



Winter 2021 Newsletter



Letter from the President:

Hello,

As we near the end of 2021 I think it is a great time to reflect. It was the completion of the first full year of the EAPK and it was a resounding success. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the board of directors and all the committee volunteers who have worked long hours to make this organization special. The sheep industry saw great prices and growth all year. As for production Katahdins specifically, NSIP was able to release GEBV's thanks to the efforts of our leading sheep researchers and producers. With lambing season right around the corner, **it is also time to renew your membership. The organization relies heavily on volunteers, but your membership dues help us put on events, sponsor events, and promote the use of production oriented Katahdins across all sectors of agriculture. Starting next year this newsletter will only be distributed to members. In addition, a full voting membership is required to consign animals in the annual sale.**

There are many exciting events and research projects set to kick off in 2022. First, I would like to remind everyone the **2022 EAPK Annual Symposium and Sale will be held in Blountville, TN on July 9th.** One change this year is it will be a one day event. We will be hosting it on Saturday July 9th with educational sessions throughout the day and the online sale in the evening. We hope this will allow more people to attend and bid on great production Katahdins. We will have more details in the coming months but mark your calendars! Secondly, next year we will be hosting two field days one further north and one south of the symposium. The locations and dates have not been confirmed, but we hope to have more information in the next newsletter. The EAPK was also very pleased to hear the "Sheep GEMS" grant application was successful and will begin in 2022. The EAPK provided a letter of support for this grant and is very excited to contribute towards this research.

We have had several new volunteers join committees over the last few months, but we are always looking for more. If you want to help but aren't sure where please contact me and I would be happy to assist. **Additionally, after serving for the first two years of the organization we will have an election for two new Board of Directors this summer at the symposium. We will be sending out a separate email about this as the deadline approaches, but I would like to encourage all qualified voting members to consider running.** Please let me know if you have any questions.

I would like to wish you all happy holidays and good luck lambing!

Thank you,

Brad Carothers

It's Time to Renew your EAPK Membership

[CLICK HERE TO RENEW NOW](#)

We want to thank everyone who joined EAPK during its inaugural year. By all measures, it was a huge success because of the support from you, our members.

As the year comes to a close, we want to remind you to renew your 2022

EAPK membership dues before January 31, 2022. Although all the EAPK administrative and website work are done by volunteers, your dues help EAPK to provide the annual symposium, as well as educational and promotional material provided at meetings and conferences.

There are a few changes to EAPK membership benefits for 2022. **After January 1st, only members will receive the quarterly newsletter and notices of new blog postings and upcoming events. Members will continue to have their farms and profiles listed in the EAPK membership directory.** Anyone who has not renewed their membership by January 31st will have their names removed from the EAPK website so that only current members will be listed.

Only EAPK voting members can consign their NSIP-enrolled animals in the annual EAPK online sale if they choose. As a reminder, to qualify for a full

voting membership, either individual, corporate or farm, members must have a Katahdin flock currently enrolled in NSIP and have submitted data during the previous calendar year. Associate members can purchase animals in the sale but cannot consign.

NEW! All EAPK members can now post classified ads for sheep and sheep related items on the new Classified section of the EAPK website. [Simply go to the Classifieds tab and select "Place Ad" and create an account](#) (to prevent spam), or log in, and enter your information. Once membership has been verified, your ad will be placed on the website. Don't forget to check the classifieds often to see what others have posted.



2022 EAPK Symposium and Sale

Blountville, TN
July 9th

Member Opportunities

EAPK is your organization. Your input is always welcome and appreciated. Here are a couple specific needs:

- We're considering a new feature for 2022 called "Developing Your Markets" where we hope to feature different markets and opportunities for Katahdins, such as solar farms; ethnic market; farmers markets; restaurant sales; online sales (both meat and breeding stock); pelts; dog training; prescribed grazing; etc. If you have experience in any of these areas, or know someone who does, please let us know.
- While most of our committees now have volunteers, more are always welcome, especially the Mentorship Committee.
- If you have suggestions or ideas for blog topics, or if you would like to submit a blog article, please let us know.
- If you know of EAPK members in the news, please let us know so we can recognize their accomplishment.

