

From the
Premier Breeder
of British Registered
Soay Sheep



SOUTHERN OREGON SOAY SHEEP FARMS

Viewpoint

THIS MONTH'S FEATURE

Soay School Abroad

by Kathie Miller

I am a bit behind schedule with the newsletter this month because I have just returned from "Soay School" myself.

I spent a month in the British Isles with my friend, Christine, following her around as she cared for her large flock of Soay (and Boreray, the other St. Kilda sheep which are only found in Great Britain), soaking up all the information and ideas that she was so willing to share. Field trips were part of our curriculum, and we traveled from one end of the British Isles to the other, attending rare breed shows and visiting Soay keepers. But the high point of our adventure was our trip to St. Kilda.

Even after three earlier visits I was as amazed by what I saw as I had been the first time. We have such a small sample of British Soay in the

US (all originated from just six animals) and on this trip I had the opportunity to see a number of flocks that, like my own, are isolated populations which arose from a few animals. Each group exhibited characteris-

Comparing these various mainland flocks with the feral sheep wandering Hirta reminded me that it is just as important to be saving phenotypic diversity as well as genetic if we are going to truly preserve this breed.



Blond ewes grazing on Hirta. Neighboring Boreray island in the distance.

tics slightly different from the others, but all of them live on St. Kilda. Most of the ewes that we saw were polled or scurred, a trait we do not have in America, but one we hope to introduce with new genetics.

The Soay on St. Kilda have been part of an ongoing study that was initiated by Drs. John Morton Boyd and Peter Jewel in the 1960s, a project which continues today and is now one of the world's longest running studies of large mammals. While these sheep are not husbanded in any way, the animals in the village area are ear tagged by researchers in the summer (if they can be caught). In August, a census is taken (this year there are 1909 sheep on Hirta) and those that escaped earlier are rounded up, tagged and marked. These are the ear tags and green markings that you will see in most of the photos. A different color tag is used each year. 🐏



Scurred blond ram lamb.

RESOURCE GUIDE

The official St. Kilda website, especially note the rangers report:
<http://www.kilda.org.uk/>

Wonderful aerial views of St. Kilda:
<http://www.lastrefuge.co.uk/php/show-images-all-big.php?id=DW2074>

One day cruises to St. Kilda:
<http://www.kildacruises.co.uk/>

Multiple day cruises to St. Kilda:
<http://www.island-cruising.com/wildlife.asp>

Rare Breeds Survival Trust (RBST)
 Leading conservation charity working to restore Britain's native breeds of livestock:
www.rbst.org.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.

Photo Gallery

by Kathie Miller



Fat ram in the village area, Hirta.



Blond ewes on top of Ruaival, Hirta.



Ewes grazing in the village, Hirta.



Mature ram in the village area, Hirta.



Self blond and blond mouflon ewe with color.



Mature polled ewe.



Old self blond ewe on Ruaival, Hirta.

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