



Summer 2023 Newsletter



Letter from the President

Hello,

The summer grazing season is well underway, which means our Annual EAPK Educational Symposium and Sale are right around the corner. This year, we will be hosting our event at Morehead State University, centrally located for many of us in Morehead, Kentucky. EAPK member and Morehead State Ag Professor Patricia Harrelson has been working hard the past 6 months alongside our Board of Directors and Symposium and Sale committee to help bring another quality program to you this summer.

We are excited to have a few new speakers joining us this year. Dr. Ron Lewis will be joining us as our keynote speaker. Dr. Lewis has been the head of the groundbreaking Sheep GEMS project - check out archived newsletters for more information on the program. With our goal of presenting on environmental fitness, we'll also have talks on feed efficiency and immunity from Dr. Camren Maierle and Dr. Scott Bowdridge. Dr. Andrew Weaver will be presenting on NSIP topics, while EAPK member and veterinarian Dr. Chris Fletcher will be demonstrating necropsies on young lambs right before lunchtime.

A big thank you to our speakers for traveling and preparing such great content, and our volunteer committee for planning such a great event every year in a new location with new considerations. Another big thank you to KHSI for their KREG Grant funding which allows us to bring these events to those of us who are curious about production Katahdins and NSIP

Brad Carothers
President

New on the EAPK Website

Grazing Native Warm-Season Grasses: SARE Grant Update

Understanding “Number of Lambs Weaned” (NLW) Estimated Breeding Values

Evaluating your mineral program

EAPK Members in the News



At the 2022 annual meeting of the Ohio Sheep Improvement Association (OSIA) in December, EAPK member Kathy Bielek was recognized for 10 years of service on the OSIA Board of Trustees, and Brad Carothers was elected to the Board.

Recently Brad had the opportunity to travel with others from OSIA to Washington DC as part of the 2023 ASI Spring Legislative Trip.

Timely Topic: Tips for Buying Your Next NSIP Ram

Selecting the right NSIP ram to improve your flock can be a little complicated but rewarding. First, don't let the "perfect" be the enemy of the "good." It's nearly impossible to find a ram that is in the top 10% or better for every trait, so it makes sense to focus on the traits you really need. Keeping your short-term and long-term flock goals in mind, make a list of the desired traits or EBV values that need to be improved in your ewe flock. It's important to realize that some traits are antagonistic. For example, by selecting strongly for parasite resistance, you may be inadvertently selecting against certain maternal traits like prolificacy (NLB). Other traits are strongly correlated. For example, if you select for higher growth, you'll also be selecting for higher birth weights and mature weights.

Once you've determined which particular trait or set of traits need improvement, you'll also need to determine which traits you want to maintain at the current level or in some cases, tune down. Maybe your ewes are too prolific for your management system and that's straining your ability to provide needed resources or labor to support a lot of ewes with triplets. In that case, selecting a ram with lower NLB EBVs may be the better option.

The next step is to go to www.nsip.org and use the online searchable database to identify potential rams with the traits you've identified, and to find reputable Katahdin NSIP breeders.



Spend time getting insights and advice from these breeders. Ask them to share their management system with you and find out if their breeding program addresses the goals that you've identified for your flock. Some NSIP breeders focus on a specific set of traits (growth, milk or parasite resistance) while others focus more broadly on balance in all or most traits. Genetic improvement occurs faster when selection is focused on a single trait, but you may risk going backwards on other important traits. For instance, selecting a ram with high maternal traits may result in less parasite resistance in his offspring. The risks and benefits must be weighed. In larger flocks, breeders often buy two or more rams whose traits are complementary so that future generations can be crossed to get that ideal balance.

Lastly, consider how differences in management and environment could affect your choices. Although EBVs factor out most non-genetic effects on performance, an animal may not fully express his genetic potential when differences in management/environment are substantial such as extreme climate differences, going from a low to a high parasite challenge or from high quality to poor quality feed/forage.