Timely Tip: Gestation

It might seem like there's nothing much to do during gestation, that seemingly long period between breeding and lambing, but here are a couple of things to keep in mind.

- Don't deworm with Valbazen during the first trimester of pregnancy or for at least 30 days after removing the ram as this drug can cause birth defects in developing fetuses. It's ok to use during late pregnancy, and other dewormers are fine throughout gestation.
- It's a good idea to booster your ewes' CD&T vaccines about a month before lambing begins to provide passive immunity to lambs for enterotoxemia and tetanus.
- EAPK has a handy lambing calculator at the bottom of every page on the website. Simply enter the date of breeding and click on the "calculate" button. An expected lambing date and a range of dates will be supplied.
- Remember to supply optimum nutrition, including a good quality loose mineral throughout pregnancy, especially during late gestation. A ewe in poor condition risks giving birth to very small and weak lambs. Overfeeding pregnant ewes could lead to lambing difficulties and fatty udders, which can reduce milk production.



Sheep GEMS

Dr. Ron Lewis, University of Nebraska, Lincoln

In September we were thrilled to learn that our grant application to the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) was successful. The project title is Improving robustness and climatic resilience in US sheep populations through genomics, with a start date of January 1, 2022. The panel reviewing our application wrote “this is an outstanding, industry-driven proposal with a high probability of success and beneficial impact across scientific, industry, and producer audiences.” It was your support that led to this success.

Admittedly, the project title is a mouthful. As a briefer one, we propose “Sheep GEMS.” The acronym GEMS stands for Genetics, Environment, Management and Society, all captured in the project. Hopefully, its outcomes will also prove to be gems for all of us.

The sheep industry is unique. Distinct breed-types are spread across climatically diverse regions and management systems. Breeding robust animals that perform well under these conditions is paramount to the industry’s sustainability. Robustness and climatic resilience traits, however, are largely absent in our US sheep genetic evaluations. The goal of this project is to develop the knowledge to improve precisely these traits in the major US sheep breed-types (hair, semi-prolific, fine-wool, terminal-sire) using both established and new genomic tools.

Achieving that aim depends on collaboration. Three USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) centers are core to the research: Dale Bumpers Small Farms Research Center (DBSFRC); US Meat Animal Research Center (USMARC); and US Sheep Experiment Station (USSES). We will benefit from their Katahdin, Polypay, Rambouillet and Suffolk flocks—with Katahdin at all three centers—to investigate in detail traits indicative of robustness and climatic resilience.

Yet, to impact the sheep industry, a subset of those traits must also be recorded in NSIP flocks. This is necessary for these novel traits to be incorporated in routine genetic evaluation alongside our traditional ones. Furthermore, for the genomic information collected to be of value, large numbers of sheep with both genotypes and performance records are needed.

A Producer Advisory Group, including four breeders from each of the four participating breeds, has been established to assist us in defining pragmatic robustness and climatic resilience traits to collect on-farm. Our list includes lamb survival, ewe longevity, udder health, gastrointestinal parasitism, and hair coat score (in Katahdin). We need to recruit 20 to 25 NSIP Katahdin flocks to join us in this project. We plan on three years of data collection in these “innovation flocks” starting with the 2022 lambing season. With pledges of support from Katahdin Hair Sheep International and the Eastern Alliance for Production Katahdins, we also anticipate that 3,300 Katahdin sheep will be genotyped in NSIP flocks over this timeframe. This will be complimented by 1,550 Katahdins genotyped at the USDA ARS centers.

