

A Big Prairie Perspective

Mark Meurer, President

When I was a kid, I remember thinking that my Dad had one foot in the grave when he turned 40! Next stop the nursing home for old Dad. Now that I'm in my 50's, my perspective on age has really changed. I wish I was forty, again! The years seem to go faster and faster. How many of us have used the phrase, "it seems like yesterday". I'll bet we've all uttered that common phrase.

True to form, this past year flew by. The APSA had a tremendous year in terms of sale results, participation in genetic research, youth engagement and our finances are solid. As an association, we had a very positive year.

As we flip the calendar to 2023, we have many things on the agenda to keep our association heading in the right direction. We'll be offering an APSA National Online Sale this summer that will be open to all members. We are promoting the APSA Stater Flock Grant again this year to better engage young producers who wish to try Polypay genetics for the first time. We continue to support and participate with Dr. Ron Lewis, at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, in his research entitled, Improving Robustness and Climatic Resilience in US Sheep or GEMS, which stands for Genetics, Environment, Management, and Society. There are several online replacement ewe sales taking place this year and the Midwest Stud Ram Sale and the NSIP Center of the Nation Sale will again be held in June and July, respectively. Breeders from across the country are holding online breeding stock sales this year and as a breed association, we will begin our advertising campaign in the ASI Magazine, The Sheep Industry News, in the near future. Whew! What a busy year ahead!

None of these opportunities would even be possible without the continued support, cooperation and

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APSA Board of Directors

Mark Meurer, President 1869 Midway Rd. Ashton, IL 61006 meurer66@gmail.com	2023-1 815-973-5576
Jeremy Refshaw, Vice-Pres. 1339 290th St. Waubun, MN 56589 refshawranch@yahoo.com	2025-1 218-230-5383
Matt Chadwick, Secretary 200 Shadow Circle Murray, KY 42071 chadwicksheepcompany@gmail.com	2024-1 270-227-8731
Mark Van Roekel, Treasurer 3891 390th St. Orange City, IA 51041 mandbvr@gmail.com	2023-2 712-540-8710
Kayla Inbody 10356 Cty Rd. 30 Dunkirk, OH 45836 flinn_13@hotmail.com	2024-1 419-306-2451
Nicole Jessen 17146 377th Ave Redfield, SD 57469	2025-1 605-460-1932
Zach Meinders 42645 20th Ave Buffalo Center, IA 50424 meinders2@hotmail.com	2025-1 515-320-3835



Big Prairie Cont.

engagement from you, the APSA membership. As far as I'm concerned, we're the most focused, commercially-oriented sheep breed in the nation. And you know what...our breeding stock sales from the sale ring to the farm yard are proving it. Polypay genetics are in demand. Thank you to all of you for your continued focus on the commercial sheep industry and for your commitment to our breed, Polypays!

As always, if you ever have questions or concerns, please give me call. May you all have a blessed and prosperous 2023!



Starter Flock Grant

The American Polypay Association will again be awarding a Starter Flock Grant to one 13-18 year old applicant in 2023! The purpose is to promote the growth and usefulness of the Polypay Breed, and to encourage youth involvement and education in the breed. Applications are due April 1st and more information can be found in the Youth tab at Polypay.org.

The "Polypay Association Starter Flock Fundraiser Auction" will be held February 15th, 2023 to raise funds for the Starter Flock Grant and for other youth activities. We are now looking for donations from Polypay members and from anyone involved with Polypay sheep in the industry! Some examples of donations would be ram or ewe lambs, sale credit for your personal polypay sale, feed/mineral, semen, custom farm apparel or promotional items.

Here is the sale link <https://plauctions.live/auction/18783> We already have a nice set of donations!

Mark Your Calendars!

The APSA Annual Meeting will be held on July 28th at 8:00 p.m. cdt. The meeting will be held in conjunction with the NSIP Center of the Nation Sale at the Clay County Fairgrounds in Spencer, IA. For those who can't attend, a Zoom link will be provided. More details will follow.



