

Fall 2017

Tomorrow's Sheep Today

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View from the Great Lakes State

Brett Pharo, APSA President

This month I had the privilege of representing the American Polypay Sheep Association at a seminar held in Coalville, UT. My thanks to the Let's Grow committee and ASI for making the trip affordable, and to Tom Boyer and Rusty Burgett for putting it together.

There were primarily two groups meeting there. Each had their own agenda items part of the time and were together part of the time. One group was the Leading Edge group Tom Boyer has put together in Utah and the other group was comprised of breed representatives of several breeds, and NSIP. ASI president, Mike Corn, and treasurer, Susan Schultz, were there also. Superior Farms, the meat packer that will be involved in the upcoming trial project with a large number of sheep on the Mickel operation had a representative there to talk about their part in the project.

The conversation was lively among the breed representatives, NSIP representatives, and ASI representatives. Each of the breeds represented has its own

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strengths and its own place in support of the American sheep industry. Discussion was focused how to further advance the Industry Road Map objectives, especially the need for widespread use of quantitative genetic selection. This is considered to be a very important tool in the effort to strengthen and grow the American sheep industry. Participation in NSIP by seed stock flocks and use of the data by commercial flocks has grown significantly in the last few years since the Road Map came out, but it is still an under-utilized tool.

We also had a hands-on opportunity to judge some rams (Suffolk, but you take what you can get) at Tom Boyer's ranch that are destined to be sires in the trial. It was a good exercise done primarily for the benefit of the Leading Edge group where sheep were placed first with just visual appraisal, then repeatedly placed as more data was fed in, then finally with all the data and EBV's added.

The other two highlights were a review and demo by the software developers of the newly released searchable database that went public shortly before this meeting, and a run down on the large, very involved trial being done at Matt Mickel's ranch, Mike Harper's feedlot, and the Superior Farms packing plant. There will be a tremendous amount of data gathered as individual lambs are followed through the system. Time will tell as to what the data will show.

It was good to visit with old acquaintances, to meet folks I've only talked with by phone or email, and to visit with industry folks I've not talked with before. My take from visiting with the people there was that the APSA is looked on as a leader in the use of quantitative genetic selection. That's a tribute to you, the membership, and you should be proud. We dare not be content to stay where we are in a changing world, though. One thing I didn't see in the small part of Utah I was in was Polypay sheep. True, our breed may be more prolific than they're used to working with in large bands, drift lambing on the open range, but I think we could offer a huge boost with development of crossbred range ewes.

Fee Change

As a reminder, the fee for transferring registrations for members has been increased to \$7 beginning August 1. Late fees and fees for non-members is double that.

National Sale Suspended

As you know, the prices have been pretty dismal at the APSA national sale for the last several years, whether the sale was held in Sedalia, Springfield, or Berrien Springs. APSA consignor participation has been much higher at both Springfield and Berrien Springs than it had been for years at Sedalia, but prices remained weak, especially for rams. The APSA board recently sent an email survey to members for whom we have working email addresses, seeking opinions about a national sale and our annual meeting. We received a good response with a variety of opinions.

Both Springfield and Sedalia had some positive support as possible locations, though both elicited negative responses, as well. Springfield was identified as being a good location, but other breeds there were not seen as being particularly compatible with a production breed like Polypay. Sedalia was identified as having a good mix of breeds and good sale management, but the long weekday time period of the event was nearly unanimously looked upon as a negative, and the significant majority did not want to participate in the kind of conformation-only show that has historically been done at Sedalia. There were others that indicated they prefer that type of show to one that determines sale order using both conformation and data, as we have done the last couple years. The majority of respondents, and nearly all that had attended those events, liked the format where both conformation and data were used.

The board has been in contact with the Sedalia sale management about the possibility of a change in format and timing if we had a national sale there again. As this has been the go-to show/sale for some of our members that prefer this type of event, we don't want to infringe on this experience for them, but without changes participation would likely remain very low.

Given established sales with significant Polypay presence at Sedalia, Spencer, and now Wooster that are well spaced throughout the summer, the question came up, as to whether there is a need for a national sale.

It was not an easy discussion or decision, but in the end, the board voted unanimously to suspend the national sale for one year and reevaluate for 2019.

We will have an annual membership meeting, likely in conjunction with one of the three sales mentioned above.

Center of the Nation Sale Results

Polypay sheep sold well again this year at Spencer, IA. Rams averaged \$917. Ewes averaged \$436. Overall, the average Polypay sold for \$744. This sale continues to be a top sale for Polypay breeders.



Eastern NSIP Sale Results

NSIP added a second sale this year, hoping to build on the success of the Center of the Nation Sale. The sale was held in Wooster, OH. With the growing popularity of Polypays in the eastern US, this may grow into a very productive sale. Being the first year, prices did not rival those at Spencer, but it was a good sale with considerable interest. Polypay rams averaged \$650. Ewes averaged \$388. Overall, the average Polypay sold for \$595.



Searchable Database Is Now On Line

The new NSIP searchable database is now on line and available to the public. The database can be accessed at <http://nsipsearch.nsip.org/#!/search>, or under "Resources" on the NSIP website.

This new tool should prove quite useful to sheep producers across the country. Producers, or just curious lookers, can search the database in a number of ways. The database search can be as wide or narrow as is desired. A person can search for an individual animal using his NSIP identification number, or you can search by breed and narrow the results by parameters you set, be it EBV range, age, sex, etc. Once you find an animal that meets the search criteria, you can find its owner and contact information.

Late Registration Fee Amnesty Ends

Last fall, the APSA board decided to not charge a fee for animals registered late. That was done for one year only to encourage members who may have fallen behind in their timely registrations. That grace period ends at the end of October 2017 and regular late registration fees will apply.



Freking Polypay



Lambshire Polypay



Pharo Polypay