Beyond myself, the research team includes Drs. Luiz Brito (Purdue University), Joan Burke (DBSFRC), Brad Freking (USMARC), Tom Murphy (USMARC), and Bret Taylor (USSES). Building on genotypes already collected, together we will establish a genomic database of over 10,000 Katahdin sheep. We will define novel robustness and climatic resilience traits that can be pragmatically measured in industry flocks. We will introduce new analytical pipelines and resources benefitting producers. As societal impacts, we will improve the welfare and well-being of sheep raised in variable climatic conditions, increasing productivity and the economic viability of sheep enterprises and their surrounding communities.

With your help, our project outcomes will be substantial. We look forward to getting started.

Acknowledgement. This project is supported by the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative Grant number 2022-67015-36073 from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Animal Breeding and Functional Annotation of Genomes program, A1201.

Timely Topic: Take Time for Reflection

By: Allison Rudd, EAPK Member

As fall winds-down and the year comes to a close, the opportunity to reflect on the year's progress presents itself. Many shepherds keep notes of some kind. Notes, whether it be as extensive as spreadsheets or as simple as a handwritten notepad are an invaluable tool for planning. Now is the time to analyze those records and figure out what next year should look like. Evaluate your achievements by identifying the triumphs, failures, and changes that will result in success for next year. How is your management system holding up? Did you have a smooth lambing season? Are your selection choices benefiting your operation? Sometimes asking the BIG questions helps unlock the potential for positive farm development. Your most challenging experiences and critical moments are the ones that teach you the most. Mishaps and failures typically establish the backdrop for major decisions. Revisiting those moments strengthens them and that clarity helps you develop solutions. Talk to your fellow shepherds about your experiences. Share ideas, identify patterns and brainstorm. Don't forget to brag about your achievements. After all, it is just as important to acknowledge your successes as it is your failures. Celebration of your victories helps you emulate them in the future. Nothing is more rewarding than when everything works out! Plan for the future by studying your farm notes, ask questions and develop goals for next year. Ruminating (pun intended!) on this year's experiences will help you cultivate a sound strategy for next year's farming adventure.



A Year of New Opportunitites

By: Andrew Weaver, PhD

As we look back on 2021 and look ahead to 2022, there is reason for optimism. Hair lambs are selling for over \$200/head in New Holland, PA behind growing demand. Educational organizations have formed, such as the Eastern Alliance, providing valuable resources to new and existing producers. Furthermore, new genetic tools are now available to improve our selection practices and advance genetic progress and animal performance.

Strong prices throughout 2021 are not only an encouragement for current sheep producers, but they have also garnered the attention of new and prospective sheep producers. Currently, only half of the lamb consumed in this country is produced domestically. Room for flock expansion exists and may be encouraged with current market conditions. This growth may be realized through additional ewe numbers in existing flocks as well as new producers joining the industry. This is a time when consideration should be given to growing flock size and assisting new producers to ensure they have a successful start.

Producer groups and extension programs will continue to be called upon as we observe an increased interest in raising sheep. I'm encouraged when I look back on the accomplishments of the EAPK this year. The educational resources established by this organization will be a great starting point for many new producers. Opportunities for mentorship may grow and should be welcomed as a method to encourage new producers and assist with technical questions. Remember that experience levels will vary significantly among new producers and technical concepts may become intimidating. Fundamentals of record keeping and genetic selection should be shared in a way that does not overwhelm or discourage these producers.

There are a number of new producers looking for ewes to purchase. The new NSIP Influenced Replacement Ewe Sale will take place January 25, 2022. All females sold will be sired by rams enrolled in NSIP. This should be a great opportunity to market females or invest in new, high-quality genetics.

As we explore flock expansion, we also need to consider the value of the replacement ewe lambs in our flock. There is a trade-off when trying to grow the flock during times of high market prices. The value of replacements retained is significantly greater now than what it was 2+ years ago. The question that arises is, "Do I retain more females and grow my flock, or do I sell these valuable females?" Partial budgets can be utilized to help answer this question. Consideration should be given to the productive lifespan of these females and lifetime revenue potential in comparison to their value today as replacement ewe lambs and costs of developing and maintaining those females in the flock.

