

Texel Times

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Surviving the Storm

Writing to you from southern Pennsylvania, "Surviving the Storm," means digging out 30 inches of snow from our 500 acre farm. We are in the process of building a new sheep barn, but it didn't get completed in time to shelter our Texels from the historic blizzard of Jan. 23, 2015. Our girls, due to deliver starting Feb. 1, managed to ride out the storm in a 1780s bank barn, obviously built right by German settlers.

For me, "Surviving the Storm," has also meant coming through the birth of our fourth child in seven years! Our son, Robert Wolfgang Pike, was born Nov. 1 and let's just say, having four kids

isn't the easiest thing we've ever done!

Thank you to Austin Brown, Patrea Pabst and the students at Norfolk County Agricultural High School for their contributions to this newsletter.

I look forward to working with the members of the Texel Sheep Breeders Society to produce more newsletters soon!

To submit your ideas, articles, pictures or feedback, please contact me at breslaufarms@gmail.com.

Sincerely -- Kristin Pike

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Even Sheep Can Think Pink!



The senior livestock management class at the Norfolk County Agricultural High School in Walpole, MA, came up with a unique way to show their support for breast cancer this past October. They painted one of their Texel ewe lambs pink!

The agricultural high school holds various fundraisers to help spread awareness and support of breast cancer and breast cancer research. The senior livestock management class decided to spray-paint one of its lambs with non-toxic pink paint to show its support.

“Breast cancer has no limits and we hope this will remind people to take the proper measures to prevent and catch the cancer early,” the students said in a statement. “We wanted to promote the Texel breed as well as remind people that [breast cancer] is a relentless disease.”

TEXEL TREND STEADY AT 2015

PA RAM TEST SALE

By Austin Brown

At this year's Pennsylvania Ram Test Sale, Texels were represented well with seven selling for an average price of \$507.

The sale was held Aug. 1 at the Samuel E. Hayes Jr. Livestock Evaluation Center in Furnace, Pa. The highest indexing and selling ram of the sale sold for \$900 and had a final index of 107. He was closely followed by a ram which had a final index of 106 and sold for \$400.

Two Texel ewe lambs sold for \$375 and \$400. The average for Texel ram sales was down \$101.33 from last year's average of \$608.33, yet the quality and quantity of performance tested Texel rams was up from previous years.

The Pennsylvania Performance Ram Test Sale is administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture in collaboration with Penn State's Department of Dairy and Animal Science, the Pennsylvania Sheep and Wool Grower's Association and state breed associations.

The program was established to offer purebred breeders as well as commercial producers the opportunity to purchase performance-tested rams. The rams are evaluated under

parallel, unbiased environmental conditions for rate of gain, structural soundness, muscularity, condition and estimated carcass merit. The testing facility houses up to 200 rams in 5 groups for a 77-day feeding period. Rations are self fed after a warm-up period and contain approximately 1000 lbs. of oats, 500 lbs. of corn, 250 lbs. of linseed meal, 190 lbs. of soybean meal, 50 lbs. of wheat middlings and 26 lbs. of minerals and vitamins.

The advantages of performance testing rams include:

- * An inclusive performance report based upon testing results taken within one environment with similar management so variations in performance are likely to be genetic.
- * Producers are able to track superior production progress within their flocks.
- * The interim and final reports received provide valuable advertising information to other breeders as well as the general public.
- * An index ratio is calculated to rank rams at the conclusion of the test for sale eligibility.

* Approximately the top 75 percent within any breed and/or breed group are sold.

* Some of the information provided to the buyers and sellers of the rams includes sire and dam, birth type, average daily gain on test, weight and per day of age, fat thickness, shoulder height, loin eye area and scrotal circumference.

* With the provided information progress in genetic improvement can be tracked over succeeding generations, thus improving efficiency within commercial and purebred flocks.

For more information on the Pennsylvania Performance Ram test and sale results visit: <http://www.livestockevaluationcenter.com/Default.aspx>

Austin Brown is a junior at Saegertown High School in Saegertown, Pa. He is a member of the school's Panther Press and journalism program. He has been raising Texels for the last eight years.

Georgia Sheep Head to Puerto Rico



Patrea Pabst's Texel rams getting ready for their flight to Puerto Rico.

By Patrea Pabst

In May 2015, Kenan Davila approached me about importing Texel rams to Puerto Rico with the hopes of improving local sheep genetics there. I had three lovely February 2015 rams of top quality British breeding. Kenan picked out two lovely rams and we went to work getting approvals.

We had a time crunch because it was decided they would fly Delta air cargo in extra large dog crates and we needed to ship before they went over 100 lbs. One of the striking features of the Texels is their very high rate of gain with .8 to 1 lb per day up to three months of age. At 3 to 3 1/2 months the ram lambs were already approaching 90 lbs. Fortunately all parties worked hard and we met the deadline. The day before they left Dave Milan bathed them to get as much red clay out as possible. We were tempted to refer to them as rare apricot-colored sheep, but fortunately the clay washed out!

The flight was uneventful and the boys were very well received. All are optimistic that the offspring of the Texel rams crossed with the much smaller and slower-gaining native sheep, will do much to improve sheep raising in Puerto Rico.

Kenan Davila provided an update in January as to how the Texel sheep are adapting to their new environment: "So far the experiment is going good," Davila wrote. "The Texels are adapting to the new environment. We experienced some hard set backs, but we learned from them. We also imported ewes that we bought from Bob Adams."

"We have not exposed the Texels yet to the rough environment that the tropical weather in Puerto Rico has. But we will soon and see how their parasite resistance works."

"In order to be successful, Texels will need to live in the same way that the Dorpers and Katahdins live on the island, exposed to the grass, weather and all the good and bad stuff that comes with it."