

# The Third Time was a Charm

## The Great Sheep Exchange III

Priscilla Weaver, Saltmarsh Ranch  
*Self-Appointed Social Director of the Soay Sheep Breeders Cooperative*

Pictures by Kevynne Layne, Kathie Miller and Priscilla Weaver

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*Blue Mountain Rune on his way to his new home.*

What better way to start the 2006-07 breeding season than with a party? And what a party it was. Almost a dozen Soay breeders and their families and friends gathering at an ideal location with a three-item agenda: talk Soay, eat, exchange Soay.

We couldn't have asked for a nicer day for the Great Sheep Exchange III in Lake Oswego, nor for a more gracious host than Angela Percival (and her mother Ruth in absentia), nor for a more robust 5- hour conversation about our special variety of sheep. Most of us didn't know each other before, especially Laura Lane-Unsworth, who flew all the way from Maryland for the event, but there were many subgroups of friends and clients who got reacquainted or met face-to-face for the first time. We learned a lot from Laura about the Maryland Sheep and Wool Show. Several of us are threatening to reciprocate by attending "her" show next May. Stay tuned on this website for further details.

For awhile it looked as though Danielle Lefor Wallace and her new baby boy Dwayne and proud papa Dusty would not make it. We were relieved when they drove in, not least because of the fabulous big bowl of fresh peaches they brought for the potluck.



*Ruth Percival's home was designed by a protégé of Frank Lloyd Wright.*

When the southern Oregon contingent arrived (Jen Bailey, Kathie Miller, Steve Weaver and the SASDSSBC/Recorder), things were pretty quiet. Angela and her friend Kevynne, Carol Waters and her husband Tom Tyler, Jackie Dole and her friend Marshall McComb and her shepherd Corey Lawson, Carla Marcus and her husband, Elizabeth and John Price and their son Zach, and Wendy Hanson, had made introductions and were enjoying the early fall sunshine. Then Kathie set up the Shaul panels she had cleverly decided to throw in her truck; someone popped a couple of sheep into the little pen, and off we all went into Soayland. The questions and comments came so fast and thick we needed nametags after all to keep each other straight.

Can you imagine? Last year there were five breeders, seven people, at GSE II. This year there were eleven breeders, twenty people at GSE III. That's a population explosion to make any ambitious Soay breeder envious!



*Corey Lawson, Jackie Dole. Carla Lawson and her husband, Wendy Hanson and Jen Bailey look on, as Steve Weaver says goodbye to Cumin and Lemon, Angela Percival's two new wethers.*



*Left: Laura Lane-Unsworth joined us from Maryland*

*Bottom left: Angela Percival sets up the potluck feast*

*Bottom right: Priscilla Weaver and Cory Lawson consult the portable Open Flockbook on some question of ancestry.*





*Top left: Steve Weaver and Kate Montgomery*

*Top right: Jackie Dole, Kathie Miller and Danielle Lefor Wallace*

*Middle left: Elizabeth and John Price with Kate*

*Middle right: Dusty and Dwayne, Danielle's new baby*

*Bottom right: Tom Tyler, Carol Waters and Kate*



We talked about all sorts of stuff concerning coat color, what's going on with polling and scurred horns, where some of the most striking features of some of the Soay come from, who's got which characteristics in their flocks, what kind of hay is "best" for winter feeding, the ever-present problem of ice in water buckets, how wonderful the various Soay-downsized Shaul feeders and panels are, and of course dozens and dozens of pedigree and breeding plan questions and observations, including a gratifying amount of back and forth about the Open Flockbook Project. We learned a lot about blue tick hounds from John; others talked about their experiences with LGDs, llamas, and fences as predator control. Tom allowed as how he wanted Carol to have more black sheep and asked if anyone had some spare black ewes for sale. Don't we all wish?

Eventually, most of us got hungry and plowed our way through a table heavy-laden with good food, made the more fun because the menu was totally improvised. Jackie and others kindly provided wine for those in a celebratory mood. And for the inquiring minds who want to know: yes, Kate Montgomery did arrive, finally, and she did bring two huge Blue Mountain Blackberry Pies and they were beyond delicious.