I hope you each have a wonderful holiday and successful winter lambing season. I look forward to working with everyone in 2022.

Merry Christmas.

Andrew

Timely Tip: Prolapse or Labor?

What's going on here? Should I intervene or let nature take its course?



An early vaginal prolapse will appear as a small pinkish-red vaginal bulge. Often the ewe is seen straining while lying. The bulge often retracts back into the vagina when standing. Early intervention could save the life of the ewe and her unborn lambs.

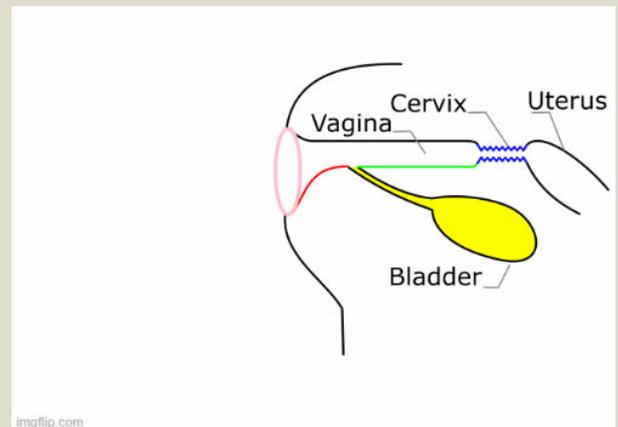


When lambing is imminent, a fluid filled sac appears from the vagina. The fluid can appear very dark, bright red or tea colored. This is normal labor. Interfering at this stage of lambing could stress the ewe and delay birth.

From the EAPK Blog...

Prolapses in Sheep

Vaginal prolapses in sheep are fairly common and yet can be a sensitive subject for a lot of shepherds to talk about. Although uterine prolapses are less common, they are also more complicated to treat. Learn more about what factors can contribute to the risk of prolapse, the anatomy and physiology involved and what steps the shepherd can take to prevent a bad outcome for both the ewe and her lambs. [Click here for the full blog.](#)



Pregnancy Testing Ewes

There are various options for diagnosing pregnancy in sheep. The cost/benefit analysis for doing this procedure depends on what you are going to do with the information. Your reasons for doing pregnancy diagnosis will also dictate which method you want to employ. [Click here to learn more about pregnancy testing.](#)

What Happened to our Index???

From Tom Hodgman, NSIP Katahdin Breed Representative

The past several months have brought a whirlwind of changes to Katahdin breeders in NSIP. As part of our switch to Genomics, a series of updates were necessary to allow our estimated breeding values to work properly. Our NSIP technical advisor, Dr. Ron Lewis, updated the heritability of several of the individual traits as well as the correlations between traits. Together with the raw data submitted by breeders, the heritability and correlations are used in calculating our EBVs. These new heritabilities and correlations reflect the most up-to-date research within our breed. More importantly, they lead to a more accurate genomic evaluation. But recently, we learned of a slight setback. The index that we've used for so many years is being put on hold awaiting one more update and will not be reported to us for the next several months.

Let me explain - The US Maternal Hair Index is based on an equation that combines four EBVs (WWT, MWWT, NLB and NLW) to produce a single number that reflects the pounds of lamb weaned per ewe. But each of those four traits is not equally important for predicting pounds weaned. Think of it as each EBV needs to be weighted slightly differently in the equation. So far, we've updated the heritabilities and correlations with other traits, as well as generated Genomic-enhanced EBVs, but we still need to determine the proper weighting for each breeding value in the index to reflect all of these changes. I'll admit, the new weightings should be quite similar, but we do expect the percentile rankings, at least for some traits for some animals, to shift up or down. Until the weightings can be recalculated, the index as we know it has been put on hold. Many breeders have noticed that the index is currently being reported as -99 for each animal. Our partners at Sheep Genetics in Australia needed something to use as a temporary placeholder in our reports, so -99 it is, at least for now.

