



# ST. CROIX HAIR SHEEP INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION

July 2014

St. Croix Hair Sheep  
International Association  
16529 NW Pauly Rd.  
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## RAMblings from EWEr President

Fellow St. Croix Breeders. It is my pleasure to welcome our many new members (18 in the first 5 months of 2014) as well as say "Hello" to all. Our total membership now stands at **87**.

First, what a pleasure it is to **serve** as President for this wonderful group of people. Joyce and I were originally attracted to the St. Croix breed due to their many attributes such as parasite resistance (see the article by Professor David Notter herein), multiple births, low maintenance, motherly instincts, etc. but the many fine people we've met along the way has been equally as important.

My primary intention for this column is to keep you advised of what YOUR board of directors is doing to assist you in acquiring, raising and selling your St. Croix. Our association has two primary missions - one, to **Preserve** the polled and white" breed standard in effect since 1983 and two, to **Serve** our members. In other words, the SCHSIA exists only for you, our members, benefit. In order, to provide the best possible service, we are stressing **better communications**. Here are some of the more important ways we are achieving this goal:

- ⤴ **WEBSITE**- Please make it a point to visit at [www.stcroixhairsheep.org](http://www.stcroixhairsheep.org). There you will find a wealth of information such as - member directory sorted by state or last name, for sale listings, registration and membership applications, breed standards, and much more. You can also view the latest (monthly) board meeting minutes. Plans for this year include ability to view pedigrees on line, a new chat line utilizing email, and eventually online registration.
- ⤴ **MEETINGS**- With so much on our plate for this year the board decided to forego the usual annual meeting in favor of smaller regional meetings conducted by the Regional Directors. They should be contacting you in the near future to set up times, locations and agendas. We will plan to have an all member meeting in 2015.
- ⤴ **EMAIL**- will be our preferred means of communication due to the low cost and ability to send simultaneous messages to all. I urge you to take the time to set up and frequently check your email. Again, communication remains the key to our mutual success.
- ⤴ **NEWSLETTER**- We plan to publish 3 times per year. However, after this original mailing, we will plan to send via email and post on the web site.

In closing, I'd like to reemphasize our commitment to **PRESERVE** the breed and **SERVE** our members. So, please feel free to contact me or any other board member with your comments and questions about how we can best accomplish those goals. Thanks for your continued support of St. Croix sheep and SCHSIA. Respectfully, Gary Keibler

## St. Croix Hair Sheep: A Genetic Resource for Parasite Resistance

David R. Notter

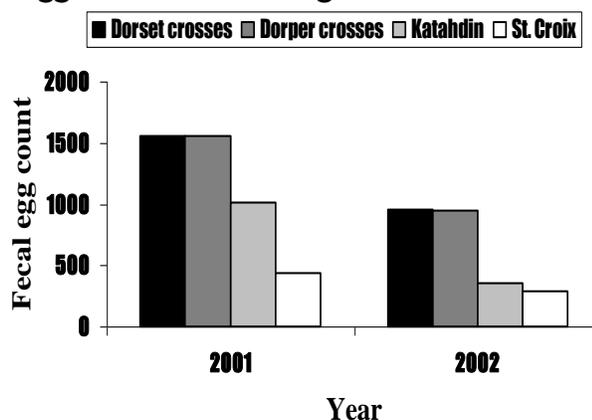
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A small number of sheep breeds around the world are known to possess high levels of resistance to gastrointestinal nematode parasites (i.e., to stomach worms). The St. Croix is one of these breeds and, as such, is a unique resource for genetic improvement of parasite resistance in US sheep flocks. St. Croix sheep originated in the hot, humid regions of tropical West Africa and were forced to develop resistance to the local worms in order to survive. The sheep came to the Caribbean, largely in association with the slave trade, and then to the USA.

St. Croix sheep are not truly immune to worms, and losses due to parasitism remain important in extensively managed flocks in the Caribbean. However, with reasonable management and nutrition, St. Croix sheep have a unique ability to weather the storm of parasite challenge, maintain parasite numbers in the gut at tolerable levels, and thrive in the hot, humid conditions of the Southeastern USA.

Sheep of the St. Croix type made a major contribution to development of the Katahdin breed. Figure 1 shows a 2-year comparison of fecal egg counts in lambs produced by crossing Dorset and Dorper rams on Polypay-type ewes, in Katahdin lambs, and in St. Croix (and a few Barbados Blackbelly crossbred) lambs. The advantage of the St. Croix-type lambs is obvious, as is their contribution to parasite resistance in the Katahdin breed. The figure also shows that hair sheep breeds are not all the same in terms of parasite resistance. Dorper crosses were no more resistant than lambs sired by Dorset rams, reflecting the origin of the Dorper in arid regions of South Africa and the origin of its parent breed, the Black-Headed Persian, in dry regions of the Middle East, where parasite challenge was relatively low.

**Figure 1. Mean Fecal Egg Counts Following Natural Infection of Wether Lambs**



These results show the importance of the St. Croix as a genetic resource for the American sheep industry and emphasize the importance of maintaining breed integrity and parasite resistance of St. Croix sheep.

## ITS FAIR TIME

By John Hamstreet

I know this will not apply to all of you but it will for most. As I write this it is almost August and with August come the fairs. County fairs and state fairs and livestock shows and whatever they call them in your area.

Some of us will be getting our sheep ready to show and for all of those I wish you good luck (unless you are competing against me and then sort of good luck). For those of us who will be taking sheep out to show the public and other sheep breeders take some brochures, copies of the newsletter, business cards, signs, and anything else you can think of to promote the breed. We have been showing sheep at the Oregon State Fair for 15 years and have talked to thousands of people and still the most common response after you tell people they are sheep not goats is "I never heard of hair sheep". At that point the education starts.

Even if you are not showing at the local fair maybe it would be possible to have a booth with some information to educate the public. Anything to get the name out. Also, talk to your local 4-H and FFA people about the sheep. Many of them do not know about the breed. As a general rule the St. Croix will not make it in the fat lamb class but will be exceptional in the showmanship class. Go to your local fair and watch the kids trying to handle those big suffolk or hamp crosses and then talk to them about a sheep that with little effort can be shown with one hand.

Fifteen years ago we were looked down on by the wool breeders and judges knew nothing about the sheep. Now we are just another breeder and we have had some excellent judges that judge on the merits of the sheep and not just on the size. So progress is being made but it has been because breeders have stepped up and shown their sheep and talked to the public and talked to other breeders.

If you have the chance, go to the fair and promote your sheep and the breed. You may be the one to turn things around in your area.

## FROM THE EDITORS

I would like to thank Sue Swan for getting this newsletter set up and the first half of it ready to go and John Hamstreet for taking it from there. Since this is our first, the newsletter will probably change and certainly improve as things go along. We would like to get contributions from the members - pictures, cartoons, stories, helpful hints, odd bits of information, etc. - that we can include. References to articles in other publications will also be considered. Articles from other publications may be included entirely

if they are short, bear directly on the St. Croix or shepherding, and have the publishers permission. Also, maybe some short bios about members and their experience with the breed. We really need your participation to make this newsletter successful.

**Note:**Please send your contributions to [info@stcroixhairsheep.org](mailto:info@stcroixhairsheep.org)



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*Driving the ewes and  
lambs to pasture."*

*Bass Ranch  
Palestine, TX 2014*

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