

THIS MONTH'S FEATURE

Back to the Beginning

by Kathie Miller

From the
Premier Breeder
of British Registered
Soay Sheep



SOUTHERN OREGON SOAY SHEEP FARMS

Viewpoint

My visits to the UK are never your typical touristy forays; they are always part of an ongoing treasure hunt.

This trip was no exception and this time I stumbled upon a momentous treasure: details of the export of a small flock of Soay sheep from England to Canada in 1990, the progeny of which later formed the foundation of my flock in Oregon.

Christine had arranged an overnight stay with Ann and Thomas Knowles of Burstye Farm in West Sussex England, the exporters of two rams and four ewes to Phoenix Life Sciences in Montreal 20 years ago.

After breakfast, Ann brought out a box of records which she shared with me. "All the papers pertaining to Canada are in one envelope," she said. These were details that had eluded me for a decade. As I turned over each page it became clear that it was ALL there, even materials that I had assumed were long gone.

In conversations over dinner the evening before, Ann had shared some of their experiences, but I didn't expect to learn so much about the original Canadian flock. All the preparation and planning

documents were there, including exact measurements of the animals for shipping crate construction; records one would assume had no lasting value, but which provided me the specifics of the ancestors of my own flock. There was even a photo of Gigolo, one of the two original rams.

Much of the story I already knew, but I had not realized just how complicated a process it had been. Quarantines, blood tests, and vet exams I was aware of from my own experience importing semen, but preparing live animals for

shipment to Canada was an entirely different matter. Canada had very strict import requirements; isolations (multiple), timetables, RBST registrations, and repeated inspections. Without the aid of an experienced export agent the task would have been overwhelming. It became evident that this had been an extraordinary accomplishment. Two additional groups, which would have greatly expanded the Canadian population, were planned for later that year, but in the spring of 1990,



Burstye Lily in Canada

less than six months after the Phoenix flock had arrived safely in Montreal, a BSE crisis gripped the UK and the importation of all ruminants to Canada from Great Britain were halted, a ban that is still in effect.

These six, and most importantly the four ewes, (semen could later be imported) would be the last live Soay to come from the UK. Further, only after completing a five year quarantine in Canada could their offspring have been imported into the USA. This was indeed a special little flock of sheep and my resolve to preserve it (through continued RBST registration) was renewed.

The Knowles have a long history with Soay Sheep which began in 1980 when Peter Jewell brought the last of his flock to Ann from Cambridge University. They were the offspring of animals he had been instrumental in taking off St. Kilda in 1963. This was the beginning of a long association between the Knowles and Soay sheep, an association that continues to this day, thirty years later. 🐏



Gigolo

Burstye Farm

*The September
issue of
Viewpoint
will have
a new look.*

Watch for it!

TIP OF THE MONTH

Placing colored electrical tape on horns is an easy way to mark sheep.

Viewpoint is a monthly publication of Southern Oregon Soay Sheep Farms. If you have enjoyed this issue, please subscribe (kathiem@soayfarms.com) to have each new issue emailed to you. To be removed from our mailing list, please unsubscribe (kathiem@soayfarms.com).

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All advice in this newsletter has been used successfully on our farm. It is important to remember that every animal and situation is different. Before you try any of our suggestions, we urge you to consult your veterinarian.



Thomas with a polled ewe



Burstye ewes



Bellsie (wether)



Burstye ewe



Burstye ewes and lambs



Burstye flock



Ann with a 14-year-old ewe

AUGUST CALENDAR

- ❑ Second cutting of hay (in Oregon) comes in this month. Clean out barn of last season's hay and prepare for delivery of new supply. Store hay on pallets a few inches off the ground for good air circulation around the bales.
- ❑ Wean lambs well in advance of traveling. Ship sheep when weather cools. Arrange with your vet for health inspections. Health certificates are required for animals traveling across state lines, especially when shipped commercially. Requirements vary by state, but most lambs under six months do not need testing. Some states require blood tests for older animals. Check with state to which they are going. Health certificates are only valid for 30 days (US). Movement licenses are required for all sheep leaving or arriving at your farm in the UK. A copy must be sent to the local trading standards office within three days of the sheep's arrival (UK).

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