

Summer 2019

Tomorrow's Sheep Today

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View from the Great Lakes State

Brett Pharo, APSA President

This week was our little county fair. The first two of my grandkids were old enough to show lambs this year. They gave the judge a good workout having to compare different types of sheep. The top four lambs were two Hampshire/Suffolk cross lambs and my granddaughters' two Dorper/Polypay cross lambs. I think the judge nailed it exactly as I would have. Those four were obviously the top lambs and he put one Hamp/Suffolk as champion, followed by the two Poly/Dorper lambs, and then the other Hamp/Suffolk. It's good to see a judge that looks at what the carcass will be rather than just the color of the head. Polypays remain a superior maternal breed both as purebreds and for cross breeding with terminal sires in a commercial operation. As an added bonus, the two girls took first and second in showmanship in their class. Makes me a proud Grandpa.

The downside is that our fair coincided with the sale in Wooster, OH, as well as a third granddaughter competing (and doing very well) in a Special Olympics event. Just can't be everywhere at once.

Hope everyone has a great fall, and that winter is kind to us.

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Wollin Sheep Farm

1151 470th Ave., Karlstad, MN 56732

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My name is Scott Wollin and I own and operate Wollin Sheep Farm in northwest MN. I currently run 45 commercial polypay ewes and 15 registered polypay ewes. My commercial ewes are basically full bloods but no paperwork to prove it. I have used polypay rams for about 25 years, with rams from Van Well Polypays and later rams from U of W and Refshaw Ranch. Currently U of W 17415 is my main sire with 2 rams from John Carlson being added for this fall. JCC 854 and JCC 934.

I think one of the things that makes me different from a lot of producers is the fact that I have tried a lot of different breeds over the years, but at the end of the day the polypay breed is what works for me. I am continuing to work on improving milkability through selection and nutrition. Working on improving wean weights and uniformity throughout the flock.

I will have 4 registerable polypay ram lambs and 2 commercial polypay ram lambs for sale.



3 year old commercial polypay with quads (total of 44 lbs. of lamb born. This ewe also had quads as a 2 year old (total of 42 lbs. of lambs born) and as a yearling had twins. Both sets of quads sired by 17415.

U of W 17415 2 year old ram. A very nice evenly framed ram that just keeps producing. Two year old weight on him was 323 lbs.



6 year old commercial polypay with triplets born 5-27-19, this ewe also had a single on 10-15-18 and another set of triplets on 3-23-18. So far she has raised all the lambs herself. All lambs were sired by 17415.



Sale Results

Midwest Stud Ram Sale, Sedalia, MO

4 Polypay rams were sold at an average price of \$525.

10 Polypay ewes were sold at an average price of \$388.

High selling rams:

L&K Sheep Co. consignment sold for \$700 to Matt & Chelsea Chadwick in Kentucky

L&K Sheep Co. consignment sold for \$700 to Shady Lane Farms in South Dakota

High selling ewes:

Shady Lawn Farms consignment sold for \$600 to Big Prairie Polypays in Illinois

L&K Sheep Co. consignment sold for \$525 to Joe Ferguson in Missouri

L&K Sheep Co. consignment sold for \$500 to Shady Lane Farms in South Dakota

Center of the Nation NSIP Sale, Spencer, IA

42 Polypay rams were sold at an average price of \$.827

42 Polypay ewes were sold at an average price of \$455.

High selling rams:

Diamond K Sheep Co. consignment sold for \$2800 to Meinders Stock Farm in Iowa

JCC Polypay consignment sold for \$2600 to Shauer Sheep Co. in North Dakota

JCC Polypays consignment sold for \$2000 to Jake Rouse in Iowa

CAK Polypays consignment sold for \$1700 to the US Sheep Experiment Station in Idaho

High selling ewes:

4 Ewes consigned by Refshaw Ranch sold for \$750 each to Tim Kinsley in South Dakota

4 Ewes consigned by Big Prairie Polypays sold for \$600 each to Shady Lane Farms in South Dakota

Eastern NSIP Sale, Wooster, OH (preliminary)

10 Polypay rams were sold at an average price of \$995

6 Polypay ewes were sold at an average price of \$492.

High selling rams:

Two University of Wisconsin consignments sold for \$1600.

