Don

American Hampshire Sheep Association At Large Director

Don Drewry, Farmington, MN

I have raised sheep various breeds of sheep including Shropshires, Columbias and commercial ewes. Currently we have a 50 ewe flock of Hampshire ewes and have raised Hampshires for about 20 years. Previously I raised wether dams and Polypay sheep and I was a Polypay director for several years.

Our flock goals are to produce a terminal sire strain of Hampshire sheep that are both thick and fast growing with reasonable eye appeal. I want to produce practical terminal sire rams for use with white face ewe flocks and be a seedstock producer. I'm of the opinion that in terms of number of rams sold, that is the largest market for our breed is the terminal sire market. Tools I use include NSIP and the show ring. I have used UK ram semen in the last few years and we are seeing excellent buyer response to very thick, bigger boned type of sheep we are getting from those genetics.

I think showing sheep is a good way to promote our breed and to sell sheep. However, I am concerned that 10 years from now we may not have a sustainable breed if that is the primary focus of the association. The exhibitors at major state and national shows are gradually "aging out" and in 10 years as a breed we are at real risk of losing major breed status and many of our key flocks aren't likely to be active anymore. All Hampshire breeders will benefit if we find more ways to promote our breed to the industry. Major shows, and youth programs are good and they draw in some breeders. As a breed type we currently dominate the wether dam shows but that isn't likely to remain for 30+ years. If you want board members focused on just doing what we've been doing, vote for someone else. I will advocate for more things such as NSIP and getting Hampshires in breed comparison studies. I don't claim to have a plan that if we do these 3 things will will thrive I do think if we aren't receptive to expanding beyond what appears to me to be primarily a show ring promotion are future as a breed is suspect.