

From the
Premier Breeder
of British Registered
Soay Sheep



SOUTHERN OREGON SOAY SHEEP FARMS

Viewpoint

THIS MONTH'S FEATURE

What's in a Name

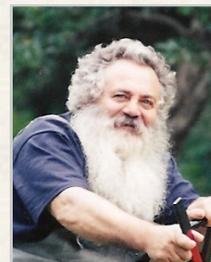
by Kathie Miller

"Very cute lamb," my friend said. "Pity about the name." I could hardly contain my laughter.

I had been taking a computer class at the junior college, and what better idea for that season's naming theme than computer terminology. Adobe, Excel, Hewlett, HP, Kilobyte—you get the drift. We had adopted the name theme tradition with the original flock of Soay sheep we had imported from Canada. The Canadians had inherited it from the English, who had originally exported the sheep to North America. In the UK, a lot of keepers name their lambs based on a letter in the alphabet. All names begin with A the farmer's first lambing season, B the second, C the third, etc.

But Canadian flock tender George Berci liked pizzazz and started his first year with

herbs: Chamomile, Rosemary, Rue, and Basil. The second year it was gems: Diamond, Emerald, Sapphire (his spelling) Ruby and Topaz. George was a colorful



George Berci

character, a swami-looking fellow with bushy gray hair and a massive, silver beard. He was confined to a wheelchair after a 35-foot fall from a tree which had broken his back and left him paralyzed a quarter-century earlier. In spite of having lived in Quebec for forty years, his strong Hungarian accent had never softened and his command of the English language...well he never commanded the English language. He typed with just



Emerald

one finger, the keyboard teetering on a lapboard across his wheelchair. In combination with the phonetic spelling of his version of English, this led to some unusual monikers for his lambs.

Val's and my plan was to manage and market lambs from both locations as a single flock (our two farms are fifty miles apart). This made a naming theme practical for us, and we added a couple of twists. We used an alphabetical order within each theme: Audi, Bonneville, Corvette, Dakota, etc., and we gave twins names that began with the same letter.

American automobile models may have been one of our more inventive themes. Other years we chose members of George's family: Berci, JoJo, Maya, Brandy; Scottish towns: Paisley, Miavig, Uig; and

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An Unexpected Gift

by Kathie Miller

"Look! What a darling lamb," Corrine called from the paddock.

"Oh yeah," I yelled back without looking, "he was my last one. Younger than the others—about a month old now." "I don't think so," she said. "He's soaking wet." I raced over to see what she was talking about. There he was, a little wet blob, his mother still licking him. She hadn't even passed the after-birth. I kept shaking my

head. This didn't make sense. The rams had been taken from the ewes on January 1 and today was June 29, a month past the average 150 day gestation period for Soay sheep. I was baffled. Hydrangea had not been pregnant, and she *couldn't* have been. Then I remembered. "I'll be right back," I shouted as I hurried to my office. I frantically rummaged through my records and, sure enough, June 29 was just 150 days from

February 3rd. the day I'd discovered York had jumped the fence into the ewe pen while I was in town.

I had already gone through my entire list of "G" names so this little fellow went without a name for some time. Then one morning, an email came from Wales. "Call him 'Gift'," it read. "He was, after all, a last gift from his father." You see, York died just a few weeks after this last son was born. And so "Gift" it was. 🐑

RESOURCE GUIDE

'Scratch n All'

www.scratchnall.com

Presently there are no suppliers in the UK but they are working on it.

Birthing & Health Records:

Quality Llama Products

www.llamaproducts.com

Has packets of blank birthing and health records and laminated gestation tables and wheels. Set to the date of service and it will give the expected date of lambing.

A great book about lambing:

A Manual of Lambing Techniques, Agnes C. Winter and Cicely W. Hill
ISBN 1-86126-574-3

Available through Amazon.

Make certain you order it from a US dealer if you are in the States and a UK dealer if you are in the UK. Both were listed. The cost of postage for books going either way is outrageous.

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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.

Names *continued from page 1*

scientists of history: Kepler, Pavlov, and Mendel. Some years we would make it almost to the end of the alphabet: Argyll to Wick; others we would not. Val managed our husbandry and marketing scheme from her farm and by working with the same list we knew the exact age of each lamb within "the flock." She could tell from our joint birth roster that everyone from "Edsel" to "Isuzu", no matter on which farm, was due for its first shot or was old enough to be weaned and shipped. But "Jetta" to "Triumph" were still too young.

Themes gave us a system that enabled us to catch transcription errors when building a database. We could tell that while Chehalem (Oregon names) and Pistachio (trees) were full brother and sister, they could not be twins as I had them listed. And Venturi (scientists) could not be Ilan's (George's family) father because scientists were six years after George's family.

As the years have gone by, Val retired and we were no longer marketing animals from two locations. As my memory was starting to fail, I could not remember which



Kepler and colleagues

year was what theme. To know the age of a particular animal, I had to go back and check my files. As I got more involved with this project, age became more important to me and I needed to know how old a sheep was as I looked at it in the barn. So I turned back to the British tradition of using the alphabet. Because I was switching over in 2006, I started with "F" (the sixth letter of the alphabet). Now I instantly know that Fyne,

Fiona and Fingal, even the dog, Foula, and goose, Fancy, were all born in 2006. I have tried to stick with Scottish names, but this has proved extremely difficult. Some lambs ended up with very strange names like Fianuis, Giuran and Garavan—all of whom I'm certain got new "nicknames" the minute they left my farm. 2009's "I" is going to be a challenge.

This system has also allowed me to "segregate" the flock with the use of a name.

All of my AI (artificially inseminated) lambs were given an "H" name of a member of their father's flock in the UK: Hamilton, Hector, Hamish, etc. All the rest got conventional "H" place names: Hereford, Hartford and Haven.

By the way, Excel, that cute lamb with the pitiful name, grew up to be my friend's favorite. She doesn't tease me about my goofy names anymore. 🐑

MARCH CALENDAR

- Prepare list of lambs' names
- Check lambing supplies
- Get colostrum in case of emergency
- Prepare birthing records (sheets or cards)
- Have your camera ready

TIP OF THE MONTH

'Scratch n All'
For scratching
horns or wool.



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