Lambshire Polypays consignment sold for \$1600

High selling ewes:

Ewe consigned by University of Wisconsin sold for \$650.

Two ewes consigned by University of Wisconsin sold for \$600.

Scary Thought ...

The Polypay Breed (and APSA) Almost Never Happened

Dr. J. Bret Taylor, USDA, Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Sheep Experiment Station, Dubois, ID

We are all familiar with how the Polypay breed came to be. Mr. Reed Hulet and fellow sheep-producing compatriots were frustrated with low-prolificacy sheep breeds. Wool just wasn't paying the bills, and their ewes were too slow to puberty and not weaning enough lambs. They needed something else, something visionary. Fortunately, Mr. R. Hulet and fellow producers operated near the USDA, Agricultural Research Service (ARS), US Sheep Experiment Station in Dubois, Idaho. Even more fortunate was that Mr. R. Hulet's brother, Dr. Clarence Hulet, was the lead sheep geneticist at the USDA's U.S. Sheep Experiment Station. After several meetings with stakeholders, Drs. C. Hulet, Arlin Knight, and Keith Ercanbrack went to work on developing the Polypay breed, which is described in detail elsewhere (Hulet et al. 1984. Development of the Polypay Breed of Sheep. *Journal of Animal Science* 58:15-24). Ultimately, the development of the Polypay breed was a great success. However, it was not accomplished without a few hiccups. In fact, a nearly fatal issue popped up near the end of the development program that almost resulted in a "no Polypay" (and no APSA) scenario.

When rummaging through the U.S. Sheep Experiment Station archives, I stumbled onto a few documents that, much to my surprise, painted a fragile beginning of the APSA. Consistent with other breed releases (e.g., Targhee) from the U.S. Sheep Experiment Station, I assumed that the Polypay breed was handed to the producers, the producers formed a registering organization, and all was well thereafter. Apparently, this was not the case. For instance, the breed was nearly "hijacked" from the U.S. Sheep Experiment Station by a lone individual, and the early founding Polypay producers nearly lost the ability to register their sheep as "true" Polypays. As you might imagine, such events would have led to the complete demise of the Polypay breed. Had it not been for the persistence of Mr. R. Hulet and a passionate USDA-ARS scientist, the breed may have been lost forever. Let me further explain by paraphrasing information gleaned from an archived letter from Mr. R. Hulet.

As Dr. C. Hulet and co-scientists were developing the original composite lines to be used to create the Polypay breed, a young budding scientist named Dr. Lyle McNeil joined the U.S. Sheep Experiment Station genetics team. Dr. McNeil sealed his Ph.D. work with a dissertation on the Polypay breed development. He was deeply engaged in the Polypay development process, and Dr. C. Hulet assigned him the duties of Executive Secretary, charged with governing the U.S. Sheep Experiment Station Polypay Performance Pedigree and certification of qualifying sheep.

In 1978 and 1979, following the annual U.S. Sheep Experiment Station Ram Sale, Dr. McNeil organized meetings with Polypay producers to discuss the possibilities of forming a registering organization. As noted in the records, producers that attended the meetings owned about two-thirds of the Polypay breed population. Dr. McNeil was the Chairman of the meetings. At the meeting in 1979, a goal was set to formalize an official registering organization by September of 1980. So far, things seemed to be moving in the right direction for the Polypay breed, but as with many productive efforts, an unforeseen obstacle seems to always block the path.

