

2015 Newsletter

After what was perhaps one of the most brutal winters in recent memory, the recent sunny and warm (50 degrees +) days have been a welcome change. It was hard to imagine that temperatures one week were below 20 degrees and within 7 – 10 days we had a day when the high was nearly 70 degrees. With these warmer days, we all know that the show and sale season of 2015 can't be far-off.

With lamb prices at near or above all-time highs, 2014 was a great and profitable year to be in the sheep business. Early indications for 2015, point toward a continuation of those strong lamb market prices. So, what does that mean for the purebred sheep industry? I think we may be looking at purebred producers retaining only their best lambs as replacements or sale prospects; those other lambs will go to market to take advantage of those strong prices (perhaps we even saw that trend in 2014). With fewer retained purebred lambs, we could see some strong purebred sale prices this spring and summer as I would expect demand to increase as well; not only from other purebred producers but also from commercial producers wishing to expand their flocks. Above all, remember the old economic principle of supply and demand and the resulting prices. However, the impact of fewer retained purebred lambs could result in some negative statistics for the Association; fewer registrations and fewer transfers. In 2014, we saw some of those reductions; registrations were 917 (down about 150 from 2013 and 320 below the previous 10 yr. average) and transfers were 562 (down about 60 from 2013, but right on track with the 10 yr. average of 561).

I think all of this can have a positive effect for the Oxford breed in the long-run. If only our best lambs are retained then we should be keeping the most complete sheep that we can produce. If we use show ring performance, confirmation and production performance to determine an animal's "completeness" then we could achieve producing Oxfords that are consistent in the lambing barn, the feedlot, the show ring, on the rail and on the dinner plate. And like I said in the 2014 Newsletter; "If we strive to produce a complete sheep, and then deliver those complete sheep, we will live up to our motto of **"Oxfords, Truly the World's Best"**.

Mary Blome National Oxford Show

The 2014 National Oxford Show at the North American International Livestock Exposition (NAILE) in Louisville, KY was renamed the Mary Blome National Oxford Show in honor of long-time AOSA Executive Secretary, Mary Blome. The National Oxford Junior Show at the NAILE also had an addition in 2014 as Senior and Junior Champion and Reserve Champion Ewe awards were added.

Both Oxford shows at the NAILE were top-notch with some of the very best quality Oxfords in the nation in competition. Entry numbers in both shows were about the same as in 2013. Again, there were 4 show rings in the Junior Breeding Sheep Show that continues to complete the day at a respectable time on Sunday evening. Watch for some possible changes to the NAILE schedule in 2015 as an attempt may be made to give the junior weekend an earlier start. Also, the AOSA has requested that Best Headed Ram and Best Headed Ewe classes

be added to the Mary Blome National Oxford Show (open show). For a complete list of 2014 NAILE show results (open and junior), you can go to the AOSA website for a link or go to www.livestockexpo.org, the NAILE website.

Membership and Mailings

It's been said before but, it's worth repeating; it's nearly impossible to cover everything that everyone needs to know in just a single printed annual newsletter. However, because of mailing costs, the economic ability to do more direct mailings is not financially practical.

One way we try to overcome the burden of postage costs is to utilize electronic communications. We are putting more effort into maintaining the AOSA website in terms of keeping things current. You'll also find us referring to the website for the availability of the various forms you might need (annual membership renewal form, registration request forms, National Sale entry forms, Futurity Ewe Lamb rules and forms, etc.). This helps us reduce printing costs too.

There are times throughout the year that we would like to send members updates and items of interest. However, to make that possible we really need email addresses of our members. Right now, we have email addresses for less than 25% of our members. So, as you renew your memberships for 2015 be sure to complete the actual membership form and include your current email address. Speaking of annual memberships, if you haven't sent your 2015 membership dues into the AOSA office yet, take a moment now to complete the membership form (found at the AOSA website) and send it in with your dues payment; Senior dues are \$20 and Junior dues are \$6. If you have already sent your 2015 dues but didn't complete one of the membership forms, complete a form now and send it in with your next mailing of office work (just put "*information update*" on the top of the form). By having your current email address, we will be able to communicate with you on a more frequent and timely basis.

