



THE LINCOLN LETTER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL LINCOLN SHEEP BREEDERS ASSOC.

FALL

2008

SUCCESS TO THE LINCOLNSHIRE BREED ACROSS TIME AND CONTINENTS

by *Dusti Vanderwende*

From June 12th until the 21st, a group of eight Lincoln breeders from the United States traveled to Lincolnshire, England, to meet members of the Lincoln Longwool Sheepbreeders' Association of the United Kingdom in the native land of the Lincoln sheep. After visiting Lincoln sheep farms, the Lincolnshire Sheep Show, and local historic sites, everyone left with a sense that civilization as we know it would not be the same without the sheep we all love, Lincoln Longwools.

We visited five Lincoln farms, including the historic cottage of a Lincoln wool craftswoman, a prison work-camp with over 1,000 sheep (large flock of Lincolns included), a farm nationally recognized for quality organic vegetable and animal products including a large flock of Lincoln sheep, and a third generation shepherd whose Lincoln bloodlines are traced back to the earliest on record. We also attended the 124th annual Lincolnshire Show, where we were able to observe Lincolns, and many other agricultural exhibits. Our very own National Lincoln Sheep Breeders' Association President, Brian Larson, judged the Lincoln Longwool competition.

At the Lincolnshire show, age as well as number of times shorn, determined the class in which Lincolns competed. For example, "full-fleeced" referred to sheep past one and nearly two years of age that had not felt the blade of a shearer for 15 months and carried twelve plus inches of long spiraling locks. "Shearlings" were yearlings shorn by



Harding Flock

March 1st and carried upwards of six inches of fleece, similar to that of Lincolns we typically exhibit in the United States. Regardless of the length of wool, the Lincolns of Lincolnshire competed in

their raw form with minimal trimming or oiling, and absolutely no belling out or rinsing.

The most striking features of the Lincoln sheep of Lincolnshire were their incredible fleece lengths, luster, and overall consistency. Even Lincolns with the longest spiraling locks, such that their belly wool dragged the ground, were rarely troubled by mats. The lack of mats may result of being left out to pasture all year in the cool, damp English climate. The Lincolns of Lincolnshire were also distinguished by their clean white faces, solid black points, and heavy dreadlocks hanging forward over their eyes, often surpassing their bottom jaws.



Burgbly House near Peterborough

As many of us Americans are natural colored sheep enthusiasts, we were surprised to learn the degree against which black Lincolns are discriminated. In fact, we learned that black lambs are often sold or destroyed immediately after birth. A respected breeder, John Michael, cited his champion Lincoln ram several years ago that was highly anticipated by buyers until he disclosed that the ram was kin to a black Lincoln and may have carried the gene for black wool. The value of the champion ram immediately diminished and



Hospitality at Harding's

no breeder would even consider it for purchase. We saw only two black Lincoln Longwools amid thousands of Lincolns we observed on our tour of Lincolnshire, and it was not until the end

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Visit the Lincoln Association Website for Updates and Information

www.lincolnsheep.org

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

by Brian Larson, President NLSBA

Members of the NLSBA enjoyed the 8-day June tour of United Kingdom, primarily, Lincolnshire. Dusti Vanderwende has an article about the tour and many photos are included in this edition of the Lincoln Letter for your enjoyment. US attendees were Debbie and Dusti Vanderwende (DE), Roger Watkins and Brandon Jensen (WI), Rod Dart (IL), Harvey Warrick, Jennifer Garrett and Brian Larson (MI).

I would like to pass along my observations about the Lincoln Longwools we saw and handled in the United Kingdom. The UK sheepmen prefer to have their breed known as Lincoln Longwool. Lincoln Longwools are concentrated in Lincolnshire, but by no means restricted to the name-sake 'shire'. Many fine flocks are distributed around the geographically small nation, however it was our best use of time to look at the many leading flocks in Lincolnshire while on a tight schedule. From discussions with the officers of the UK Lincoln Longwool association, it appears that the US flock is slightly higher in registrations than in the UK.

The Lincoln Longwool generally has a higher quality fleece. I think that if we compared US and UK Lincolns shorn on the same date and checked them at the same time in the future, you would see the following differences in the UK Lincoln fleece: the staple is longer, the locks are wider, the crimp is bolder, there is more luster, and the fleeces are more dense (weight/volume). When you grab a handful of fleece in the UK, your hand is full of heavy locks. On average, the fiber diameter may be slightly greater than in the US, but not many coarse fleeces were observed in the UK. We were told that some of the crafts people with small flocks that breed Lincolns in the UK tend to favor the 'Leicester'-type lock. That was the same description given by Ike Williams a few years ago, New Zealand Lincoln breeder, of most US Lincoln fleeces that he has seen. My impression of the New Zealand Lincoln fleeces was that they have even broader locks and bolder crimp than the UK. However, the NZ Lincoln appeared to be of a smaller body size than those in the UK.

The Lincoln Longwool is very much in the same body weight range as the US Lincoln. However, there are some differences in how the two Lincolns are constructed. My observation is that UK Lincoln Longwools are deeper bodied, have greater chest capacity, more substance of bone on sturdier legs, broader heads with excellent breed character and well-colored 'points'. With that general conformation difference noted, I would also say that many of the elite Lincoln Longwools would compete very well in the show ring with US Lincolns, especially with a judge that understands how longwool breeds are to be evaluated. Lincoln Longwools receive very little grain in comparison to US Lincolns and they appear to be very efficient on grass.

