

A Big Prairie Perspective

Mark Meurer, President

Have you ever heard or read something that profoundly affected your life? Throughout my 58 years on planet Earth, there have been a few words of wisdom that have stuck with me like the bubble gum I used to smash into my sister's hair. Yes, I was the brother a sister never wanted to have! I tormented her. She's forgiven me, but I'm afraid she's going to raise the cash rent on me someday as payback. Anyway, I thought I'd share a few words of wisdom that I've compiled over the years and how they apply to everyday life and even raising livestock.

The first bit of wisdom that affected me immensely involves the anatomy of your head. "You have two ears and one mouth. Use them in that proportion." I have always loved this statement. Have you ever been around someone who talks non-stop, but never takes time to listen? We all have. I have found over the years that we all have so much to learn if we just listen to each other. A good listener makes a great spouse, a trusted parent, a good friend, and a solid co-worker. I've always thought the best leaders were those who were quick to listen and slow to speak. I think this adage also applies to those of us in the Polypay business. We should all listen to each other and learn. Some of us use NSIP, some don't. Some like to exhibit Polypays, some don't. Some of us utilize certain traits as core selection tools and others focus on different traits. None of us are wrong. We just utilize different methods and ideas. We should all listen to each other, respect each other and work to make our breed even better.

The second nugget of wisdom that I try to apply to my daily life is from an unknown author who is obviously full of common sense. "There are two types of people in the world...those that work hard and those that take the credit. Try to be in the first group because there's less competition." What a statement! But I love it. I truly believe that in today's world, work ethic may be the one thing that sets people apart. I think this statement applies to those in the Polypay business, as well. Through hard work and perseverance, Polypay

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breeders from across the country have collectively made our breed "America's Production Breed", but we can't stop now. We need to continue to work on genetic progress through testing, applying strict phenotypic selection standards and providing the industry with the best maternal genetics in the country. There is no substitute for hard work and Polypay breeders exemplify that trait. Let's keep it up!

Finally, the last quote that I think about almost every day is one that I learned while attending bull riding school in the late 1980's. It's a quote that was shared with me by the legendary rodeo cowboy and rodeo coach, Lyle Sankey. Lyle was a traveling partner with Chris LeDoux, the world champion bareback rider and famous country-western singer. Chris and Lyle got to a rodeo one evening and it was pouring rain. The livestock was soaked, the cowboys were soaked, and the arena was nothing but mud. All the cowboys were complaining about the conditions. That's when Chris LeDoux said to Lyle Sankey, "We can make money in the rain." In other words, no matter what you're faced with, a good attitude will always carry the day. I don't know about you, but raising livestock,

especially sheep, can be very challenging at times. Ewes don't get bred, a lamb dies, feed prices go up, etc. Raising livestock can be tough on the soul sometimes. That's when I think about Chris LeDoux and his attitude towards a sloppy arena and wet livestock. Even with all the challenges, raising livestock is still a blessing. I wouldn't change anything. Keeping a good attitude even when things get tough is just plain smart. A good attitude will always make you a winner. The Polypay breed is full of winners!

That's probably enough of my rambling for one newsletter! If you ever have questions or concerns, please let me or the board know your thoughts. This is your association. Also, we are so excited to have Beverly Berens as our new newsletter editor! Bev comes with years of experience and an award-winning background in newsletter productions. Welcome Bev!

Respectfully,
Mark Meurer
APSA President



After 35 years, I am hanging up my shepherd's crook.

I have raised Polypay sheep for 35 years and used NSIP for years.

We will be selling about 30 ewes and about 24 ewe lambs in small lots.

All ewe lambs are sired by Meinders ram, 6201212022002056, the same ram that sired high selling ewe lambs last year owned by Justin & Hayden Taylor.