Director Nominations

In this newsletter is a nomination form for the APSA Board of Directors. Consider whether you might be willing to serve and help guide the future of the American Polypay Sheep Association, or if you know someone that you feel would serve well. We need your input.

Candidates need to be nominated by three members and the form returned by March 31 along with a short resume to Mark Meurer, 1869 Midway Rd., Ashton, IL 61006. meurer66@gmail.com

Solving the Mystery of Dozer Lambs

Kathy Ewert, DVM

Many of you have already started lambing and for the rest of us lambing will start very soon. This year we are again asking producers to report any lambs born on your facility that may be exhibiting the Dozer syndrome. An affected Dozer lamb is born with an inability to raise its head/neck beyond level with its back. The affected lamb has extreme difficulty nursing the ewe because it cannot raise its head to reach the udder. Even though it is born alive, it usually dies or has to be euthanized. One or more lambs may be affected from the same ewe. The defect can occur in single and multiple births. This congenital defect has only been reported in Polypays and Polypay crosses.

Here is a picture of a Dozer lamb:



Our research to determine the cause of Dozer lambs continues. This year we have been able to confirm that the phenotypic presentation of these lambs (most notably, weakness in head, neck, and front legs) is in fact, genetic in origin and not nutritional or the result of uterine malpositioning. Genetic and microscopic evaluations both point to a mutation that causes a type of muscular dystrophy similar to that seen in humans.

Dr. Brenda Murdoch, a molecular geneticist, at the University of Idaho, and her graduate student, Morgan Stegemiller, have spent the last year analyzing samples from affected lambs to find the genetic mutation causing this syndrome. Dr. Maggie Highland, a veterinary pathologist at the University of Wisconsin, has necropsied affected lambs and looked at their tissues microscopically.

Ms. Stegemiller conducted a genome wide association study to determine any genetic variations associated with the Dozer lamb phenotype. Samples from 14 affected lambs as well as 33 closely related animals such as the sire, the dam, and siblings of the affected lambs were analyzed. The results of the genetic analysis revealed 2 gene regions on chromosome 15, where the most significant markers were identified that are associated with the Dozer phenotype.

Variants in these 2 gene regions in humans are known to cause a type of muscular dystrophy. This muscular dystrophy in humans results in muscle weakness in the face, neck, and arms, as well as, heart abnormalities. Research continues to look for variants in the 2 gene regions. This is no small task as there are 370 variants in one of the gene regions that are being investigated as the potential causative mutation for the Dozer lamb syndrome. Once the variant or variants that are responsible for Dozer lambs are identified, a genetic test will be

developed and offered to producers to check their seed stock for animals carrying the mutation responsible for Dozer lambs.

Dr. Maggie Highland at the University of Wisconsin has examined a number of Dozer lambs. The lambs were x-rayed and had CT scans and were completely necropsied. No gross skeletal abnormalities have been identified. Microscopic examination of a wide range of tissues from the Dozer lambs revealed pathological changes of skeletal and heart muscle. These changes are consistent with microscopic pathological changes in humans with muscular dystrophy.

The APSA Board has formed a standing committee for Dozer research. The committee consists of Dr. Holly Neaton (hjneaton@gmail.com); cell phone: (952)240-2192; John Anderson (johnwallaceanderson@gmail.com); and me, Dr. Kathy Ewert (info@notkwyta.com); cell phone: (785) 207-7084.

If you think that you have a Dozer lamb, please take some pictures and contact one of the committee members listed above. We will work with you to collect samples and will make the necessary arrangements to get the samples to Dr. Murdoch and Dr. Highland.

Up to this point, Dozer lambs have been identified in only one gene pool of Polypay sheep; however, it is imperative that all Polypay producers stay vigilant and report any suspect lambs to us.