*Elizabeth looks longingly at Danielle's rams.*

Kate even allowed her pies, and several sheep, to make the trip in her Good Truck, not the Blue Bomber. Not quite as elegant as the Jaguar Tom and Carol arrived in, but close. Actually, we should have had a prize for the best vehicle. Besides Kate's Good Truck and Carol and Tom's Jaguar, we all got to ooh and aah over Kathie's new sheep trailer alternative in the form of a really amazing drop-in cage-like affair that can safely hold a couple of dozen Soays in the event of, for instance, a flock- threatening fire, or to bring sheep or demonstration panels to GSE IV, or almost anything requiring secure, lightweight portable enclosures. It's hard to describe this contraption.

Speaking of contests, the SASD-SSBC completely forgot about the photo contest, and how could we have done justice to it anyway without Gevan there to win the Flying Sheep division? It's hard enough to manage the Missing Sweatshirt Division (Jen at GSE II, Zach at GSE III) without adding another layer of responsibility. If you're planning to bring a sweatshirt to GSE IV or GSE-East, chain it to your wrist, please.

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*Kathie's "contraption" is quite ingenious, and Danielle's rig look very practical. Kate's Good Truck transported several ewes, along with Rune in a crate. Unfortunately, we didn't get a picture of Tom and Carla's Jaguar! But does it transport Soay?!?!*



And then we moved to the sheep exchange. There's nothing quite like it, is there, fellow attendees? Among other things, there is an element of morbid curiosity akin to watching the Indianapolis 500 and wondering whether anyone will crash. Would Kate's beautiful RBST ewe Galice get moved successfully from her (Good, remember?) truck into our dog crate? How about Danielle's lovely black-faced light fleeced ewe, the one Carla fell in love with? Would she cooperate in the exchange or head off into the gardens of the good people of Lake Oswego? I clearly had underestimated the sheep-catching talents of this bunch. I know I overestimated Steve's ability to remember to put on his coveralls before a thoroughly annoyed Soay in transmit decided it was time to leave its "mark" on Steve's driving jeans. Good grief!



*Steve and Blue Mountain Ivy makes the trip between Kate Montgomery's and Wendy Hanson's trucks.*





*Rune's eyelids, fleece and lips confirm that he is a blonde (Bb/Bb)*

"Angela, please tell your mother how much we enjoyed drinking up her view! What a marvelous place to grow up."

"I definitely think "show and tell" must be added to GSE IV and maybe even encourage people to bring animals for show and tell even if they are not exchanging. We could bring more pens and maybe between farms bring different examples of colors and markings etc. for others to see."

"We had a wonderful time with all our new friends and compatriots. It is nice to be in a group where people don't think you're nuts because you talk about your rare "estate" sheep. We will certainly attend GSE IV, stay longer, learn more, acquire more ewes, and sit at the feet of the experts!"

It was "neat to be able to get a mini-genetics lecture in the field with real sheep for Steve to use to illustrate what he was explaining."

"It is really special to find folks who are intrigued with these little critters as I am."

"The flock book was amazing- the genetic mystery and trail is worth a lot of effort."

"Ideas [for next year?] - gosh- I thought it was perfect. I learned a lot, laughed a lot, listened a lot and in general felt very fortunate to have found you all. Thanks again for everything, and being so open to new people."

For those of you who were unable to attend, we missed you and we hope you'll participate next year. To Angela and Ruth, a loud and heart-felt thanks from all of us for sharing your beautiful home and deck and field with us. Probably nothing sums up the enthusiasm of those in attendance better than to let everyone know that there are rumblings amongst our colleagues back east of an East Coast GSE next year. Now wouldn't that be just the bees' knees?

Here's hoping we all get our breeding plans figured out before the rams get too impatient for the fun to begin, the winter is mild, the lambs come early, we all win the gender lottery, and we enjoy ourselves and our Soay in the process. Best wishes to one and all.