



THE BLUE NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE BLUEFACED LEICESTER BREEDERS ASSOCIATION

VOL.. 6, NO.1

SPRING 2008

THE BLUEFACED LEICESTER AND HIS MULE SHEEP PROGENY



The North American Mule Sheep Society (NAMSS) will be hosting the first North American Mule Sheep & Bluefaced Leicester Progeny Show held in conjunction with the Wisconsin Sheep & Wool Festival in Jefferson, Wisconsin on September 5th – 7th, 2008.

There will also be a display of the breeds that comprise the Stratified Three-Tier Breeding System and educational talks on utilizing the 3-Tier system for grass fed lamb production.

The USA's current economic trend of high grain prices is taking the profit out of the traditional feedlot systems used to produce market lamb. Alternatively it is causing a growing interest and demand for grass based sheep genetics selected for their capacity to produce lean, healthy, grass fed prime lamb. The Stratified Three-Tier breeding scheme utilizes traditional British Hill and Upland type

ewes from breeds such as the Scottish Blackface, North Country & Border Cheviots, Clun Forest, and Shetland sheep. These hardy and adaptable ewes are bred to a Bluefaced Leicester tup to produce the popular and prolific commercial ewe called the 'Mule'. The Mule is a hardy and prolific hybrid that consistently inherits the vigor, hardiness, and forage conversion capabilities of its hill dam with the additional benefit of increased size, prolificacy, milk production, and early maturity, characteristic of their Bluefaced Leicester sire. For over a century now, this combination of genetic traits has resulted in the repeatable production of highly productive forage based commercial 'Mule' ewes in the United Kingdom. Nearly one half of all current commercial ewes in the UK are Mules.

The NAMSS Show is designed to demonstrate to the sheep producer an alternative efficient and economic way to produce lamb through an organized crossbred breeding system; where the Bluefaced Leicester ram is the unifying factor in the scheme. For the commercial sheep producer, the Bluefaced Leicester offers the genetic option of producing grass fed market lamb more efficiently thru its Mule progeny. This carefully selected English Longwool provides the key link between the hardy hill breeds known for their forage conversion abilities, and the efficient heavy carcass genetics of the terminal sire breeds. The Bluefaced Leicester, when utilized as a maternal crossing sire, passes on its prolific values, with many hill and upland breed crosses realizing an increase in lambing percentages upwards of 200 percent. In addition, he imparts his early sexual maturity to his 'Mule' ewe lamb progeny allowing successful mating to terminal type rams their first year, and a greater lifetime production record.

(continued on page 3)



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Brenda Lelli

Many of you may have taken notice of your newly elected BFLBA Board, and the appointment of this year's slate of officers. I think they are a dynamic group of individuals eager to promote the Bluefaced Leicester. We've already established several committees headed and supported by the various Board members. I would encourage all of you to become involved with the BFLBA by volunteering to serve on a committee. Let us all work together on breed awareness, promotion, health and education as the interest and demand for our Bluefaced Leicester breed spreads throughout North America.

The new Sheep Show and Promotion- Marketing committees are already hard at work on the Maryland Sheep & Wool Festival's "Hall of Breeds" display. I would like to thank Nancy Starkey for the generous donation of the background materials and curtains for the display. Kelly Mansfield has organized the materials for the Breed display and she has included the Crossing sire aspect of the Bluefaced Leicester into the educational and visual information.

Several members of the BFLBA are also working with the North American Mule Sheep Society (NAMSS) to host the 1st Mule Sheep and Bluefaced Leicester Progeny Show held in conjunction with the Wisconsin Sheep & Wool Festival in September. This should be an excellent opportunity to showcase our Bluefaced Leicesters to the sheep industry, to their versatility as a crossing sire in 3-tier breeding scheme for grass fed lamb production. You will find more details about the NAMSS Mule Sheep Show in this issue.

We, the Board, look forward to serving you and hope you join us in spreading the word on the unique attributes of our Bluefaced Leicesters.