Soon after the 1979 meeting, a rumor made its way to the U.S. Sheep Experiment Station leaders that a producer in California had independently established the National Polypay Breeders Association (NPBA). This was indeed a disturbing surprise. Dr. McNeil was quoted at the time saying, "Dr. C. Hulet, myself, and others, who have spent so much time working with Polypay, are concerned that the registration be turned over to the most competent organization possible." The rumor was promptly verified, which initiated a USDA-ARS agency response to investigate the matter. USDA-ARS organized a delegation, which consisted of Dr. C. Hulet, the Project Director and Research Leader, Dr. Dean Plowman, the Area Director and later USDA-ARS Administrator, and Claire Terrell, USDA-ARS National Programs Director. The delegation promptly went to California to meet with this person. Upon their return, they issued a formal USDA statement: "[The USDA] does not endorse or support any specific organization. This is not the mission of the USDA or [USDA National Programs]. However, [the USDA stresses] that data or any information [will be made] available to any organization if [proper] requests are made. We also emphasize that [the] NPBA has the right to exist or co-exist like any other producer organized group."

As vague as USDA's statement may have seemed at the time, it was apparent that much more transpired in the meeting than the statement conveyed. As recounted in Mr. R. Hulet's letter, "...the USDA-ARS leaders and U.S. Sheep Experiment Station scientists were very concerned about the outcome of the meeting and potential threat to the Polypay breed." Evidence of a possible intense discussion between the USDA delegation and the California producer surfaced when letters from the producer, accompanied by numerous Freedom of Information Act requests and lawsuit threats, were received by the USDA. The letters were populated with accusations against the USDA, U.S. Sheep Experiment Station scientists, and several Polypay producers. As you can imagine, this was a very troubling for scientists and producers who were committed to maintaining the integrity of the Polypay breed. It is interesting to note that the producer's letters were sent soon after the producer had been fired from the so-called NPBA board. I can only assume that the NPBA board was originally formed by the rogue producer? If so, can you image being fired by your own creation?

In response, Mr. R. Hulet sent letters to nearly 50 Polypay producers urging their support of the U.S. Sheep Experiment Station Polypay Performance Pedigree leadership and Dr. McNeil's role as Executive Secretary. Mr. R. Hulet also sent this survey (returned results are included in parentheses):

1. Did you have any input in selecting the NPBA officers? (Yes 2%, No 98%)
2. Did you have any input into the NPBA bylaws? (Yes 2%, No 98%)
3. Do you feel NPBA represents you and your objectives? (Yes 3%, No 97%)
4. If NPBA could retract its initial efforts, so a more unified thrust by all interested Polypay breeders as well as Sheep Station personnel and Executive Secretary (Dr. McNeal) could be involved as established in September 1979, would you support such an effort? (Yes 100%)

As you can see, the Polypay producers, even those aligned with the NPBA, were in support of the U.S. Sheep Experiment Station's original efforts to cultivate a Polypay registration organization.

Dr. McNeil charged forward as his role as Executive Secretary and organized a series of formal meetings (1980) at Utah State University, Idaho Falls, ID and Twin Falls, ID with all interested Polypay producers. In the meetings, Dr. McNeil was able to effectively orchestrate:

1. Official acceptance of the Polypay breed requirements as established by the USDA U.S. Sheep Experiment Station.
2. Final establishment of Polypay sources, foundation breeds, and method of breeding.
3. Name change of the Polypay Performance Pedigree to the Polypay Performance Registry, which facilitated hand-off of the registry to a producer-based registering organization.
4. Compromise with the NPBA members.
5. Establishment of organizational bylaws.
6. And, finally, the initiation, naming, and establishment of the American Polypay Sheep Association.

At the final meeting in 1980, the USDA's U.S. Sheep Experiment Station formally handed the Polypay Performance Registry to the APSA and respectfully bowed out.

So, next time you're admiring your highly-prolific, tough-as-nails, heavy-milking, outstanding Polypay flock or catching up on the latest APSA news, tip a hat to those early innovative producers and scientists who developed the Polypay breed foundation. Furthermore, offer up a smile and thanks to the likes of Dr. Lyle McNeal and Mr. Reed Hulet who ensured the perpetuity of "Tomorrow's Sheep Today" and the American Polypay Sheep Association.