Special Recognitions / Awards

- Oxford Foundation Flock Award – The Foundation Flock Award is presented annually at the National Oxford Show and Sale. The purpose of this award is to help establish a new Oxford flock and breeder each year. The actual award consists of young brood ewes and/or ewe lambs and a young ram. These animals are donated by various established Oxford breeders. The deadline to apply for this award is **May 8, 2015**. If you know of a person or family who would like to get a start with Oxfords, encourage them to apply.
- Oxford Hall of Fame Award – The Hall of Fame Award was initiated in 2000 to recognize those people who have made significant contributions as supporters and promoters of the AOSA and the Oxford breed. A list of past honorees can be found on the AOSA's website. The application/nomination deadline for this award is **May 15, 2015**.
- National Oxford Queen – The AOSA has an annual queen contest for junior members who are between the ages of 16 and 21 as of December 31 in the year of application. This past year, Elisabeth Ward of Missouri represented our Association at many shows and other events and she did a super job! If you have questions about the expectations of this position, I'm sure Elisabeth would be happy to discuss her experience and ideas with you. The application deadline for the 2015 National Oxford Queen contest is **May 15, 2015**. Queen candidates will be interviewed at the National Show and Sale and the winner will be crowned at the AOSA Annual Membership Meeting on June 19, 2015.

Application information for all three of these programs, as well as, the application forms can be found at the AOSA's website or printed copies of the information and forms can be mailed to interested persons by contacting the Association's office.

Ewe Lamb Futurity Program

This will be the 7th year that the AOSA has provided a futurity program for ewe lambs that are nominated and purchased at one of three (3) sales. Last year, Oxford breeders nominated 38 lambs at just 2 sales for this program. Those breeders paid \$25 per head which was paid out (100%) to the juniors who purchased those lambs and participated in the futurity program.

Juniors should check-out the Futurity program procedures and participation requirements found on the AOSA website. And we encourage all breeders to continue to nominate their sale ewe lambs for the Futurity program; nomination forms are also on the website or hard copies of these forms can be mailed upon request.

There have been some changes to the Futurity program for 2015 that should make it easier to nominate and participate. The Great Lakes Sheep Show and Sale at Wooster, OH has been added as a third sale where ewe lambs can be nominated. Also, five more regional double point shows plus two other double point shows have been added to encourage more juniors to participate. Check-out the website for details on these changes.

This is a great program and a good opportunity to promote breeding programs and for juniors to get recognition for a sharp eye at the sales and a study hand at the shows.

Upcoming Oxford Related Events

The officers and directors encourage you to attend, support and participate in these upcoming Oxford related events.

- *Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival & Ewe Sale; West Friendship, MD --- May 1 – 3, 2015
- *Ohio Oxford Showcase Sale and Big Ohio Sale Weekend; Eaton, OH --- May 7 – 9, 2015
- *Great Lakes Sheep Show & Sale; Wooster, OH --- May 23 – 24, 2015
- *Great Plains Sale; Tulsa, OK --- May 28 – 30, 2015
- *West Virginia Purebred Sheep & Goat Sale; Petersburg, WV --- May 29 – 30, 2015
- *National Oxford Show and Sale; Springfield, IL --- June 19 – 20, 2015 (*entry deadline is April 15*)
- *AOSA Annual Membership Meeting; Knights of Columbus Hall, Springfield, IL --- June 19, 2015

Office Work

Check your record and make sure your registrations and transfers are all up-to-date and current. Do you have all those 2014-born lambs that you plan to keep registered? What about sheep that you sold to other folks; have you sent in transfers so the new owners are now the registered owners?

I'm also trying to "clean-up" registration/ownership records. If you have any questions about animal ownership within your family flock, just contact the AOSA office. Sometimes there may be animals that were registered in a junior member's name but never transferred to the family or farm name once the junior member ended their show interests. We can provide you with lists of animals registered to each member of a family; then you can determine if transfers are needed.