BFLBA COMMITTEES

Sheep Show:

Chair* Kelly Mansfield, Cathie Shiff, Robina Koenig

Promotion & Marketing:

Chair* Mark Lelli, Becky Utecht, Kathy Davidson, Graham Phillipson

Education:

Chair* Cathie Shiff, Mark Lelli, Graham Phillipson

Newsletter:

Editor* Brenda Lelli, Becky Utecht, Kathy Davidson

Website:

Webmaster* Brenda Lelli

BFLBA MEMBERS

Published articles

The Shepherd Magazine
February, 2008

The Bluefaced Leicester

'Its history and origins in the United Kingdom and North America, and its use as a premier maternal crossing sire for producing commercial ewes.'

Submitted by:

Brenda Lelli, President, BFLBA

Sheep! Magazine

May-June 2008

The Importance of Hill Breeds in a Structured Breeding Program

* The first in a series of articles on utilizing the Hill breeds in the 3-Tier Breeding system.

Written by:

Graham Phillipson, Littledale Farm, WI

(continued from page 1)

The final tier of the scheme is to utilize the heavy carcass genetics of terminal rams, the British type Texel and Suffolk, to economically and efficiently produce wholesome, healthy, grass fed lamb. The Mule ewe when crossed on terminal meat breeds is able to wean multiple, high weight lambs on forage alone; in contrast to traditional corn based feedlot systems. These grass based genetics, when used in conjunction with the "British 3-Tier Breeding System", produce a lean carcass from milk and grass without grain inputs, finishing at weights ranging from 85 to 130 lbs within 7 months. This healthy, lean, succulent lamb is quickly finding its way into niche markets and is sought after by the restaurant trade, ethnic markets, and the private consumer.

For more information on the NAMSS Mule Show please visit:

www.wisconsinssheepandwoolfestival.com
or, www.mulesheep.com


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**A WARM WELCOME
TO NEW MEMBERS**

Cindy Ciecwiwa, Pitchfork Ranch, Swartz Creek, MI

Jean & Gary DeBoom, Ridge Road Farm, Algona, IA

Michael Lilburn, Ambercroft, Wooster, OH

North American Mule Sheep Society



www.MuleSheep.com

**MULE SHEEP & BLUEFACED
LEICESTER PROGENY SHOW**

In conjunction with the:

**Wisconsin
Sheep & Wool
Festival**

September 5-7, 2008

**Jefferson Fair Park
Jefferson, Wisconsin**

**Stratified Three-Tier Breeding System
Sheep Breed Displays
All weekend**

*Hill & Upland Ewe Breeds, Maternal Crossing Sire,
Terminal Sire Breeds*



**NAMSS Sheep Show
Sunday September 7th
At 10:00AM**

NAMSS Show - Classes
~Mule Ewe Lamb
~Yearling Mule Ewe
~Hill dam w/ Mule ewe
 lamb
~Mule dam w/ Terminal
 Sired lamb
~Bluefaced Leicester Ram
 w/ 2 Mule daughters

Educational Presentations

Utilizing the Stratified 3-tier System

Graham Phillipson 'Littledale Farm'
Sunday 12:00 Noon

**Introduction to Mule Sheep
'The Bluefaced Leicesters link to grass fed lamb'**

Mark Lelli 'Muleflock'
Sunday 1:00 PM

NAMSS Show Entry Information:
616-837-1872 or email: beechtrfrm@aol.com
Entry Deadline: August 15

Announcing the Formation of the Scottish Blackface Breeders Union

The purpose of the Scottish Blackface Breeders Union organization (SBBU) is to promote the breeding, expansion, and knowledge of the Scottish Blackface sheep. With the goal that they may take their rightful place in the sheep industry as the premier hill breed utilized in grass fed sheep production.

The Scottish Blackface sheep is a breed that has been developed over centuries to utilize rough and coarse grazing ground and to produce grass fed market lambs of the highest gourmet quality. Scottish Blackface ewes are ideally suited to grass based production systems especially in these times of high grain costs. They are extremely hardy and thrifty and thrive in northern climates where other breeds struggle to even survive. We also emphasize the Scottish Blackfaces' importance in the production of commercial breeding ewes.