About the author: Dr. J. Bret Taylor is the Research Leader and Supervisory Scientist at the USDA, ARS, U.S. Sheep Experiment Station, Range Sheep Production Efficiency Research Unit. Correspondence may be sent to: bret.taylor@ars.usda.gov

Points on NSIP

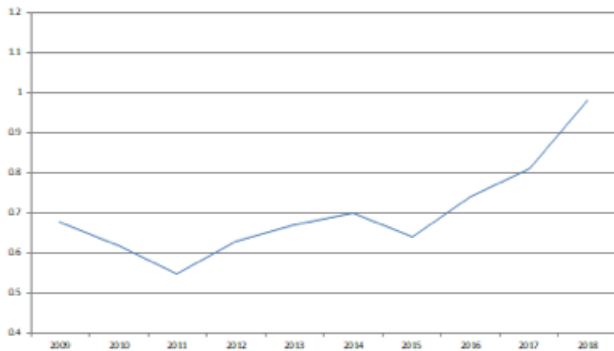
Dr. John Carlson, Polypay breeder and member of NSIP Board of Directors

I was recently asked to be part of a breeder panel discussing NSIP. The typical procedure for such panels is for each of the presenters to deliver a few points on the topic and then answer questions. As I thought of the points I wanted to make regarding NSIP, several easily came to the top.

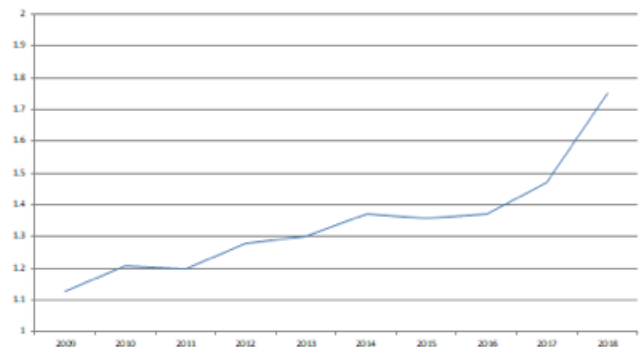
Point #1 -- NSIP is a powerful selection tool but not the only tool to be used in selecting animals. It is meant to be used in conjunction with visual appraisal to produce the best possible results. If only NSIP numbers are used in selection, breeders risk the possibility that unsoundness problems such as poor feet and legs or other skeletal problems may crop up. On the other hand, ignoring NSIP data means that instead of using scientifically backed predictors of performance, the breeder is trying to increase performance using visual traits that he or she feels are associated with traits such as growth and ewe productivity. Using only one of the two selection tools will produce selection progress that is not as good overall as is possible if both were used. So while NSIP is not everything, it cannot be ignored in a progressive breeding program.

Point #2 -- Selection involving NSIP does yield results. Below are charts showing the progress that Polypay breeders on NSIP have made from 2009-2018 for traits that are generally of interest in the breed.

