



OPP
CONCERNED
SHEEP
BREEDERS
SOCIETY

OPP CONCERNED SHEEP BREEDERS SOCIETY

Newsletter — August 1997

Mary Jarvis on LA200?

Not really — not yet. But Mare did tell one of her doctors that if one of her sheep had a temp of 104 that ewe would be getting massive doses of LA200. Mare's fever is down from that point by now!

Backing up a little — to shortly after our annual meeting in early April. Mary, our secretary/treasurer and the glue that holds us together, began feeling a little "off." Thinking it was just a bug she'd easily shake — and with lambs, crias, and kids due — Mare didn't slow down. But she got worse instead of better. Sick enough that she and Rusty decided not to milk this year (they milked 90 ewes in '96). She did keep working full time at the credit union in Duluth until just a few weeks ago when it finally became impossible.

Though Mare has been in considerable pain, the worst part is not knowing what she's at war with. Tests have ruled out Lymes, thyroid problems, anything infectious — but joint pain has been so severe that she's often on crutches (when she feels well enough to even get out of bed). The latest medical opinion is that it is likely one of about 100 diseases in the rheumatoid arthritis family. By the time you read this we hope she'll be on the upswing and back to work again — and, as she says, "Making Rusty's Life Miserable."

We know that Mare's positive attitude and terrific sense of humor will carry her through this. She can still laugh, continues to crack jokes, and would love to hear from you (cards, letters, e-mail O.K. but please no phone calls — in self-preservation, the phone is sometimes off the hook). While she's out of commission, OPP Society board members will be pinch hitting so please be patient. Official business should continue to be mailed to Mary Jarvis. But until she's back on track, Mary asks that other inquiries be directed to Judy Lewman at 612-472-4524 (e-mail: JL6250@aol.com).

New Faces on OPPCSB Board

The terms of Mary Jarvis (secretary/treasurer) as well as Judy Lewman and Greg Pauley (directors) expired this year. Greg did not wish to run for reelection as he has sold his sheep and gone back to school. In addition, president Jim Schultz announced at our annual meeting that he was stepping down. Judy Lewman was nominated to fill the one year remaining of Jim's term. Members Stefania Dignum, Gretta MacIntyre, and Holly Neaton had submitted resumes and agreed to run for the two three-year board positions.

MARY C. JARVIS, SECY/TREAS
2862 SOUTH PETERSON ROAD
POPLAR, WI 54864
(715) 364-2646

Shortly after our annual meeting Gretta MacIntyre was elected to the board of her breed association. She has chosen to withdraw from the OPP Society race in order to concentrate her efforts on that position. There being no further nominations, Stefania Dignum and Holly Neaton are your new directors. Mary Jarvis will continue as secretary/treasurer and Judy Lewman will fill the remaining year of the president's term.

The directors' race turned out to be a real win/win situation. We end up with two excellent additions to the OPP Society board and also have a progressive, health conscious member of our group serving in a breed society leadership position. Here is a brief introduction to your new directors and, since we already had her bio on file, a few words about Gretta MacIntyre:

STEFANIA DIGNUM

RR 1, Parham, Ontario, Canada K0H 2K0
613-375-6308

Stefania and her husband Ray, along with their daughter Louise, are widely known as the sole importers of Icelandic sheep to North America to date. At present, the flock consists of 100 purebred breeding ewes plus a few replacement ewe lambs and, to ensure enough bloodlines for the breed, almost 20 rams. A large number of their animals are sold for breeding.

Beginning with various breeds in 1979 (including Scottish Blackface, Suffolks, Hampshires, Dorsets and Columbias), the Dignums were never happy with the flock's performance. So in 1985 they decided to import their first Icelandics from Stefania's homeland. Not until 1988, after agreeing to volunteer their flock for a Canadian government Maedi/Visna (OPP) study, did Stefania learn that their sheep were infected. She had assumed they were free of M/V but tests came back 33% positive. Stefania says that *"... was a shock to me since I was growing up in Iceland when the battle with M/V was going on there and, even though I was just a child and lived in the city, I was aware of how serious the M/V was to the sheep population in Iceland. What really hurt was that I had brought my disease-free Icelandic sheep into an infected flock already here on the farm."*

So began an eradication program — *"difficult, expensive, and emotionally draining"* — that has been well documented in *The Shepherd* magazine and elsewhere. Stefania says that, *"Even though I will never consider our flock 100% free of OPP, I feel that we have been successful in our effort. No ewes have tested positive since 1992 and only 2 or 3 rams (culled) since then."* The Dignums have access to the Canadian government ELISA test. Stefania was one of the first to speak out on OPP and is willing to continue to share her experience with anyone thinking of fighting the disease.

HOLLY NEATON, DVM

11549 Highway 25 SW, Watertown, Minnesota 55388
612-955-2596

Holly and her husband Paul, along with their 3 young sons (ages, 8, 10 & 14), live on a farm that has been in Paul's family for over 100 years. Previously a partner for 18 years in a mixed large/small veterinary practice, Holly specialized in dairy and small ruminants. Earlier this year she began working in private industry, which allows her more time with her family and her flock of 60 registered purebred Polypays and Polypay crossbreds.

The Neatons have had sheep for 11 years. The high producing Polypays are on an accelerated lambing schedule — with a strict OPP eradication program in place. The flock is enrolled in NSIP and replacements are selected using rigid production-based guidelines.

Dr. Neaton has been a popular presenter at various sheep conferences and, in 1996, was given Minnesota's "Silver Bell Award" (purebred division) by her state association. She presently serves as president of the Minnesota Veterinary Medical Ass'n, is past chair of MVMA's Animal Welfare Committee, and also sits on Minnesota's Scrapie Certification Board.

Holly has been working with the OPP Society during the past year in a collaborative effort to evaluate diagnostic labs doing OPP testing. She looks forward to combining her study of OPP and her personal experience with the disease in order to help others with eradication/control programs. Her sage advice: *"Don't EVER stop testing! An infected though negative-testing (at the time) ram was put in with my negative Polypay ewes — and within 2 years the ewe flock converted to 75% sero-positive."*

GRETta MACINTYRE, a former nominee for the OPP Society board who is now concentrating her efforts on serving her breed association, lives with her husband Jim on their 180 acre farm in Pennsylvania. A Border Leicester breeder since 1979, Gretta says she has *"been blessed with an OPP-negative flock."* Her sheep are also at "Level B" in the five-year Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program.

Gretta recently left her position as a social worker on the oncology unit of a small hospital to be a full time farmer. Though her county has the highest number of sheep in the state, she says that *"... many are old timers and tend to be short-sighted, especially regarding health issues."* Gretta is excited about the possibility of a National Flock Health Certification Program coming into being and says, *"It's time to make a difference."*