The sale will be on July 15 on PLAUctions.live
515-320-3835



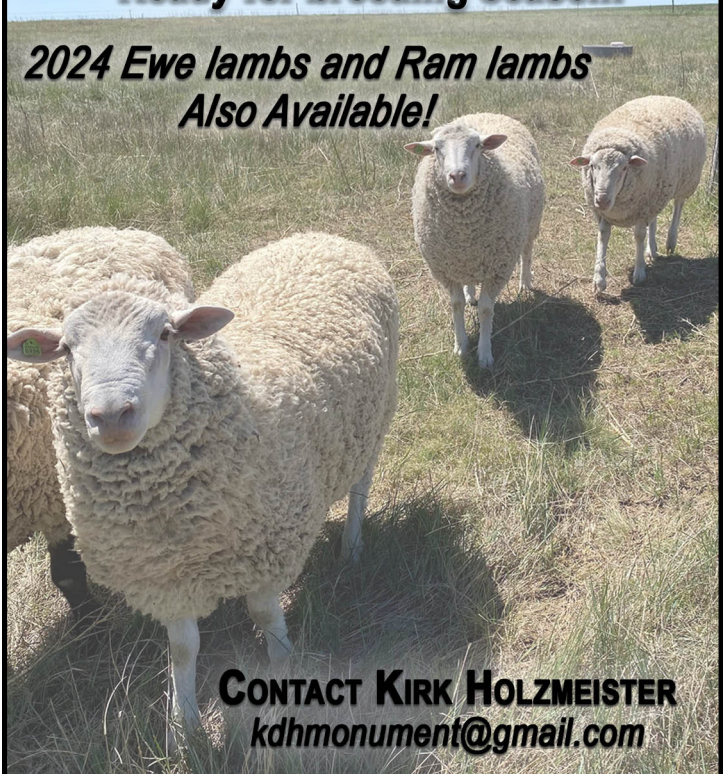
IRISH ACRES

Warren and Ellen O'Brien
920-382-1946

**3 Polypay Ram Lambs for Sale
March 2024 Yearlings**

Ready for breeding season!

**2024 Ewe lambs and Ram lambs
Also Available!**



Polypay Breeders Continue to Support and Participate in GEMS Research Project

GEMS stands for Genetics, Environment, Management and Society, which are four pillars of our sheep industry. Why so? In the U.S., distinct breed-types are spread across climatically diverse regions and management systems. Breeding robust sheep that perform well under these conditions is therefore critical to the industry's long-term sustainability. Currently, however, traits indicative of robustness and climatic resilience are largely absent in our genetic evaluation. Our ambition in Sheep GEMS is to remedy that shortfall.

Sheep GEMS has been underway for about two years, with exciting results generated. For those findings to be useful to sheep producers, they need to be widely shared. To begin that process, our providing further background into Sheep GEMS seems appropriate. That necessitates defining terms.

Robustness is an animal's ability to remain healthy and productive (i.e., to survive and reproduce) within a defined environment or set of management conditions. **Climatic resilience** is an animal's ability to either be little affected by, or capable of recovering from, changes in climatic conditions (e.g., extremes in temperature or relative humidity). An **indicator trait** is an on-farm measurement that helps predict an animal's robustness or climatic resilience. As an illustration, fecal egg count is an indicator trait for resistance to gastrointestinal parasitism and thereby robustness.

The robustness traits incorporated into Sheep GEMS are lamb survival, udder health, and gastrointestinal parasitism (Figure 1). Our indicator traits for **lamb survival** are birth weight and type, early postnatal survival, and survival to weaning. For **udder health**, our indicator traits are udder depth and teat placement near lambing. Lastly, for **gastrointestinal parasitism** our indicator traits are fecal egg counts and FAMACHA scores collected in lambs and ewes at critical times.

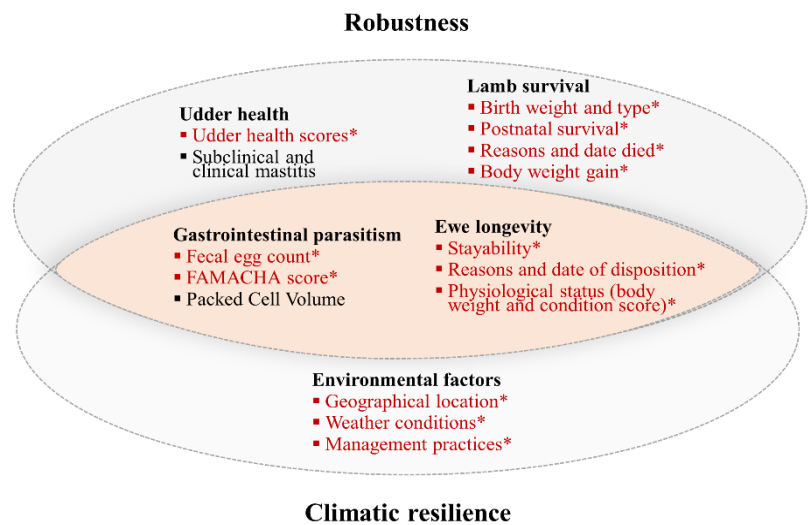
We are assessing climatic resilience focusing on ewe longevity. As its indicator trait, we are recording an ewe's stayability, defined by her retention in a flock while remaining productive. Additionally, we are collecting body weights and condition scores on ewes at key physiological stages (e.g., breeding and weaning) and monitoring their changes over the production season.