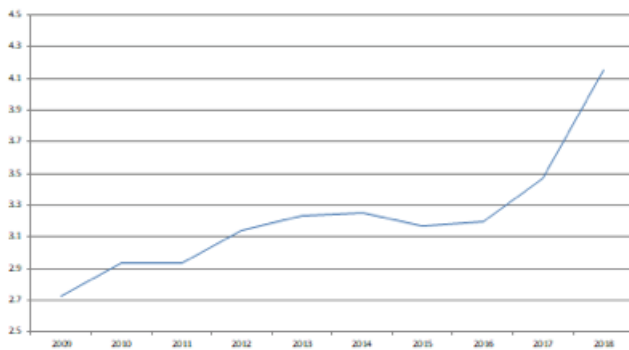
Mwwt, 2009-2018



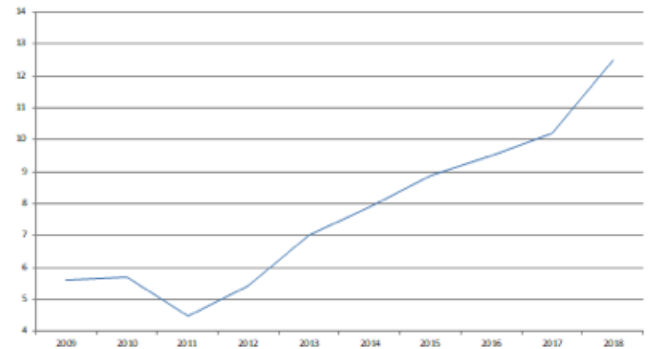
WWt, 2009-2018



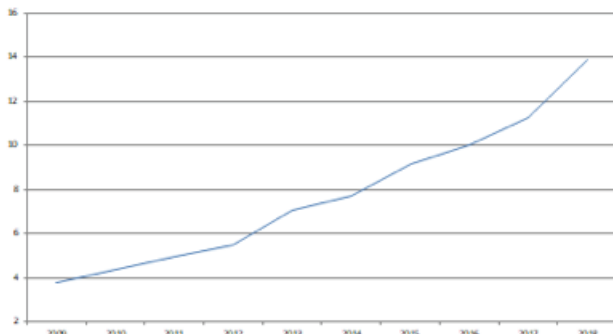
PWWT, 2009-2018



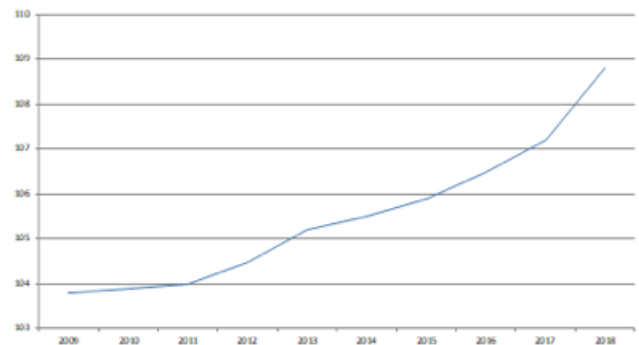
NLB%, 2009-2018



NLW%, 2009-2018



Maternal Index, 2009-2018



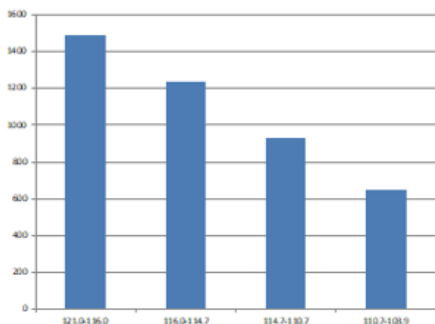
The first and obvious thing to note is that progress is clearly made for each trait. While you could argue that non-NSIP breeders also made progress, note the amount of progress in the right half of each chart vs. the left half. The left half represents the progress from 2009-2013 while the right half shows the progress from 2013-2018. In each case, the progress is much greater in the most recent five years than in the first five which shows that as breeders became more familiar with the data and how to use it in selection, more progress was made. This shows that the progress made was based on selection involving NSIP, rather than something that would have occurred naturally.

Of particular interest is the Number of Lamb Weaned % (NLW%) chart. For many years, geneticists said that while number of lambs weaned is very important economically, selecting for it wouldn't yield results because the heritability was very low. A low heritability means less genetic control and thus little gain from selection. However, using NSIP data in selection, there has been an extremely large improvement in NLW%, showing how important this tool is. What once seemed extremely difficult to do can now be realized by applying technology.

Point #3 – Your customers will see the benefit of using production data and will be willing to pay for seed-stock backed by production data. I remember the first time I had a buyer come to our farm after I was on NSIP back in 1988. I was proud to hand him a data sheet with all sorts of EBVs. As I explained them to him, he casually looked over the fence and said “That’s a big strong buck, I’ll take him.” I was more than a little disheartened but times have changed. Just as most cattle and swine people are now accustomed to using genetic data, the newer, progressive sheep producers are as well and many sheep are sold over the internet based on data and a photo.

The Center of the Nation Sale held at Spencer, Iowa every year has become the top sale for Polypays nationwide and entries must be on NSIP. Last year’s sale saw 49 Polypay rams sell at an average of \$1,067. To ascertain whether or not these prices were influenced by data, I first looked at the average price for those in the top fourth of the sale for the U.S. Maternal Index, the price for those in the second fourth, third fourth and bottom fourth. The result is shown below. Each quartile dropped in price by about \$300 per head, going from the top to the second, etc. I then looked at the correlation between price and particular traits to see if one trait stood out from the others. The correlations shown below show that each of the traits has a high correlation with price, indicating that the buyers were not looking for just one trait but had varied interests, perhaps looking for sheep with balanced EBVs.