After talking to breeders and narrowing down your choices, use the online searchable database [NSIP Search](#) to compare each animal's EBVs and pedigree information. To learn more about EBVs, EAPK has a list of fact sheets for each EBV measured and how they can be applied to your flock ([Education - Eastern Alliance for Production Katahdins](#) (easternalliancekatahdins.com)). Or download the KHSI Buyer's Guide for more information: [Katahdin Sheep Buyers Guide.pdf](#)



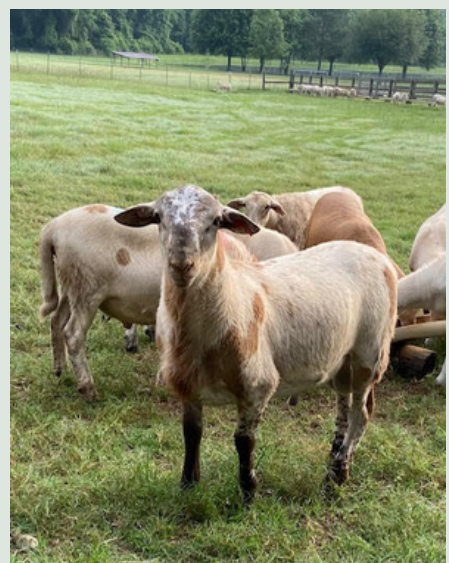
Timely Tip 1: Photographing Sale Animals

Good photography is becoming more important as a tool when marketing your livestock, especially with online sales. While a professional photographer is nice, it isn't necessary. Here are some tips.

1. Ensure there is adequate natural light; early morning or late afternoon are best. Cloudy/overcast skies prevent shadows. Don't take photos inside a dark barn or shed.
2. Keep the sun behind you, but don't let your own shadow enter in the frame.
3. Fill the frame with the animal sideways with head up and turned towards the camera.
4. Take photos from around the same height as the animal's head.
5. Be aware of what's behind the animal; a busy background is a distraction.
6. Make sure animals are clean; while show condition isn't necessary, an animal caked with mud or with a dirty butt could turn off potential buyers.
7. An expensive camera isn't necessary; most of the time a cell phone photo will work.



An example of a good quality photo for marketing



A less desirable photo, note the poor lighting, bad angle, and distracting elements in the background



2023 ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM AND SALE MOREHEAD STATE UNIVERSITY JULY 8TH

SYMPOSIUM SCHEDULE

8:30 Registration begins

9:00 Dr. Camren Maierle - *Nutrition and Parasitism: The Future of Feed Efficiency*

10:00-10:45 Concurrent Sessions - Dr. Andrew Weaver - *Data Collection and Submission 101* *or* Dr. Chris Fletcher DVM - *Necropsy Demonstration*

11:00-11:45 Concurrent Sessions - Dr. Andrew Weaver - *Practical Steps for Flock Genetic Improvement* *or* Dr. Chris Fletcher DVM - *Necropsy Demonstration*

12:00-1:30 LUNCH

1:30-2:15 Dr. Scott Bowdridge - *Selection for Parasite Resistance is Selection for Immunity*

2:30-3:15 Dr. Ron Lewis - *Broadening our Breeding Objective: Incorporating Robustness and Climatic Resilience into our Decision-Making*

3:30-4:15 Small Group Discussion with presenters

4:30 EAPK Annual Meeting

The barns will be open for sale animal viewing throughout the day and into the evening until the conclusion of the sale.

Hotel blocks are available at the Hampton Inn and the Best Western in Morehead, Kentucky. Mention EAPK when booking for a special room rate.

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER BY JUNE 24th !](#)

It's Time to Consign!

The EAPK is taking consignments for our annual sale. To enter animals and review sale rules, head to the following link:

<https://wlivestock.com/auction/21181>

Proposed By-law changes to be voted on at the EAPK Annual Meeting, July 8th, 2023

Article III: Membership

Current – A: There are two levels of membership; full voting membership and associate membership.

Proposed Change - A: There are three levels of membership; full voting membership, associate, and honorary membership. Individuals can be nominated for an Honorary Membership by any EAPK member by submitting the nomination to the President at least 60 days prior to the annual meeting. The honorary membership will then be voted on and approved by the BOD with a maximum of one approved by BOD per calendar year.

Current – P3: Members may only vote in person at a meeting. In the event an annual meeting can not be held the Board of Directors reserves the right to alter the voting process to mail or online voting.

Proposed Change – P3: Voting may occur by electronic or in-person means as determined by the BOD.

EAPK Board of Directors Elections

A big thank you to Tom Hodgman and Lee Wright for serving on our first Board of Directors. We will be electing two new board members at the Annual Meeting to fill their positions. Candidate bios are below.



