

Why I would love to see an on-line breed registry

For those of you who follow this newsletter you know that I come from Canada (the country that sends you the cold and snow... which by the way is not my fault). We have had sheep for 7 years now. We breed registered Tunis, registered North Country Cheviot and a commercial F1 cross between those two breeds.

In Canada the majority of the sheep breeds are registered under a common association and registry. The Canadian Sheep Breeders Association represents the interests of over 40 different sheep breeds with the registration of all purebred animals falling under the responsibility of the Canadian Sheep Breeders Association being handled by Canadian Livestock Records Corporation. In addition the rules for breed associations and registration are legally governed by the federal Animal Pedigrees Act.

Last year the federal government suggested that the Animal Pedigrees Act be repealed and there was widespread protest against this action from breed associations straight across Canada. Breeders in Canada recognize that this legislation protects not only the interests of breeders but also the interests of our clients. The Animal Pedigree Act not only governs breed associations for livestock but also those for dogs, cats and other animals. The breed association for our Canadian horses falls under the Animal Pedigree Act. Our horses are registered by CLRC. The CLRC not only registers Canadian livestock. All Icelandic sheep in North America fall under this registry.

What I like the most is that the CLRC maintains a searchable on-line pedigree and membership registry. It allows breeders to search for other breeders within the association and to know which animals each breeder currently owns. The registry also lists all registered animals. Data provided includes an extended pedigree including ancestors and progeny, dates of birth and litter size. It also lists an inbreeding coefficient and allows for virtual matings to any relevant mate in the database. This allows for inbreeding assessment prior to mating or purchase, a valuable tool for breeders of a rare breed.

Genovis, our national sheep genetic and production evaluation program uses data from the CLRC registry in the evaluation of sheep registered in the Genovis program. We have our flock in the Genovis program to help us improve the quality of our breeding stock and take advantage of the linkage with the CLRC database. <http://www.genovis.ca/>

I would love to see such a registry for Tunis sheep as it would allow breeders to find suitable stock to add to their breeding program and to search pedigrees and inbreeding coefficients prior to purchase.

I encourage breeders to review the Canadian registry and consider the advantages it would have for the Tunis breed.

<http://www.clrc.ca/cgi-bin/query.cgi? association=30>

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