

From the
Premier Breeder
of British Registered
Soay Sheep



SOUTHERN OREGON SOAY SHEEP FARMS

Viewpoint

THIS MONTH'S FEATURE

Barn Placement

by Nick Surjan

Even the best barn construction may not overcome poor location. Consider the following before building or renovating a barn or shelter.

Though location choices may be limited on small acreage, it is still critical to consider a structure's placement.

Drainage, both water and air, is extremely important, especially for hoof rot prone sheep and goats. The flattest spot on your property may also be the wettest and, like water, cold air drains down swales and gullies to the lowest spot. A barn located in a low area or in water/air drainage course may be cool in the summer, but wet and cold in the winter. No spot is perfect, but wet

ground is the worst of all possibilities for sheep. If you confine your animals, they just have to tough it out, and live with the wet and cold.

Access to your barn can be a struggle if not properly evaluated beforehand. Can hay trucks get in, turn around and deliver the load as close to the storage area as possible? Good gravel, paved or dirt roads are important for equipment access. Do all your pastures connect in some way to the barn so that your animals don't have to



Fill was used to add slope and improve drainage



Equipment access

walk through your rose garden?

You should base your structure's design on how it will be used. Will you use the barn as a shop, to milk

goats, cows or (yes) sheep? Is there enough room to quarantine sick animals for treatment, set up pens for lambing, direct lambs for marking, etc? Will you have cows, sheep, llamas, and goats, all using the same structure? This means different feeding strategies, different manure management, different structural considerations, and different access issues.

Manure management is important to consider in your barn's configuration and placement. Many livestock managers let bedding

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The barn and the blues

by Kathie Miller

One evening, I received a call from a woman I barely remembered.

"You came to my farm last summer to see my sheep," she said. I had actually gone to see her flowers and her dogs and didn't remember the sheep. She had four Soay to sell. I said I couldn't take them for a variety of reasons: I couldn't afford them, had no way to get them here and had no way to house them. In a single breath she explained, "You can make

payments, we'll deliver, and you can keep them in a big dog house." I didn't stand a chance and relented.

A mad scramble ensued to construct some sort of shelter, just something temporary tacked-on to a rickety old building on a slope.

That was the beginning of my long relationship with blue tarps. I remember the annual ritual of covering the old tarp with a new one as I continued to fantasize about a real barn someday.

My dreams were finally

realized a few years ago with real roofs over real sheds for the sheep. Every animal now has a roof over its head and my raunchy blue tarps are but a fading memory. Or so I thought.

The other morning, I wandered outside with my cup of tea and was horrified to see—through the only hole in the bushes between me and the neighbor—in all its shining glory, a brand new blue tarp covering my neighbor's new critters! 🐑

RESOURCES

Online Resources:

www.cps.gov.on.ca/english/planmenu.htm
an online resource for plans for sheep housing, open-end pole barns, hay and grain feeders for sheep, salt and mineral feeders, etc.

www.sheepandgoat.com/housing.html

Fact sheets on animal housing, manure management animal facility ventilation, etc.

www.soayfarms.com/shelter.html

Shelter and fencing ideas from the US and UK.

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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.

Placement *continued from page 1*

and manure build up through the winter. Does your barn allow for easy manure removal in the spring before fly season starts? Or before the ammonia builds up to the point that both you and the animals refuse to enter the barn? Ventilation, even in cold weather, is important when animals are confined. Removable or sliding panels/doors allow easier access for manure removal. Your barn should accommodate the type of equipment you will use to remove manure.

That means access to the loafing areas and enough room to turn equipment and exit to the area of manure storage. Before you build the structure or fencing, consider access issues for manure clean up and feed delivery.

Manure-contaminated water and manure piles should not drain directly into creeks, rivers or lakes. The high bacteria and

parasite counts affect aquatic animals. Settling ponds, drain ditches that redirect manure laden water onto fields, and judicious placement of riparian vegetation (poplars, willows, etc.) to absorb drain



Hay barn with easy access for delivery

water are some strategies that can slow and prevent contaminated water from entering waterways.

There are solutions to problems with existing barns. They can be retrofitted to allow for better access. They can be sealed or even insulated on exposed sides. The animals can be moved to the sheltered side of the barn, and soil can be added to low spots and

drainage ditches can carry away some of the moisture from poorly placed barns. Upslope drainage can be improved to divert flow from low spots and to reduce soggy soils. Trees can be planted for shade and water filtration.

Research and preparation are key to proper barn construction and placement. Talk to other livestock managers about the utility of their structures. Visit school and university farms to see what works. Talk to your Farm Advisor. Consider carefully the placement and design of the structure that will be part of your property for years, maybe decades, to come. Your reward will be a structure that enhances your property and purposes instead of consuming your time trying to solve problems that could have been avoided. ☺

Nick Surjan has degrees in English and Agriculture, has worked in production agriculture and for the State of California in solid waste recycling and composting, emergency response and pest control. He also has experience in raising dairy goats, sheep, calves and feeder pigs.

JUNE CALENDAR

- ❑ Vaccinate lambs at 4 to 5 weeks and again 21-28 days later.
- ❑ Keep barnyard picked up as fly season begins.
- ❑ Start to roo (hand pluck) ewes as they molt.
- ❑ Watch lactating ewes for weight loss. Supplement as needed.
- ❑ Watch ram's horns. Trim as needed.
- ❑ [Black Sheep Gathering](#), Lane County Fairgrounds, Eugene, Oregon, June 19-21

TIP OF THE MONTH

A 5-gallon bucket lid on the ground makes a great (dry weather) salt feeder that rams won't bash or tip over.

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