Relationship of Price and Index
2018 CNS



Correlations of price with traits
2018 CNS

Maternal Wn Wt.	.63
Weaning Wt.	.56
Postweaning Wt.	.48
# Lambs Born	.45
# Lambs Wnd	.56
Maternal Index	.68

Point #4 – Don't get left behind as demand and marketing shifts happen. What people look for in sheep and how they buy them are not what was in place 20 years ago. There are currently about 60 Polypay breeders in NSIP and the number is growing. How much or how little you use the data and visual appraisal is up to you. We are all individuals as breeders of Polypays and need to do what is right for us and for the breed. Don't hesitate to join NSIP, however, because you think it is something that will eventually fade away. The trend toward the use of scientific-based production data has been building over time in the sheep industry and its use in the beef, dairy and swine industries is extremely strong if we look at those industries as a comparison of what lies ahead for us. For more information on NSIP, contact Rusty Burgett, the NSIP Program Director at 515/708-8850 or via email at info@nsip.org.

Two Former Polypay Breeders Honored for Their Foresight

by Glen Jones

At the beginning of the Center of the Nation Sale this summer, two long time and prominent Polypay breeders were recognized for their efforts in starting what has turned out to be the most successful sale for our breed and has also been a boon to some of the terminal sire breeds. Polypays have remained the dominant breed in numbers with 84 head selling this year.

In addition to providing a valuable service to seedstock producers, the sale annually provides a source of quality genetics for commercial producers who have come to rely upon those “sheep with numbers” to improve their financial success. The following remarks were made at ringside to those gathered for the July 27th event.

The Center of The Nation NSIP sheep sale is well established as the premier sale for sheep producers focused upon improving the productivity of the sheep industry in Middle America. How did this come about? The story that I have heard, and subsequently verified by visiting with an eye witness, is that two frustrated Polypay breeders were enjoying tacos and beer while discussing the need for a better way to market quality genetics to progressive sheepmen. Those two gentlemen are Jerry Sorensen and Mike Park. It was in that setting where the idea of the Center of the Nation Sale was born. With notes written on a restaurant napkin the ship was soon launched.

I believe that it is appropriate today, that those of us who are benefiting from their foresight take this opportunity to recognize the fathers of this movement that has brought great genetics together in one location for the improvement of Americas Sheep Industry. Thank you Jerry and Mike for all that you have done for the benefit of those of us gathered here today.

At this time I would like to present to each of you these plaques and a small gift as a token of our appreciation. The plaques are inscribed with the following: “In appreciation for the foresight, effort, and leadership in establishing the Center of the Nation NSIP Sheep Sale. Your efforts have greatly improved the marketing of superior genetics for seedstock producers and the availability of these quality genetics to our commercial sheep industry.”

Sponsors of the award were Polypay consignors Glen & Chris Jones, John & Colleen Carlson, Chris & Anna Kaeb, Anthony Henke, John Anderson, Brett Pharo, and Don Hausser along with Dale & Judy Dobberpuhl with Mint Gold Suffolks.



**Top Selling Ram at
Center of the Nation Sale**

Annual Membership Meeting

The meeting was held Friday night at Spencer. It was well attended in person, and one person used the call-in option. A brief recounting of board operations along with a treasurer report was given.

Dr. Bret Taylor of the US Sheep Experiment Station in Dubois, ID then gave a great presentation on the projects involving Polypays that the sheep station has been involved in. He made us aware that both the USSES in Idaho and the MARC in Nebraska are really ramping up their Polypay research and projects. They will be cooperating on research projects.

The USSES is in the process of loading their years of Polypay data into the NSIP system, which will better facilitate integrating their research with Polypay breeders.

Four USSES research papers involving Polypays can be accessed under “Links” on the APSA website, www.polypay.org.