

# Montadale Project - 1998 Sheep Day Report

## Montadale Regeneration Project

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In a history-making move, the Board of Directors of the Montadale Sheep Breeders Association unanimously approved the Montadale Regeneration Project in their annual meeting held June 19, 1997, in Springfield, Illinois.

The Regeneration Project will involve returning to the roots of the Montadale breed . . . crossing Cheviot rams on Columbia ewes. The purpose of this project is to increase the genetic base while keeping the current breed standards. In addition to increasing the availability of quality breeding stock and allowing the breed to expand, the project promises to generate new interest in the Montadale breed. No other modern sheep breed has taken such an up-front approach.

### **Objectives**

1. To go back to the roots of the Montadale breed to create another strain of Montadales to increase out-cross potential within the breed.
2. To increase availability of quality breeding stock in order to allow the breed to expand while keeping the current breed standards.
3. To generate new interest in the Montadale breed.

### **Rationale**

Although most purebred sheep producers hate to admit it, the reality exists that most breeds of sheep are not pure at this time. In the interest of gaining a competitive advantage, certain breeders have introduced other breeds into their breed.

Montadale represent one of the youngest purebred breeds in the modern sheep industry. Montadale breeders prided themselves for years on their integrity and the pureness of the breed. There is concern with that integrity today. It is quite certain that at least four different introductions of additional Columbia blood into the breed has occurred in the last twenty years. The future of the Montadale breed should not be left to undocumented experimentation.

To date, no sheep breed has chosen to be up-front and public about a major step to increase the gene pool of their breed by going back to their roots and creating more of the breed from the roots up. The Montadale Regeneration Project is a planned process to expand the base of the breed which is controlled and traceable.

During the fiftieth anniversary celebration in 1996, the national Board of Directors adopted a campaign of "4000 in 2000!" The goal was to begin a campaign to take the next steps to move Montadales beyond the 3000-3400 registration total that they have been stuck at for most of the last fifteen to twenty years.

Achievement of the goal of "4000 in 2000" seemed simple enough. If every breeder registered just two more ewe lambs each year, the problem would be solved. The problem exists, however, in finding the necessary numbers of ewes to provide the additional 1000 lambs for registration, maintain the quality of the registered progeny and thus achieve the numbers goal. Creation of a program to expand the number of ewes available to produce these numbers of progeny seemed more reasonable and attainable.

Participants in the program are encouraged to use only larger Columbias so as not to lose the present size and scale of the Montadale breed. These breeders are also encouraged to use no less than eight Columbia ewes of similar breeding to facilitate consistency in the project.

## **Requirements**

1. An Application of Intent to Participate which must be approved by three national directors.
2. One of the Directors must have physically inspected the Cheviot ram and the Columbia ewes.
3. Registration certificates, three-generation extended pedigrees produced by the respective breed association, and readable nose prints of the Cheviot ram and the Columbia ewes must be submitted with the application.
4. Registration certificates of progeny created under the Regeneration Project will have special codes to designate the crosses. Readable nose-prints must be submitted with application for registry of these progeny.
  - A. Ewe lambs and ram lambs from the Cheviot x Columbia will be registered with the Montadale Association with a "C" code.
  - B. "C" code F-1 ewe lambs will then be bred to a Montadale ram. Their offspring will be designated with an "M" code.
  - C. When "M" code rams or ewes are bred to a purebred Montadale, their offspring will have no special designations. Said offspring must meet the Montadale breed standards for registry.

D. A few "C" code F-1 ram lambs from the Cheviot x Columbia cross will be allowed to be registered and may be bred back to Columbia ewes. These ram lambs must first be inspected by one national director. Only ewe lambs from the "C" code F-1, ram x Columbia may be registered and they will be designated with an "X" code. An "X" code ewe bred to a Montadale ram will produce "M" code offspring which in turn is crossed with a purebred Montadale.

5. Nose prints of all lambs which will be registered with code designations must be submitted at time of registry.

6. This project is open to not only Montadale breeders, but to other interested breeders who are willing to follow the Association's guidelines.

7. If animals are leased, a lease agreement must accompany the application.

8. Applicants must pay an application fee of \$25, as well as Senior Annual Dues to the Montadale Association and all application registration and transfer fees.

9. The Montadale Association requests that all judges strictly follow the current Breed Standards.

An application for Intent to Participate may be obtained by contacting the M.S.B.A. Office, P.O. Box 603, Plainfield, IN 46168; phone or fax 317-839-6198.

### **NDSU Involvement**

North Dakota State University personnel were approached as a source of Columbias to be used in this regeneration project. Twenty mixed age Columbia ewes were assigned to the project. A Border Cheviot ram was selected by the Montadale Board of Directors and Breed Secretary. Results of these matings born in January 1998 look promising. Lambs have demonstrated excellent vigor and alertness. They also exhibit very acceptable Montadale breed type with open faces, dark noses and dark hooves.

Performance will be measured on all these lambs. It is hoped that they can contribute as an important part of the regeneration project which the Montadale breed has boldly endorsed.

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