 - Nutrition for ewes
 - What about nutrition for ewes? Great attention needs to be paid to ewes' nutrition during lactation, but another critical time is late gestation. In San Angelo during Jan, Feb and March there is not much to graze (digestibility is down and crude protein is down) and supplementation needs to provide concentrated

CP (crude protein) and TDN (total digestible nutrients). In a prolific breed, you can flush for twins and triplets and in the last two weeks of gestation before lambing you have to be concerned about Pregnancy Toxemia. Energy is key to preventing Pregnancy toxemia. The multiple lambs and placentas displace the rumen volume of the ewe and she cannot eat enough to meet her needs.

After Lambing

- Ewes nursing multiple lambs have significant demands on their systems. For the first month after lambing, they need nutrition adequate to support themselves and their lactating lambs. If the natural forage or feed is not adequate, they may require supplementation during this time.

Evaluation and Selection of Sheep

We are discussing purebred sheep, so we use the standard.

There are two types of selection: Natural and Artificial. We are discussing artificial selection. There are three ways to do it:

- Visual (eyeball) – We use it more than we should. One of two methods to use in commercial sheep
- Performance – it means we have to have records such as birth date, weights, etc. Don't just "have" records but USE your records. One of two methods to use in commercial sheep.
- Pedigree - Purebred breeders need to use this along with the other two based on lines you like, etc.

Visual – Start on either end of the sheep

- Mouth – bottom jaw
- Too long – monkey mouth
- Too short parrot mouth
- Sheep snap off their grazing and if the mouth is wrong then they have a problem
- You need to check and cull
- Rear – teats and testicles
- Teats are not usually bad on a sheep but you want 2 teats and watch for mastitis
- Testicles – there are studies that the size of testicles in a sire influence fertility in the daughter. Larger is better. At 12 to 14 months old have 32 cm or larger. Largest he ever saw

was 45 cm.

- Epididymitis – check for knots on cords. The testicle will be nonfunctional and will atrophy. You have to sell if both testicles are affected.

- Mastitis – lots of kinds. It's bad if it is "blue bag". If the ewe survives, sell her.

What if you just go out on a farm or ranch and see an old ewe that looks like death warmed over? Should you automatically recommend that she be culled? No, because she may be in that condition because she is highly productive.

Most Important – Structural Correctness is like the "Foundation" and frame of a building.

- ANY breed or species
- Feet, legs, bone structure, skeleton
- Pasterns are shock absorbers. Flex is OK but too weak- dew claw near the ground is a way to judge
- Rear and front feet and legs
- Rib shape- Animals that are slab-sided or flat sided are his pet peeve
- If animals are on the range they need internal dimension
- Frame score – can be judged by the cannon bone.
- Select for extremes: too big = taller and thin "pencil or gutted"
- Select for thickness = deeper and shorter "toad".
- Volume or capacity is three dimensional
- Longer
- Deeper
- Wider
- Muscling – You need the correct frame score and the correct structure
- You need to put the most muscle possible is his choice
- Rams – most muscle possible
- Ewes- not "ram like"
- Breeding
- Look for sexual characteristics
- Judge according to the breed standard
- Rams should look like rams- masculine
- Ewes should look like ewes – feminine

Ending words: "Buy the best ram that you can." 

Following are notes from the presentation given at the annual meeting by Mr. Clinton Hodges. His talk was extremely informative about hair sheep in general and St. Croix in particular. Bottom line, he believes that the St. Croix of today is not nearly as good as the St. Croix were 30 years ago. If they could be restored to their former quality, there is a place for them in the commercial meat industry.

Mr. Clinton Hodges

- He is from Sterling, Texas and owns or is a principal of Sterling Lamb. He has been in the sheep business all of his life and started with Rambouillet sheep. Used to sell 100s of rams each year in the US, finally were exporting rams, etc. The wool market has been declining for his lifetime. He has lost friends over hair sheep.
- Started with White Dorper and St Croix and crossing (Royal Whites)
- He is in the meat end and is interested in hair sheep. He was in the Texas Hair Sheep Association which is now the North American Hair Sheep Association
- Several breeders put a cooperative together marketing meat and skins
- St Croix sheep
- are part of the puzzle
- 30 years ago they were better sheep
- Frame
- Meat
- He had some of the original imports and wish that he had kept them pure
- Doesn't know what has happened today



- He and his son would be interested in buying St Croix rams if they were as good as they were 30 years ago
- A friend's son worked on the island of St Croix about 2 years ago. The guy really knows sheep and said that there is now no St Croix sheep over there worth importing

Meat end of the business

- He got tired of hearing people say
- I don't like lamb
- I don't eat lamb
- Where is it available?
- Don't mess with any processing plant unless it is USDA inspected
- They buy 500 to 700 lambs from one producer
- They only buy St Croix/Dorper crossed lambs and most come from south Texas and west Texas
- Katahdin sheep are at the bottom of his list and he does not want them
- 3/8 St Croix and 5/8 Dorper is ideal

Question: Why the 3/8 and 5/8? They just work but nobody knows.

They buy lambs at 80 to 85 pounds for about \$1.10/pound. They process at 120 pounds and the cost of gain is about \$1.30

Question: How to get to the St Croix sheep of 30 years ago? Need to be straight legged, backs were different, he doesn't want great big bone. Way too many of today's St Croix are frail boned and are less in weight

Question: Why the 3/8 & 5/8 mix? To get bigger animals and bigger carcasses. Dorper is the easiest breed to improve that he has ever worked with. Target lamb sizes is 125 to 150 pounds at 12 months old and a hanging carcass

yield at 50%+ of live weight

- His lambs get some cover on the leg but not like the standard picture (handout of American Lamb Board "American Lamb – Cuts and how to cook them). They start to put on cover at 115 to 120 pounds

- Why produce a larger loin and rack? The buyer wants it

- Do you need to hang and age a lamb carcass? No

- True hair sheep meat does not have an odor

- We need another name for hair sheep (meat)

- They sell by hanging weight at \$3.40/pound

Question: What is the future of St Croix sheep? Do we have a market? You need to have all the meat that you can on a carcass. Watch the cover (hair) as it is too much on a Dorper. You need to select for parasite resistance. He has not found the St Croix sheep that will do what he wants but they do increase shedding and boost parasite resistance. The problem with St Croix sheep today – they drop the size too much. They need to be bigger framed.

- Hybrid vigor: It is out there.

- If he could get decent St Croix like they used to be he might start over again.

- His son has a flock that is more Dorper

Question: Any reason for a St Croix ram and a Dorper ewe versus a Dorper ram and St Croix ewes? He has seen no difference.

- He is not interested in the registered business

- You can build your own ram with Dorper and St Croix **NV**



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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!