Special note to Polypay seed stock producers: If you now have or have had Dozer lambs born in your flock, please use discretion when selling breeding stock related to the Dozers. While we do not yet know the mode of inheritance, we can say with certainty that there is a genetic component to this syndrome.

Thank you for your help with this project. Dr. Kathy Ewert

Advertise

Advertising in the APSA newsletter is available.

Rates are

Full Page: \$85

7.5"w x 10"h

Half Page: \$45

7.5"w x 5"h

Quarter Page: \$25

7.5"w x 2.5"h

3.75"w x 5"h

Ads you would like put in the Spring newsletter would need to be sent to brettpharo@gmail.com by April 1.

Membership Dues

Membership dues for the APSA are due at the beginning of the year. The year you are paid up through can be found on the address label on the envelop containing this newsletter, if you're unsure.



View from the Great Lakes State

Brett Pharo



What a year it's been! There were lots of ups and downs in the sheep industry in 2022. As evidenced by prices at sales and at the farm gate, there remained much demand for quality Polypay breeding stock. The versatility our breed offers to the commercial sheep producer, along with our high rate of participation in NSIP, gives us a distinct advantage in marketing maternal genetics.

Lamb prices were riding a very high wave in the early part of the year. What a ride that was! Then the wave broke suddenly and dramatically in mid-summer. A fair look at it, though, makes you realize that the prices have not been that much different than they were 3-4 years ago. It sure feels different, though, when you come down from such a height.

The story on wool prices is a different thing altogether. Prices for medium wool started the year in dismal territory. I'm sure I'm not the only one

who experienced a significant drop from those dismal levels by the end of the year. Those of us producing medium micron wool basically gave it away this year, unless you were doing some value adding operations. I think most Polypay producers have not included wool quality in their selection criteria for sometime, if ever. I'm not sure, but I think I'm one of only a few that have done wool testing over the last few years. I don't know that I'll continue that, as my wool check will only cover the cost of about three samples.

The weather in northern Michigan has been strange so far this winter. I'm always amused when the meteorologists refer to something as more or less than "normal." Is anything "normal?" I think they really mean average. We've had two brief snow events this fall/winter. One in November and a big one over Christmas weekend. Luckily, my wife and I were blessed to get away to the tropics over the holidays, leaving our daughters to deal with winter. By the time we returned, the snow had melted.

Usually we won't see open ground from just before Christmas until the end of February. Oddly, this year we are sitting at above average snowfall for the year (around 4 feet), and yet the ground is bare and looks to stay that way through most of January.

The future for Polypay producers, and commercial producers that use Polypay genetics, looks bright. Demand is still there. The GEMS research project is moving forward into its second year with a few more flocks added to the project. There should be some good results from that in a few years, including genomic enhanced EBVs and greater ability to genetically select for traits affecting longevity and robustness. As usual, Polypays are at or near the forefront in moving the industry forward.



APSA Director Nomination Form

We, the undersigned members of the American Polypay Sheep Association,

nominate _____
to serve as a Director on the Board of Directors of the American Polypay Sheep Association.

Name _____

Address _____

Name _____

Address _____

Name _____

Address _____

Three separate voting active memberships must sign this form for it to be accepted as official.

I, _____, desire to, and will, serve to the best of my ability on the Board of Directors of the American Polypay Sheep Association, for a three-year term if elected. Attached is my resume (not to exceed 200 words), which may be mailed to all APSA members so that they may judge as to my qualifications to serve on the Board of Directors of the APSA.

I certify that I am a breeder of purebred Polypay sheep registered with the American Polypay Sheep Association, and I pledge myself to support and obey the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws of this association, and the Breeder's Guidelines as contained therein, and to advance the production objectives of the Polypay breed.

Nominee's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

Return completed nomination form and accompanying resume by March 31, 2023 to:

Mark Meurer, APSA President
1869 Midway Rd.
Ashton, IL 61006
meurer66@gmail.com