We are hoping the updated index, reflecting all of the improvements we've made (genomics plus updated heritability, correlations, and weightings) will be available in time for the 2022 sale season. But wait, there's more. There have been some discussions about creating an entirely new index. In fact, one that's based on the economic constraints that we deal with every day in our flocks. Obviously, that's no small task, but one that is central to raising sheep profitably. It is our hope that within three years or so we'll have a shiny new index - one that directly reflects the economics of producing Katahdin lambs.

So first off, be on the lookout for an updated index in the first half of 2022. Then, cross your fingers for an entirely new index with a solid economic basis. Together, these would be a huge step forward for our operations, our breed, and our industry.

EAPK Members in the News

EAPK Member **Isabel Richards** presents at the Buckeye Shepherd Symposium in Wooster, Ohio on December 3-4. Isabel gave two talks on utilizing sheep genetics and their experiences with NSIP in their management system, sat on a panel discussion, and led a meeting of young shepherds aged 18-40 on various sheep rearing topics.



Producer Profile: Richard Manning



Richard Manning grew up on a commercial cattle farm in Alabama. So, when he and his wife, Paulette, got married in 1970 and bought land to create Sweet Seasons Farm, cattle were the obvious choice. However, he was interested in training border collies for competitions, so they needed some sheep, too. In 1985 they bought seven ewes for \$30 each from a local farm. Then, they purchased a Katahdin ram from a different farm, who had gotten all their stock from the original Piel farm in Maine. "These sheep have come a long way over the years. Now they have more meat and grow better." [Read more about Richard's journey in his Producer Profile blog.](#)

"The grower of trees, the gardener, the man born to farming, whose hands reach into the ground and sprout, to him the soil is a divine drug..."



KHSI Board of Directors Update

From Robert Walker, President of KHSI



The Katahdin breed continues to excel in both popularity and its impact on the U.S. Sheep Industry. It is important that, as the producers and promoters of this breed, we recognize the diversity and potential of Katahdins. From backyard hobbyist to the commercial producer with a thousand head, or from the show ring to the NSIP, we are all utilizing this breed for its unique, diverse potential. The continued growth in membership and registrations is a testament to the diverse base we have within our breed and that the quality of animals you as producers are supplying is the type of sheep people want. In 2021 the breed surpassed our previous record highs in both registrations and transfers in only 11 months! Our phrase “A Breed Whose Time Has Come” has never been truer. Keep up the great work in promoting and educating the world about our great breed of sheep. An episode of Yellowstone had a quote in it that, as soon as I heard it, I thought it applies to the Katahdin breed: “Let the world know we’re here!” Be sure to renew your KHSI membership this winter to continue to get the Hairald and registration privileges and let’s keep the momentum going forward. Also, be on the lookout for a new updated website being developed as we speak. Our 2022 Expo will be in Cookeville TN, so get ready and plan to attend what is usually one of our best areas for attendance and sales.

Exciting times to be a Katahdin producer!



Timely Topic: Portable Pens

A portable or semi-portable pen can be set up for multiple purposes including as a catch pen, sick pen, isolation pen or even a makeshift chute. Since sheep are nearly impossible to catch in an open pasture, having a way to handle animals for treatment, or to separate, sort or confine them makes the job much easier. This is especially true for producers that don't have a permanent handling system. Catch pens can be set up using portable corral panels, fence gates, or galvanized hog/cattle panels. By using one side or the corner of an existing fence, fewer panels are needed to close it in. A feeder can be placed inside the pen with the panels wide open as a lure. Once sheep enter the area, the panels are closed behind them and secured. The size of the pen depends on how many sheep you need to accommodate, what type of treatment is being done and the length of time the animals are held. Semi-permanent pens can be constructed using T posts for added strength. If using it as an isolation or sick pen for any length of time, be sure to place it in an area with ample shade and clean water and locate it in an area where potentially infectious animals cannot have contact with the rest of the flock.