Collecting these additional measurements is an ambitious undertaking. Our success in doing so depends on collaborations. Three USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) facilities are core to our effort: the Dale Bumpers Small Farms Research Center; the U.S. Meat Animal Research Center; and the U.S. Sheep Experiment Station. Scientists at these facilities are recording the indicator traits we described (along with others) on their genetically connected Katahdin, Polypay, Rambouillet, and Suffolk flocks.

To impact the sheep industry, producers need to collect similar data in their own flocks. Therefore, in collaboration with the National Sheep Improvement Program (NSIP), we have recruited 45 NSIP flocks with these same four breeds to join the project.

Another aspect of Sheep GEMS is to incorporate genomic technologies into our genetic evaluations. Those tools allow us to validate pedigrees, provide genetic conditions for simply inherited traits, and more reliably predict genetic merit for complex traits like robustness and climatic resilience.

Sheep GEMS is in its early days. Still, our preliminary outcomes are promising. They set the foundation for providing the U.S. sheep industry with methods to further improve our flocks. We look forward to sharing our discoveries with you in the series of articles that will follow.



Measures recorded in **all flocks*** or USDA-ARS flocks only

Figure 1. Robustness and climatic resilience measures recorded.



Third Annual MSPA ONLINE AUCTION

Look local for additions to your
flock and equipment lines!

Hosted by Production Livestock Auctions

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 26, 2024

More information and lot entry found at
misheep.org/sheep-equipment-sale



THE AMERICAN POLYPAY SHEEP ASSOCIATION

Maternal Power Plus...



- Growth
- Adaptability
- Out-Of-Season Breeding
- Leaders In Performance Testing

Upcoming Sale Dates:

- ★ Midwest Stud Ram Sale-June 14
- ★ NSIP Polypay Online Sale-July 10
- ★ Center of the Nation NSIP Sale-July 27



America's Production Breed! The American Polypay Sheep Association www.polypay.org

2024 APSA Annual Meeting

The American Polypay Sheep Association will be conducting its annual meeting on July 26th at 7:00 p.m. (CDT), at the Clay County Fairgrounds in Spencer, Iowa. The meeting will be held during the Center of the Nation Sale. For those who cannot attend in person, a Zoom link will be sent at a later date. An agenda will be emailed prior to the annual meeting.

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Scientific team. The Sheep GEMS scientific team is Ron Lewis (Project Director), Luiz Brito (Project Co-Director), Joan Burke, Carrie Wilson, Brad Freking, Tom Murphy, Bret Taylor, Luis Pinto, Sara Nilson, Artur Rocha, Hilal Yazar Gunes, and Ali Haider Saleem.

Acknowledgements. We thank U.S. sheep associations and breed organizations, NSIP, and sheep producers, for their contributions to this research. This work is supported by the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative Competitive Grant (grant no. 2022-67015-36073/project accession no. 1027785) from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture. The USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the USDA.

Ballot for the Board of Directors of the American Polypay Sheep Association 2024

Matt Chadwick (____)

Kayla Inbody (____)

VOTE FOR UP TO TWO CANDIDATES

Each active membership that has 2023 dues paid is entitled to one vote.

You may return the ballot in person to an APSA director prior to the annual membership meeting in Spencer, Iowa at the Clay County Fairgrounds on July 26 at 7 p.m. or mail completed ballot, **postmarked by June 30, 2024**, to Mark Meurer, 1869 Midway Rd., Ashton, IL 61006. All ballots will be opened and counted at the annual meeting.

Mailed ballots should be returned as follows to assure a secret ballot:

- Mark your ballot
- Place ballot in an envelope marked “Ballot” on the outside
- Place that envelope inside another envelope addressed to Mark and include your name in the return address section.

CANDIDATE BIOS:

Matt Chadwick has been raising Polypay sheep since 2016 in Murray, Kentucky. He has grown his flock from 6 ewes to over 100. He participates in NSIP data collection and submission on his farm, Chadwick Sheep Company. Additionally, he and his wife operate a value-added wool, lamb, mutton, and pork business, participating in their local farmer’s market each Saturday and hosting their own agritourism events on their farm. He has a bachelor’s degree and master’s degree in agriculture from Murray State University and has worked full-time in the agriculture industry for fifteen years. He has been a Polypay Association board member and secretary for the past three years and is seeking to serve another term.

