

The DORSET Connection

A Publication Of The Continental Dorset Club

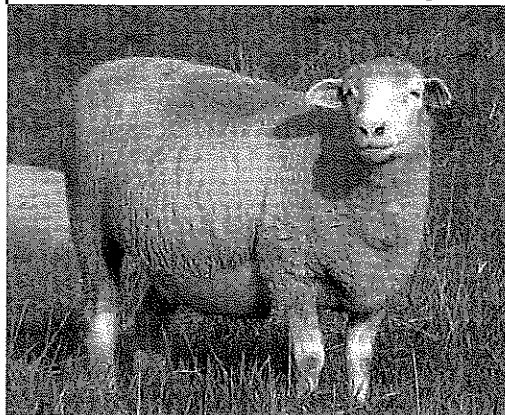
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2008 DORSET EXCELLENCE AWARD WINNERS

POLLED DORSETS

K Bar K Farm owned by Ken, Kathy & Nathan Soder of Petersburg, Pennsylvania was selected as the 2008 Polled Dorset Excellence Award Winner. The Soders have been raising purebred Dorsets for 12 years and currently run a 125 head brood ewe flock. The Soder flock would be categorized as a production oriented polled Dorset flock. Their major emphasis has been to develop an animal that excels in a forage based nutritional system



to produce hot-house and freezer lambs with minimal labor and feed costs. The flock goes through a very aggressive selection process in which production traits are evaluated through a national genetic database, to date they have over 1,000 individuals recorded.

Kathy writes, "Our flock goal is to produce high-quality Dorset rams and ewes using state-of-art objective evaluation combined with traditional selection tools. Our emphases include out of season breeding; ewes with strong mothering and milking ability that have good udders; prolificacy; growth; and carcass traits. We raise our Dorsets in a low-input, forage based system. We use a combination of selection tools, including objective genetic selection through expected breeding values (EBVs) including ultra sounding loin eye depth."

The Soders have imported genetics from other countries that emphasize the production traits they are looking for. Through their aggressive selection program they have been able to increase their weaning weights by 160%, post weaning weight by 340%, loin eye depth by 230% and maternal weaning weight by 20%. The majority of their brood ewe flock lambs in the fall and January, and raise multiple birth lambs. They have been able to breed a Dorset female that not only survives on a forage only based diet but have thrived on the program producing fast-growing lambs and breeding back in a timely **continued on page 5**

HORNED DORSETS

The 2008 Horned Dorset Excellence Award Winner is Gregg & Marlene Bell of Ewephoric! Dorsets from Shafter, California. The Bells have been raising Dorsets for over 20 years. They started out raising Polled Dorsets and then converted over to Dorset Horneds just a few years ago. They currently run approximately 50 Horned Dorsets and are building up their flock as they maintain about 60% of their lamb crop to go back into their breeding program. The rest of their lambs are sold off the farm and at consignment sales for replacement breeding stock, and ethnic lamb sales. The Bells expose all of their flock for fall and January lambing, and about 85% of the ewes actually lamb during that period.

Marlene states that their breeding program goals are, "Our flock strives to make Dorset Horns better not necessarily bigger. We are geared to supporting the natural traits of the breed like fall lambing, mothering, milking, production and natural muscling. By preserving these traits we hope to move more of this to the Dorset Horns of the show ring today. We not only like sheep, we feel a tremendous calling to raising the breed right. Keeping them as pure as possible is our goal with the Dorset Horns so that those coming after us will have fantastic experiences as we have had with the Dorset breed."

With the flock being located in California, the sheep forage on pasture most of the time and are supplemented with alfalfa hay, protein blocks and concentrates are added just prior to lambing and through lactation. The average age of their breeding females is relatively young at 3 years of age, as they converted over to Horneds recently, and their lambing percentage is running about 170% with these young ewes. Their Horned Dorset ewes run 31" tall and 32" long and **continued on page 7**



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manner. Winter born lambs have access to a creep feeder that has high quality alfalfa hay and a limited amount of concentrate, but that is about the only concentrate that is fed on the Soder farm. Their Dorsets run 28-30 inches tall and 32-34 inches long making them ideal to thrive in their management program and to meet their production goals. 30% of the lambs are sold as hot-house lambs. The Soders have also developed a strong registered breeding stock sale base as another 30% of the lambs go

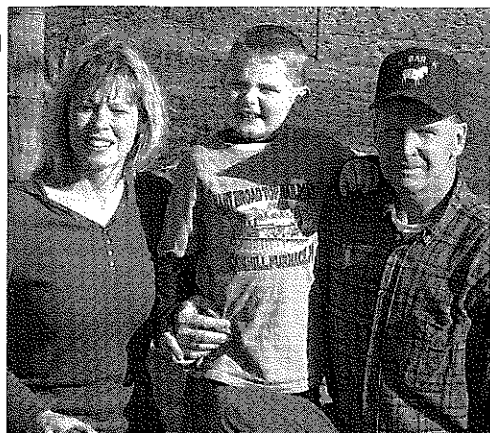


into this market.

K Bar K Farm is a very strong Dorset promoter. They have conducted farm visits and field days to promote their sheep and forage based production system. They

have also made presentations at state and regional sheep conferences regarding Dorset sheep, their management system, performance records and biosecurity. K Bar K Farm has been a Pennsylvania Ram Test consignor for 10 years and even has had a booth at the event promoting their Dorsets. K Bar K rams have repeatedly been top performing Dorsets finishing in the top five, as well as having the largest adjusted loin eyes four out of the last five years. The farm advertises in various sheep related publications, including the Dorset Connection, as well as on the inter-

net through sheep related listservs and message boards. Kathy was the person who established the listserv for production Dorset breeders on the web. It currently has over 300 members with the purpose of discussing and promoting Dorset sheep. Kathy is also a current member of the CDC Production Dorset Committee. K Bar K has a website and you can visit them at www.kbarkfarm.com to learn more about their Dorset sheep.



Kathy & Ken Soder summarize, "Our primary goal has been to produce a Dorset that works for the buyer, not the other way around. It has taken time and experimentation, but with our objective genetic selection program, we feel we are now producing an animal that can excel in forage-based systems to produce hothouse and freezer lambs with minimal labor inputs and reduced feed inputs. With proper selection, the Dorset sheep breed has a distinct advantage over other meat-producing livestock species to produce a high-quality meat product with fewer inputs, thereby improving profitability in an era of escalating input prices."

The CDC will be presenting Ken, Kathy and Nathan with their award at the upcoming Pennsylvania Ram Test Sale in early August. Congratulations to the Soder Family for this achievement!



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Performance-tested Rams and Ewes For Sale

K Bar K Farm

Ken, Kathy and Nathan Soder
www.kbarkfarm.com

Workin' for a Living

That's what we expect from our flock. We select our sheep for true Dorset traits, then step back and let them do their job.

- Raised on a pasture-based system
- Objectively selected for outstanding maternal traits balanced with growth and carcass characteristics using Lambplan EBVs (Expected Breeding Values)
- Imported genetics with outstanding production
- K Bar K Dorsets are ready to go to work for you

Phone: 814-669-1374
 5867 Eberle Road • Petersburg, PA 16669
kbarkfarm@earthlink.net