Lee Holcomb
LeeDer Farms
Hiddenite, North Carolina

I am Lee Holcomb, from LeeDer Farms, here in the Foothills of North Carolina running for the EAPK Board of Directors. My wife Der and I have two daughters, Sydney and Charlotte, and we own a 20-acre Katahdin Sheep operation with about 30 ewes. We started in the Katahdin sheep business in 2015 with just two ewe lambs we were pasturing for a friend. After a bull chased my wife on our original homeplace, it was an easy move to switch to Katahdin sheep for our livestock of choice! I graduated from NC State University in 2005 with a BS degree in Natural Resources, Soil & Water Systems. My full-time job is with USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and I've worked in the conservation arena for about 17 years now. My career has allowed me to work with hundreds of different farming operations and many innovative grazers. This has helped shape my grazing operation here at LeeDer Farms, as grazing is one of my passions.

We have a grass-based flock, with some grain supplementation, with cool season perennial pastures of Tall Fescue as our primary forage. We do have some Native Warm Season Grass (NWSG) acreage for weaning lambs and the ewe flock for summer grazing. We recently installed about 4.5 acres of Silvopasture consisting of Thornless Honey Locust, Red Mulberry, Hybrid Poplar, Hybrid Willow, and American Persimmon through a grant. I am excited to share any knowledge gained from this experience in the coming year!

Since we are grass-based flock in the Southeast, we have a focus on producing ewe lambs in the top percentile of WFEC and PFEC, while maintaining adequate growth (PWWT) and Maternal Weaning Weight (MWWT). We joined NSIP in 2019, and have data submitted back to 2017. Since joining we have enjoyed the mentorship from fellow producers and better understanding of the EBV data. With a smaller flock of 30 ewes, we've tried to source Ram genetics with NSIP data to better understand our operation's EBV goals and where we're headed as an operation. This has built some lasting relationships and allowed genetic connectivity with many other NSIP flocks. We've made some mistakes along the way but still enjoy the learning lessons each year as we gain more knowledge about the sheep industry and NSIP.

One of my goals in serving on the EAPK Board of Directors is to continue the excellent technical knowledge being shared with EAPK associate and full-time members. I bring a wealth of knowledge with conservation discussion, forage/weed ID, rotational grazing, NSIP new member experience, and overall pasture management of livestock. I believe in sharing technical knowledge so the whole group can benefit and accelerate learning for all. I hope you'll consider me for your vote for EAPK Board of Directors.



Isabel Richards
Gibraltar Farm
North Brookfield, New York

I am Isabel Richards. My husband Etienne and I own and operate Gibraltar Farm, in North Brookfield, New York. We have a flock of 160 registered Katahdin ewes that are enrolled in NSIP since 2017. We are a 100% grass fed flock and sell meat lambs (feeders and finished lambs) as the main focus of our business.

I grew up in South Africa, and was lucky enough to get to spend a lot of time on my grandfather's Gibraltar Farm (we picked our farm name in homage to his farm). He gave each of his grandchildren a cow in his herd so I started my farming career with a Brahman cow in elementary school. I kept most of her heifer calves and had a nice small cow herd by high school. I went to vet school in South Africa and Etienne and I moved to the US a few years later.

I worked as a small animal veterinarian, first in PA and later in NY state. In 2013, I did a yearlong livestock apprenticeship at Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture, to learn how farming works in the US. During my time there I fell in love with sheep and asked them to keep a bottle ewe lamb we raised that year for me until I can start my own farm. She was our first sheep and I still have my one sentimental woolie girl. We bought a 150-acre farm in Central NY in late 2013 and left city life behind to start Gibraltar Farm in 2015. The first year we lambed 16 ewes, the second year 75 and for the past 6 years we have been caring for a flock of 150 + registered ewes.

I have served on the communications committee of EAPK the past two years and have enjoyed researching and writing blog posts on udder health, scours, OPP and various other topics. I enjoy being part of an organization that focuses on education and enabling shepherds to share their experiences with fellow farmers. I would like to expand my participation in the organization by running for a seat on the board of EAPK.

We will vote for our new Board of Directors at the EAPK Annual Meeting in Morehead, Kentucky on July 8th. We look forward to welcoming our new board members!

Timely Topic: Hauling Sheep

Tis the season for transporting sheep. Whether your trailer is loaded with valuable breeding stock or meat lambs going to the sale barn, the goal should be to get the animals from point A to point B without illness, injury or undue stress.