I am **Kayla Inbody** from Dunkirk, OH (The “K” of L&K Sheep Co.). I bought my first group of Polypay ewes back in 2012 from Double E Polypays-Norb and Sondra Ebbeskotte and have been hooked on the breed ever since!

Together with my husband Luke and our son Levi, we currently run about 10-15 head of Polypay brood ewes. Our motto is “Quality Over Quantity”, and our goal is to raise structurally correct, good production type sheep that work both in the purebred and commercial sheep industries. In addition to the Polypays, we also raise Registered White Dorpers with the same values. I have just completed my first term on the board and one of my main focuses has been promoting the youth involvement in the Polypay breed. I also am an avid supporter of promoting the breed through showing them at local and state levels which in turn helps spread knowledge of the breed. Through showing, we have won numerous awards over the last 12 years from Champions at Ohio State Fair, Kentucky State Fair, Michigan State Fair, with a highlight- having 2 Supreme Champion Overall Wool Ewes at the Michigan State Fair in 2016 and again in 2021. I would like to mention that our sheep are not on the NSIP program, and I will continue to be a voice on the board of directors for the other non-NSIP Polypay members and those who share the same values. I look forward to working with the board and the membership to keep the breed moving in a positive direction.

Meet the Editor

Bev Berens

Thank you for allowing me to serve as the editor of the American Polypay Association newsletter. My name is Bev Berens. I am a freelance ag journalist since 1990 and write for several publications, including ten years of weekly columns for The Farmers Exchange magazine based in Indiana. I am also the editor for Michigan Shepherd News. Last year we received the award for Best Special Edition publication through the National Livestock Publications Council. I'd call that a win for the little guys---sort of a David and Goliath moment.

Our family farms in Montcalm County, centrally located in Michigan. My husband Jeff, son CJ, daughter Shelby and soon to be son-in-law Gabe each have a role. It is a total group effort and we all have off-farm employment as we grow into the Amish farm we purchased two and



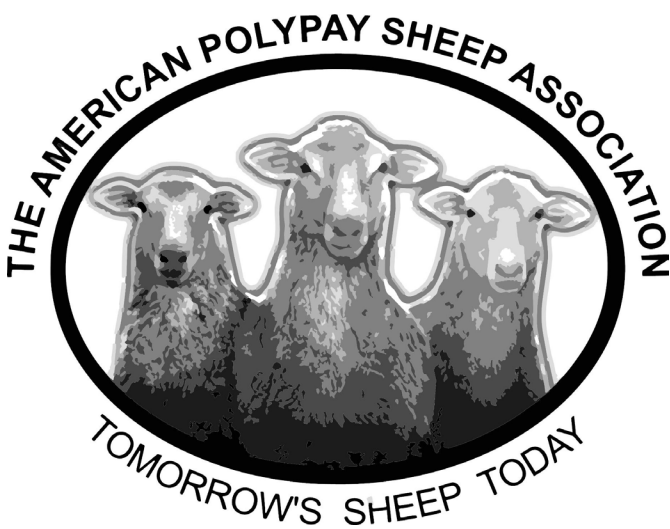
a half years ago. We have a base set of ewes including Polypay and Dorsets and are working to build a strong foundation flock from them. Prior to moving here, we had a small operation in Allegan County with a productive set of Dorset ewes.

This writing gig that started more than thirty years ago, was purely accidental, but has led me down some interesting paths, including face to face interviews with a former (and now current) Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack and U.S. Ambassador, Gregg Doud. I've covered many events and talked to people from many parts of the world. The best part of the work is meeting people who work in and believe in agriculture and its way of life.

Please bear with me as I work out a system and format for the newsletter. I'm more writer than designer, but hopefully the two will eventually mesh together!

Starter Flock Grant Draws Young Producer Applications

The APSA Starter Flock Grant continues to draw interest from young producers from across the county. This year, the APSA board received several excellent applications, and the board is in the process of evaluating each application. A winner will be selected soon, and the recipient of the APSA Starter Flock grant will be introduced during the annual meeting in July. This year, the Starter Flock grant auction, which was held in February, raised over \$2300. The grant money will be distributed to the winner this coming year.



ADVERTISE

Advertising rates in the APSA:

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

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