

# Sheep Provide Weave For Bow Family Fabric

(Continued from Page B2)

have a way to go, but we're starting to get some attention."

The quality of the fleece must be considered along with the meat-yielding quality of the frame. The genetic qualities must still demonstrate the ideal breed qualities.

But there is the roadwork, the preparation, the dedication, the decisions, the headaches.

They show Corriedales at five to six shows a year, mostly in the Northeast, but also in Ohio, Illinois, and Missouri.

Ben said that his flock has been getting attention because of the shows, and the winning by other people who purchased animals from the Bow flock.

The grand champion fleece of the Ohio State Fair came from a Locust Ridge ewe purchased by an Ohio breeder. Bow said that is important because Ohio is a stronghold for Corriedale breeders, and it means something when winners start coming from out-of-state.

"Over the years, if you're constantly showing, and not number one, but in the top placings, then you can get noticed," Ben said explaining his understanding of the recognition his family received.

They also received recognition when a ram out of a ewe they donated to the Ohio State University turned out to be the best ram lamb there, and the university used the Locust Ridge-developed ram as a sire to develop its flock.

"Things like that made our family name keep coming up," Ben said, "just like, we have been the champion breeder at Maryland, and at the Pennsylvania Farm

Show for the last couple of years."

The Bows have also donated the use of their lambs for use in Christian pageantry at nearby Lebanon Valley College, and also at the Cornwall Elementary School.

The Lancaster County tourist entertainment attraction Sight-and-Sound used to rent lambs from Bow, but actually purchased some and now maintain their own flock because of the specific needs they have for certain size animals.

The Bow name has also been associated with sheep through the county 4-H program and the county fair.

"I have always felt that we, the Bow family, owe something to the 4-H program for what it has done for us. It has made a good impression on our lives and on our children," Ben said.

He has donated his time to instruct youth on shearing and sheep activities and wool, etc., at various events, over the years.

However, he said the key to recognition by the national organization is developing a flock for good shape and consistency.

The strategy for developing his flock has been based on advise of keeping the top 10 percent of the flock for breeding.

"You have to have at least 25 sheep. Your predictability is going to be pretty poor if you don't," he said.

It's better to have a 100 from which to select, he said. That gives 10 animals from which to focus the future of the flock.

After a number of generations and selections, and as more and more of the flock is refined, quality of the cull animals becomes

higher.

If the Bows' flock contains 50 percent show quality animals, they can sell 40 percent to others for showing or breeding, and continue to keep their 10 percent for continue the program, and also sell or use the other 50 percent.

The Corriedale breed was derived from an 1866 cross between Long Wool rams and Merino ewes, for the purpose of developing an animal that would do well on the New Zealand range in producing a good carcass and good wool.

Bow said the wool of the Corriedales is naturally finer than most, and making breeding decisions for dual purposes is easier somewhat because of it.

Line breeding is part of the game for creating consistent animals, but introducing outside genetics is very important too, in order to repress the recessive and usually unwanted genes.

He tries to keep his breeding ewes about 75 percent pure and is working on developing a 50-50 ram to use on them, "... so we won't stray too far from what we consider ideal, and at the same time keeping down recessive traits.

"You're always going to have recessive traits that you're not too proud of, and cull them out. We have it pretty well under control now.

"But farming is a science with cause and effect, and the farmer is

the manipulator, especially with animal husbandry," Bow said.

"You go out and find an animal you like, and bring home a ram to use, and think how the lambs should come out, and they don't.

"It's the same with how much fertilizer to use, and how much to feed the animals, and the cost-effectiveness of feeding. You can't have them too fat, because fat reduces fertility, and all of these things wind together and that's what makes it interesting to me," Ben said.

"And each year, breeding season brings excitement about what will result in five months down the road, and what will work, and then it teases you and keeps you coming back."



Part of the Bow family Corriedale flock feeds behind Ben, Mary and Benj Bow, who are joined by dogs Rip and Jake at the edge of an old orchard, now a pasture behind their Annville farm house.

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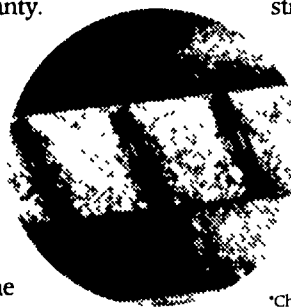


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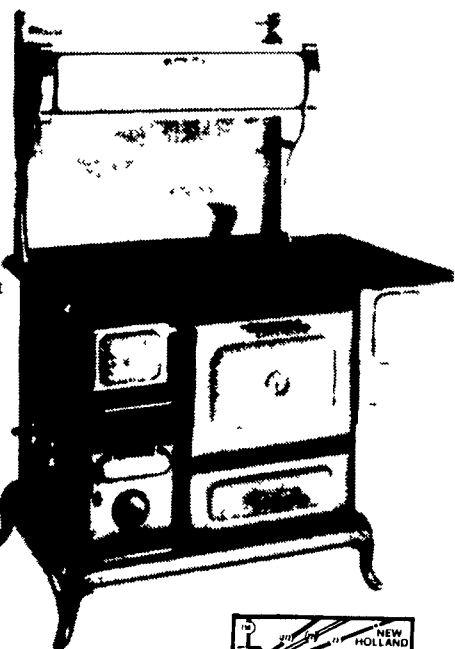
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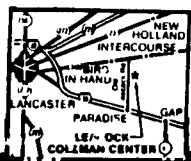
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