Before loading, inspect each animal for signs of illness: limping, nasal discharge, eye drainage, lumps, scours etc. If even one animal has symptoms of a contagious disease, the others will likely have it by the time they reach their destination or shortly thereafter. Since crowding, heat and humidity all increase the risk of transmission, leaving the sick animal off the trailer is a good idea.

When planning a long-distance transport, consult your veterinarian regarding pre-treatment for shipping fever. **You'll also need a certificate of veterinary inspection for animals traveling out of state. Some states and show or sales venues require additional health testing, so be sure to schedule the visit to allow enough time to get results back.**

Always carry a container of water, even on short trips, in case unexpected breakdowns or delays occur since animals can dehydrate quickly in the heat. Make sure the water container is spill-proof and secured. A slippery surface could cause injury to the sheep, especially on hilly, winding roads or with sudden stops. When trailering only a few sheep, it's safer to partition the sheep in a smaller compartment to prevent animals from being tossed around.

Avoid overcrowding. The recommended space allowance for sheep on a trailer with divided compartments is 4.5-5 square feet per mature ewe and 2.5-3 sq ft per 80-90 lb lamb. **In warm weather and for long trips, more space will be required. Bring a halter along in case you need to secure or offload an individual animal along the way.** Providing hay is not necessary for short trips, but on long drives, having something to nibble keeps the rumen functioning and reduces stress.

For more information on safe traveling, click on the following blog: [Transporting Sheep Safely - Eastern Alliance for Production Katahdins \(easternalliancekatahdins.com\)](http://easternalliancekatahdins.com)



Timely Tip: Management Matters

We've all heard the expression "what you see isn't necessarily what you get" and that what an animal looks like isn't necessarily what his offspring will look like. With all the different sale venues available for buyers, **it's easy to overlook the fact that how an animal has been raised or managed has a huge impact on how he/she looks. And, how an animal looks today, whether on-farm, in an online sale or at an in-person sale, is not how he/she will look on your farm in six months if your management or climate is vastly different.** Whether it's a heavily supplemented ram lamb who is put on fescue pasture in August or a pasture-raised ram lamb that is put on a heavy grain ration, changing management, especially feed, will make a difference in appearance. Be sure to learn how the animal you're considering purchasing has been managed so you can better understand how he/she will perform on your farm. Most of what you see on sale day is the result of management, not genetics. **Using EBVs when purchasing animals will give you greater reliability of how that animal and its offspring will perform on your farm.**

Timely Tip: Genetic Improvement

There are a variety of strategies to make genetic improvement in your flock. Two common methods are **Balanced Trait Selection and Single Trait Selection.** Balanced trait selection puts selection pressure on multiple traits at the same time, with the goal of developing animals that are at or above the breed average in all (or most) traits. While achieving balance across multiple traits can be a slow process, it helps avoid overemphasis on any one trait and is appropriate for both experienced and inexperienced producers. Single trait selection results in rapid progress in one desired trait. This approach may be useful when faster progress is desired in one trait (for instance, growth or parasite resistance) especially when the ewe flock is fairly strong in most traits but could use improvement in one trait where the ram is strong. Some skill and knowledge are necessary to avoid unintended consequences.

Industry News: Fecal Egg Counts

The Northeast Small Ruminant Parasite Control project at the University of Rhode Island is announcing their Free Fecal Egg Count Analysis Program funded by USDA NESARE (Project: LNE 23-3464) that will run from May through September 30th, 2023. The goal of this project is to assist with selective breeding for parasite resistance using fecal egg counts and fecal egg count EBVs in combination with FAMACHA© scoring.

This program is available to new or current National Sheep Improvement Program (NSIP) members who live in or market sheep to flocks in the Northeast and who want to generate EBVs for parasite resistance. Producers must be able to obtain and ship fecal samples on their lambs once or twice (at least 4 weeks apart) following NSIP recommendations. Animals must NOT have been dewormed within 4 weeks of sampling. Fecal egg counts will only be analyzed for lambs whose data is being submitted to NSIP. If the above criteria are met and you are interested in the program, please fill out the pre-registration form to obtain further instructions:

https://uri.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_afJuiskd2CmZauy



Upcoming Events

**July 8th, 2023 - EAPK Annual
Symposium and Sale,
Morehead, KY**

The 3rd Monday of each month
at 7PM EST - Open Forum
Discussion via zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81720266013>

Board of Directors

Brad Carothers - **President**

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