Robert Watts, who judged the NAILE in Louisville a few years ago, described US Lincolns to his UK counterparts as 'leggy' (not a compliment, as it implies lacking body capacity). I think that his point was that if you try to breed Lincolns to resemble US show-type sheep, you will give up wool quality and breed durability. If I can paraphrase his sentiments further, 'you should breed and improve upon Lincoln Longwool for its distinct and valuable traits, not just for the fashion of the day'!

I and several other US Lincoln breeders are anticipating collection of semen from three to five Lincoln Longwool rams of distinctly different bloodlines. Four of the potential rams are of white genetics and one is natural colored. These rams were selected for their size, confirmation, breed character, and wool quality. If and when the semen is collected and arrives in the US (should arrive by spring 2009), we will let everyone know of the opportunities to experiment with these new Lincoln Longwool genetic options.

I hope to see many of you in Louisville at NAILE and I will have photos of the UK trip available.



Martin's Full-Fleeced Ewes



Warwick Castle Harvey's Home Place



Lincoln Exhibit & Punch Bowl at Louth Museum



Higgin's Natural Colored Fleeces



Rod Dart inspecting Ro Harding's Stud Ram

SUCCESS TO THE LINCOLNSHIRE BREED ACROSS TIME AND CONTINENTS CONTINUED...

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of the trip that we met a couple breeding black Lincolns for spinning, despite the disdain of many traditional Lincoln breeders.

The pride of Lincoln breeders in Lincolnshire today is the product of the eminence of the Lincoln Longwool throughout history. As tourists walking the cobblestone streets of old villages, we noted sheep with the long coarse locks of the Lincoln depicted in the emblems hanging over banks as symbols of wealth, as well as in the murals and stained glass of the three ancient cathedrals we visited. Revenue generated from the wool trade funded the construction of cathedrals and other structures during the past 1,000 years. In the 17th century, prohibited wool export from England led to organized wool smuggling out of Lincolnshire, which affected trade worldwide. The city of Louth was founded on the carpet industry, which depended primarily on Lincoln wool. In the Louth Museum of Lincolnshire History, the focal point of the Lincoln Longwool exhibit was a majestic punchbowl inscribed with the words, "Success to the Lincolnshire



Best Ewe Full Fleece



Frank Martin's Ewe Lambs

Breed." The bowl is dated to around 1810, but little else is known about who commissioned its creation, its original owner, or its purpose. The bowl was purchased for the museum in 2007 and is thought to be one of a kind.

The trip to Lincolnshire was the experience of a lifetime, filled with delightful people, quality Lincoln sheep, and beautiful countryside. Thank you to Brian Larson and Jennifer Garrett for planning such a wonderful trip. Also, thank you to the generous Lincolnshire breeders who guided us, invited us onto their farms, and took us into their homes.



Frank Martin' & Robert Watts

Hopefully we will all have another opportunity to meet with our new friends, both in the United States and in Lincolnshire, to share in the wonders of the Lincoln Longwool.



Lincolnshire Flag as Sheep Blanket



Lincoln Cathedral Seen From Lincoln Castle



Champion Ram & 2nd Ram in Class



Favorite English Pubs



Brian Larson, Carol & Frank Martin



Brandon Jensen, Dusti Vandervende & Elizabeth Martin



Martin's Shorn Ewes



Ram Lamb Class



Top 3 Full-Fleece Ewes



Sharon Rowland's Craft Shop



Top 3 Shearling Rams



Lincoln Fleece Inspection



Pasture Inspection - Keith Harding, Harvey Warrick, Roger Watkins, Brandon Jensen

LINCOLN RESULTS FOR STATE FAIRS AND REGIONAL EXHIBITIONS

<u>EVENT</u>	<u>DIVISION</u>	<u>CHAMPION RAM</u>	<u>RES CHAMPION RAM</u>	<u>CHAMPION EWE</u>	<u>RES CHAMPION EWE</u>
California & Oregon	White	Pettersson	Pettersson	Pettersson	Pettersson
Illinois	White	Boersma	Rader	Boersma	Kruse
Iowa	White	Lein	Burgener	Burgener	Burgener
MD Sheep & Wool	White	Bankhead	----	Bankhead	----
MD Sheep & Wool	Nat Color	Klingelhofer	----	Shea	----
Michigan	White	Jackman	Jackman	Jackman	Jackman
Michigan	Nat Color	Jackman	Jackman	Jackman	----
Missouri	Nat Color	Gibson	----	Gibson	Gibson
Wisconsin	White	Burgener	Burgener	Burgener	Burgener
Eastern States	White	Boersma	Haddock	Kruse	Boersma
Eastern States	Nat Color	Larson	Kruse	Mombourquette	Shea

NORTH AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL LIVESTOCK EXPOSITION (NAILE) INFORMATION:

National Lincoln Junior Sheep Show

Sunday, November 16, 2008 - White and Natural Colored Shows

National Lincoln Sheep Show

Monday, November 17, 2008 - 2:30pm - Judge: Tor Sorensen from Tucson, AZ - White and Natural Colored Shows

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