The Scottish Blackface Breeders Union will be working in joint effort with other breed organizations that have specific interest in grass fed market lamb and sheep production. The SBBU strongly believes that the promotion of the Scottish Blackface ewe paired with the Bluefaced Leicester ram to produce the commercial Scotch Mule ewe will add an invaluable dimension to the US sheep industry that has been overlooked in the past. The Mule ewe can be a great asset to the sheep industry here in the US. (Over half of the commercial ewes in the UK are Mules).

Please visit The Scottish Blackface Breeders Union website for a more in depth look at Scottish Blackface sheep at: www.SBBU.org

THE HEALTHY BLUE

Cache Valley Virus

Mark Lelli, DVM

Cache valley virus, (CVV), is a virus spread by mosquitoes and is found throughout the USA, Canada, and Mexico. The virus is capable of infecting a variety of wild and domestic animals as well as humans. Infection in adult sheep is subclinical which means there are no outward signs of infection. If the timing is just right and infection occurs during the ewes first trimester, the virus may cross the placenta and cause fetal death, mummification, and a variety of other fetal malformations. The joints of these lambs are usually fused requiring fetotomy or caesarian section surgery for delivery with out undue trauma to the ewe. Infection of the ewe during the last two thirds of gestation causes no harm to her fetus. Ewes that are exposed to CVV and are seropositive before breeding are protected from reinfection and her lambs will be protected from infection during subsequent pregnancies. Currently, there are no vaccines or treatments available to protect sheep against CVV infection. In endemic areas, ewes should be bred outside of the mosquito season to control losses. The problem occurs when weather patterns during a particular season result in renewed vector activity and an increased risk of fetal infection.

Scottish Blackface Breeders Union



Scottish Blackface Sheep *The Premier Hill Breed Naturally*

- Hardy and Thrifty
- Lamb Easily w/ strong Maternal instinct
- Utilizes Rough , Coarse Grazing ground
- The Scottish Blackface ewe is the basis of commercial sheep production that gives meaty lamb growth on grass alone

www.SBBU.org

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THE BLUE NEWS

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The Blue News

May be accessed online at:

BFLBA.com

under "Newsletter"

Recent issues are in pdf. format
w/ highlights
from our older issues.

THE BLUE NEWS Advertising

Camera-ready display ads:

	Per issue	Annual
full page	\$40	\$110
half page	\$25	\$70
¼ page	\$15	\$40
Business card size	\$10	\$30

Classified ads: Flat rate \$10 per issue (40 words or less)

Payment: All ads are prepay. Make check payable to Brenda Lelli, 'BFLBA' and mail with your advert to the Editor.

Correspondence to:	Deadline for Newsletter:
Brenda Lelli, Editor	March 15 – Spring issue
17496 88 th Ave.	July 15 – Summer issue
Coopersville, MI 49404	Nov. 15 – Winter issue
616-837-1872	

MEMBERSHIP

- Annual BFLBA Membership: \$15
- Associate or Junior Membership: \$ 10
- Make checks payable to: Brenda Lelli, 'BFLBA'. Send to: Brenda Lelli, 17496 88th Ave., Coopersville, MI 49404. (616) 837-1872, BFLBA@aol.com.

EVENTS CALENDAR

May 3-4, 2008 – Maryland Sheep & Wool Festival
Howard County Fairgrounds, West Friendship, MD
www.sheepandwool.org

June 2008 – Heart of America Fiber Festival
Missouri State Fair, Sedalia, MO
www.moncwga.com

June 14-15, 2008 – Estes Park
Estes Park, CO
www.estesnet.com

June 20-22, 2008 – Black Sheep Gathering
Lane County Fairgrounds, Eugene, OR
www.blacksheepgathering.org

For more information on BFL's
Visit: www.BFLBA.com

Or join:

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



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