There are several forms and program descriptions on the AOSA website. If you would like a hard copy of any of these mailed to you, please contact the AOSA office with that request; we will be glad to send them to you.

Additional Sale Promotions

Oxford breeders with sale entries in this spring and summer's sheep sales can get a little extra publicity on social media. Jennifer Fimbel will once again put together an electronic photo album if breeders will send photos and descriptions of their consignments to her at jenniferfimbel@gmail.com. Why not take advantage of this unique marketing tool?

All-American Junior Show

The All-American Junior Show will be held at the Big E Complex in Massachusetts, July 2 – 5, 2015. This will be the second time that this show has been at this facility over its twenty plus year history. This is the big summer junior show that draws exhibitors and their families from all over the U.S. Entries are due June 1st. Show information is now posted at the show website, www.countrylovin.com/AAJSS or possibly they will be mailed to past exhibitors very soon. Like other junior shows, the All-American relies on donations and sponsorships to make it all possible. The AOSA was one of the originating breeds of this show and has been a charter sponsor since the show began. Our Association hosts an auction of donated items at the Association's Annual Membership Meeting and one of our breeders has graciously donated a ewe lamb to be sold at the National Sale each of the past several years; both of these fund raisers help secure support funds for our Oxford youth to participate in this show.

Shelley O'Brien has graciously donated one of her beautiful paintings for this year's benefit auction. It's sure to be a crowd pleaser. However, we are still looking for a breeder to donate a ewe lamb to be sold at the National Sale. This ewe lamb will be nominated for the Futurity program and transferred to the new owner at no cost to the consignor (also, there will be no consignment fee for that animal in the National Sale). If you would like to donate a ewe lamb for the benefit of the All-American and all the juniors Oxford exhibitors who participate, please contact David Trotter. If you would like to donate auction items for the benefit auction at the Annual Membership Meeting, contact one of the AOSA officers or directors, or better yet, bring your items to the Annual Meeting.

Another way you can help support the All-American Junior Show is to purchase raffle tickets. Enclosed in each of the Senior member's newsletters are 5 raffle tickets for your opportunity to be a supporter (and maybe a winner of one of the 3 raffle prizes). Junior members will get their tickets to sell or purchase from the AAJSS Office. If you decide to purchase the tickets, just complete your contact information on the ticket stubs and return them along with payment to the AOSA Office (make checks payable to AAJSS). Stubs will be placed in the drawing at the show, and you don't have to be present to win. If you would like more tickets, just let us know.

National Show and Sale

Enclosed with this newsletter is the entry form for the 2015 National Oxford Show and Sale. Again this year, we will be joined by 3 other breeds in the barn at Springfield, IL and we will also continue to publish just 1 sale catalog for all 4 sales. Therefore, it is really important that entries be received by April 15, 2015. If you have questions, please contact the AOSA Office. The ad for the National Oxford Show and Sale in the March issue of The Banner did have a mistake in that Dan Spilde of Wisconsin will be our Judge and not Evan Snyder as was printed (the April issue of The Banner should include a correction to this effect).

AOSA Annual Membership Meeting

The American Oxford Sheep Association will hold its Annual Membership Meeting on Friday, June 19, 2015 at approximately 6:00 PM at the Knights of Columbus Hall, 2801 West Street, Springfield, IL 62707. Be sure to notify the AOSA Office at about 2 weeks ahead if you plan to attend the annual meeting; tickets for the meal and meeting will be available at the fairgrounds and at the door. You may also attend the meeting (no charge) without taking part in the meal. An advance indication that you plan to attend the meal will help us make appropriate plans. Minutes of the 2014 Annual Membership Meeting are enclosed with this newsletter.

Show Information

If you have a sheep show involving Oxfords that you would like posted on the AOSA website, send an email to secretary@americanoxfords.org with the show information in an attachment; we will do our best to get it posted.