Hello fellow Texel Sheep Breeders!
I began writing and editing our Texel Times newsletter four years ago when I had two little boys and just enough time to carve out for a “side project.”
Now, my husband and I have four kids, four businesses and our hobby is farming. Needless to say the time for “side projects” is almost non-existent.
However, with the help of our current president, Judy St. Leger, we are making an effort to resurrect our newsletter and bring you some news and information about our special breed of sheep: the Texels.

I send a sincere thank you to all of the people who have continued to contribute articles, pictures and ideas to our little publication.

I look forward to working with the members of the Texel Sheep Breeders Society to produce more newsletters soon!
To submit your ideas, articles, pictures or feedback, please contact me at breslauarms@gmail.com.
Sincerely -- Kristin Pike

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Hampshire, Texel, Suffolk and Rambouillet breeders gathered in August at the Umatilla County Fairgrounds in Hermiston, Oregon for the 2016 Jackpot Lamb Competition.

This is a carcass contest that is unique in that the lambs are not only judged on the rail, but also as live animals.

There isn't any "showing" of the sheep as you see at fairs or National Shows. When the sheep arrive at the fairgrounds, they are each tagged and weighed. Later, they are brought into a show ring, tied in place and the owners vacate the show ring. The judge goes through the entries placing them in the order that he sees as being first, second, third, etc.

Then it gets really interesting. After the live judging, the lambs are taken to a local packing house and hung on the rail. Carcass data is collected and the carcasses are judged according to "The Adjusted USDA Yield Grade." The Yield Grade will be adjusted for ribeye area, fat thickness, leg conformation score and quality grade.

This year, a lamb from Fisher Texels in Payette, Idaho placed first in the Carcass division. Three other lambs from Fisher's placed in a tie for third, eighth and a tie for tenth. In the past eight years, Texel or Texel cross lambs have placed in the top 5 of the carcass division. Six of those eight years, Texels have stood number one.

All breeds are welcome from anywhere in the U.S. This is a fantastic opportunity to see how our Texels measure up against other sheep breeds as there is nothing hidden when a carcass is 'naked.'

This photo shows some of the hanging carcasses from the 2016 Jackpot Lamb Competition at the Umatilla County Fair in Hermiston, Oregon. The winning carcass - a lamb from Fisher Texels in Payette, Idaho - placed first. The man with the cane is pointing to the winning carcass.

**National Texel Show and Sale Review**

By Austin Brown

Monday, June 20th through Thursday, June 24th the National Texel Show and Sale was held in Sedalia, Missouri, as part of the Midwest Stud Ram Sale. Considering I will be a senior in high school next year, my father and I took a ram to sell in the sale. While we were proud of how the ram performed, it was not the highlight of our trip; as the most rewarding experience gained was to meet and visit with all of the Texel breeders of all ages, as well as those interested in the breed and its future.
Average Texel price tops $800 at National Show and Sale

This year, Cruz Nichols judged the Junior Show and Philip Glass judged the Open Show. The number of head was practically maintained from previous years and the quality of sheep was very consistent throughout the show. This year, Portland Prairie Texels was granted the honor of Grand Champion Ram. He was an extremely well-muscled ram with likely the most dimensional leg of the show. He sold for a total of $1,900, while the Reserve Champion Ram sold for $1,600 and was rewarded to Pine Knob Farm with her March ram lamb. Even though he was a very young ram, he showed the potential of being something really special.

In the ewe portion of the show, Pine Knob Farm was awarded the Grand Champion Ewe with her yearling ewe, it sold for $2,000. This ewe was personally my favorite sheep within the entire Midwest Stud Ram Sale. While I may be biased, as I am a Texel breeder, I was quite surprised that it was not pulled out during the Larry Mead Supreme Champion Event. As it excelled in every aspect of a judge’s scorecard, putting together a uniquely predominant package deserving of Supreme Champion consideration and at least my brief praise. Glass followed this choice with a March ewe lamb consigned by Taylor Texels, which sold for $550. I was quite pleased with this choice as it was an extremely correct, square-hipped ewe, showing a very deep leg. Pine Knob Farm was also awarded the Best Consignment award. In summary, twenty rams sold for an average of $873.75 and seventeen ewes sold for an average of $792.65. In total, thirty-seven Texels sold for an average of $836.63.

While many may have disrespected and undervalued the breed during its infancy within the United States, Texels are quickly becoming one of the most studied sheep within the country, drawing intrigue from almost all aspects of the sheep industry. From universities and research centers to the simple hobby farmer, the Texel breed has continually provided them with valuable results. This year, it appeared to many breeders that the interest in the breed was much higher than in previous years, as large crowds seemed to be walking around the pens. I was glad to hear this as it showed me that the presumptive downfalls of the breed have now been overshadowed by the reality of their benefits. While everything does have its weak points, the board is working hard to effectively develop the breed and the society forward as a whole. However, considering the relatively small size of the society, more help would be appreciated from its members. Through our collective efforts, I strongly feel that the breed will continue to develop and be recognized within a variety of prestigious events, such as the Larry Mead Supreme Champion Event.