From the EAPK Blog...

The Shepherd's Toolbox- Supplies to have on-hand before you need them

Fall and early Winter, when the seasonal workload lessens, is often a good time to focus on our sheep supply inventory. We usually think of this when getting ready for lambing, but as shepherds we should always be prepared throughout the year for emergencies, mishaps, and unforeseen circumstances. Having some basic supplies on-hand can prevent undue delay in necessary treatment and management of your flock. A recently posted Blog lists some basic items shepherds should have on hand, including basic handling equipment and supplies for sheep maintenance, therapeutics, first aid, breeding, pregnancy, and lambing. [Click here to read the full article.](#)

Virginia Tech Southwest AREC Forage-Based Ram Test Has Another Successful Year in 2021

By: Lee Wright – SWAREC, Superintendent

After having to cancel the ram test in 2020, due to Covid-19 restrictions, the VA Tech Southwest AREC Forage-Based Ram Test in Glade Spring, VA was back on track in 2021. With a record 201 rams nominated for the test in May, the sale committee was once again forced to make cuts to consignor nominations. Facilities and logistics of this comprehensive test will only allow for a maximum of around 120 rams that can be efficiently tested. The 2021 test ultimately yielded 117 rams from 37 consignors, representing 8 states (VA-TN-NC-GA-MO-KY-PA-WV), participating for the 70-day test period from June thru August. [Additional information, and specifics on how the test is run can be found at our website.](#)

This test and sale have proven to be a successful tool for consignors and buyers alike, to identify rams with the genetic capability to effectively manage parasite burdens, and maintain acceptable, or increased post-weaning growth. Test performance is measured at 14-day intervals, with data collected for fecal egg counts (FEC), average daily gain (ADG), and FAMACHA scores. At the completion of the test period, all data are analyzed, and top performers in the test are either offered for public sale or can be taken home by consignors for use within their own breeding program.

Animal performance data from this test has proven to be an asset in many flocks, when making sire selections from tested rams. Test data, coupled with estimated breeding values (EBV's) from rams enrolled in NSIP, have also proved to be in high demand at the annual sale. This one-two punch for scientific minded, data driven producer's, seems to be a key to success in many flocks when shopping for their next flock sire that can offer exceptional post-weaning gains, and a higher likelihood of parasite resistance to their future progeny.

Many rams identified through this testing program, and later enrolled in NSIP flocks as breeding sires, have shown to have progeny that either meet or exceed potential performance based on the test results shown within the data of the ram test here at SWAREC. The chart below summarizes 2021 sale data and demand, for rams with data to back performance.

<u>Breakdown of Sale Categories:</u>	<u># Rams Sold</u>	<u>Average Selling Price</u>
Total Rams in Sale	45	\$1,507
Sale Rams from NSIP enrolled flocks	20	\$1,715
Sale Rams from Non-NSIP flocks	25	\$1,340
Lowest FEC Sale Group by test data	9	\$2,544
Moderate FEC Sale Group by test data	28	\$1,311
Highest FEC Sale Group by test data	8	\$1,025



EAPK Membership Benefits

- Listing in membership directory on EAPK website
- Ability to sell NSIP enrolled animals in the annual EAPK sale
- Newsletter and blog notices (exclusive to members only after 1/1/2022)
- Ability to post classified ads on EAPK website for sheep and sheep related items
- Fellowship with likeminded shepherds

Upcoming Events

- ASI Annual Convention January 19-22 San Diego, CA
- **2022 EAPK Symposium and Sale July 9th, Blountville, TN**
- KHSI Expo and Sale August 4-6 Cookeville, TN
- NSIP Open Discussion Forum - First Wednesday of every month at 12:00 CST via Zoom:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81884447542>

Board of Directors

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Kathy Bielek - Secretary
Roxanne Newton - Treasurer
Lisa Weeks
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Lee Wright