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Science and technology will grow the U.S. sheep industry. Through the efforts of the National Sheep Improvement Program (NSIP), with backing from the American Sheep Industry’s Let’s Grow initiative, producers are learning the benefits of genetic selection based on pedigree and production data. It’s a movement designed to increase quality and quantity of lamb meat and wool. Bringing producers on board requires an innovative educational effort.

For the past year, NSIP Program Director Rusty Burgett has made the rounds of meetings and conventions, presenting information and answering questions. He has provided on-farm demonstrations and worked one-on-one with producers to introduce them to the world of Estimated Breeding Values (EBVs) and data collection. It’s a traditional extension agent approach to agricultural improvement.

Face-to-face meetings are effective. But they are not the only tool available in today’s world of digital communication. In 2016, nearly everyone owns a computer and nearly everyone with a computer frequents social media. NSIP is no exception.

“We’re using technology to promote technology,” says Burgett. “More and more people are getting their information from social media channels and in the spirit of NSIP, we need to be on the leading edge of implementing technology.”

NSIP’s Facebook page boasts 2,000 “likes” and offers everything from Center of the Nation Sale consignment forms to national sale reports, industry updates and “conversation.”

“The Facebook page provides a platform to not only post information but also to allow for feedback and start dialogue,” says Burgett. Feedback that is invaluable to Burgett as he tailors his in-person message and future efforts.

A second Facebook page, NSIP Marketplace, provides an online listing opportunity for those looking to buy and sell stock. Nearly 250 producers have used the marketing venue.

Now, NSIP has added a new electronic instrument: a YouTube channel. “The YouTube channel and Facebook pages were developed as a method to disseminate information about NSIP to a broader audience,” says Burgett. “Today’s producers, especially younger producers, are tuned to video. It’s a very effective way of telling a story.”

The channel launch is focused on producer profiles. The first features Irish Acres of Rio, Wisconsin, where Warren and Ellen O’Brion have farmed and raised Polypay sheep for nearly 30 years. The O’Brions are new to NSIP, and the four-minute video explains their introduction to the program and the benefits they’ve seen so far.

“The Irish Acres video demonstrates how the technology can be used in a maternal, farm flock situation,” explains Burgett. “It’s one example of EBVs at work.”

There are more to come. The producer highlight videos were produced thanks to funding from an ASI Let’s Grow grant, part of the U.S. Sheep Genetic Improvement Initiative, and feature producers in different production systems throughout the country that are using NSIP to increase productivity and move the sheep industry forward. Within the first few days after posting, the Irish Acres video had more than 300 views.

“Other videos will be released in the near future focusing on using NSIP in fine wool range operations as demonstrated by John Helle and family of Helle Rambouillets,” says Burgett. Hair sheep will be the focus of a third video. “This series demonstrates that NSIP can be used in a wide variety of production systems all across the U.S. and can help any flock advance its genetic merit and increase productivity.”

They’re meant to offer a taste of what NSIP can do, in producers’ own words, with more detailed information readily available on NSIP’s website.

The YouTube channel also offers tutorials on how to use NSIP technology and begin the data collection and submission process, through an NSIP webinar series recorded by Maryland Small Ruminant Extension. The webinar includes:

• “How the sheep industry can benefit from NSIP” by Dr. Robert Banks, with the Animal Breeding and Genetics
Unit of New South Wales State Department of Agriculture and the University of New England.

• “How the goat industry can benefit from NSIP” by noted goat expert Dr. Ken Andries of Kentucky State University.
• “How, when, and what data to collect” by American Lamb Board member and NSIP Vice President Cody Hiemke, Lamb Program Manager for Niman Ranch.
• “Challenges of moving to a performance-based flock” by Bill Shultz, owner/operator of Bunker Hill Farm in DeGraff, Ohio.
• “How to enter and submit data” by Chris Schauer, director and animal scientist at North Dakota State University Hettinger Research Extension Center.

The five sessions run around one hour each and provide a cache of detailed information and discussion. A sixth session features a producer panel discussion of practical application of the webinar information.

“And of course, YouTube provides links to related videos as well,” says Burgett. Tutorials on sheep genetics by Dr. David Notter, or genetic control of parasites in sheep and goats, are only a click away. It’s all aimed at reaching as many people as possible with the resources available.

“The more people we can reach, the faster genetic improvement will take hold,” says Burgett. “At NSIP, we’re determined to spread the message by whatever means are available to us. Social media and digital communication are a natural fit for NSIP’s approach of using science and technology to lead us into the future.”

You can connect with NSIP by entering “National Sheep Improvement Program” on Youtube or Facebook. Like and Subscribe to receive regular updates and visit www.nsip.org for more information.

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