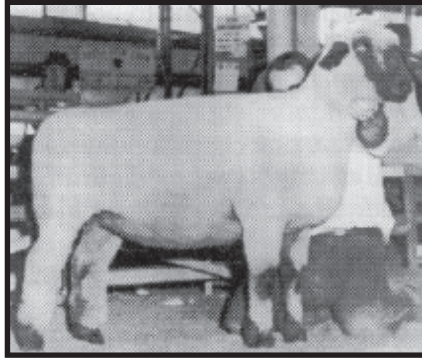


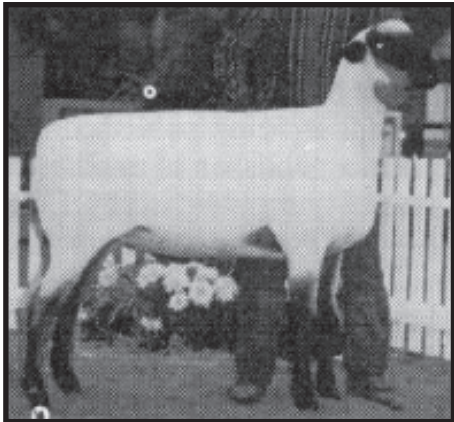


1950's



1970's

Hampshires through the Years



1990's



Today's

AMERICAN HAMPSHIRE SHEEP ASSOCIATION
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*"Meating the Needs
of the
Sheep Industry"*
1889-2011



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HAMP ORIGIN AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT

As in the case with the Down sheep breeds, the Hampshire was developed in England, gaining its name from the county in which it originated, Hampshire. At the time, the Wiltshire and Berkshire Knot were the prominent sheep in the country. Both types were used for their wool and improving the light soil by fertilization. The Wiltshire was described as a white-faced, large, imposing-looking animal with long legs, high withers, sharp spine, big head, roman nose, and horns turned back behind the ears and cheeks. Except for their dark faces and legs, the Berkshire Knots resembled the Wiltshire very closely, being of a similar size and weight; and the two breeds flocked together very well.

In the early 19th century, the Southdown breed was rapidly replacing both the Wiltshire and Berkshire Knot. They probably would have done so completely, had it not been for the extra size in both these breeds. Several farmers, preferring this large-scale, hardy, early-maturing sheep, began crossing Wiltshires and Berkshire Knots with Southdowns. By 1819, the last flock of the old Wiltshire breed disappeared, leaving in its place a sort of modified Southdown. It was not until 1835 that the Hampshire actually took its general form as we know it. But even then, it still had to be perfected to the degree of uniformity where breed characteristics would be passed on regularly to the offspring.

William Humphrey of Newbury, Hampshire, is credited with the greatest success in setting the Hampshire type; and he has often been referred to as the Father of the Modern Hampshire. Humphrey was a systematic breeder, each year he selected a few of his best to breed to a new ram; and, if the resulting lambs were the type he wanted, he would use the ram on all his ewes the following year. This was a slow process; but it took a certain amount of gamble out of his breeding program, for he always had one ram working that he trusted. Humphrey called these sheep West County Downs and later decided that, if he crossed a first-rate Southdown ram on his ewes, he would achieve size plus quality in his sheep. He continued this breeding program, producing the modern-type Hampshire, until his death in 1868 when his flock was dispersed to breeders around the country. Other breeders continued these crosses and the offspring became a recognized breed known as the Hampshire Down. The first flock book of the Hampshire Down Breeders Association, later to become the American Hampshire Sheep Association, was printed in 1890.

HAMPS COME TO THE UNITED STATES

The early spread of the Hampshire's popularity in the US was fantastic. It was reported that, as early as 1840, there were Hampshire flocks in Virginia, Maryland, New York, and Pennsylvania. Around 1910, many other Hampshire flocks, some of considerable size, were established in the New England and North Atlantic areas. As the breed spread in the eastern states, it gradually found its way westward across the farming country and attracted a great deal of interest at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. However, it was not until 1910 or 1912 that the Hampshire really started to gain a strong position in the American sheep industry. About this time, several ranchers in the western range area become interested in the breed because of the possibility of crossing the rams on their fine-wool ewes. They wanted rams that stamped very definite mutton characteristics on their lambs, so that they could be easily recognized by the lamb buyers as carrying at least 50% mutton breeding. The Hampshire, with its size, early maturity, open face, and mutton quality, showed promise for such purposes.

Without question, the rapid acceptance of the American Hampshire in the early 1900s, was due to the importations of large numbers of some of England's best seed stock and, in particular, rams from that country's elite flocks.

1890-1900: THE BEGINNING

And so it began! On November 14, 1889, the Hampshire Down Sheep Breeders Association of American was organized. From its beginning (37 members from 11 states and one from Canada recorded 555 ewes and 184 rams, totaling 739 animals), the organization grew to represent a breed that reached unprecedented popularity and became a dominating industry force for many years. In 1942, the association recorded a then mind-boggling total of 34,106 animals. The 1897-98 flock book lists 77 members from 15 states and one Canadian province.

1901-1929: BY LEAPS AND BOUNDS

Hampshires are now becoming the western lamb producer's breed of choice. Time

after time, we read of using Hampshire rams on Merino ewes to raise lambs preferred by lamb feeders and the slaughter house. The association president was quoted as saying, "the splendid showing of the Hampshires at the International Livestock Exposition at Chicago in 1902, where they captured the first prize over all the other mutton breeds in the car-lot competition, it is the latest and, perhaps, the grandest triumph to their credit; but many more splendid victories are in store in the years to come, when it is not too much to hope that the name 'Hampshire' will be understood by all to be but another way of saying, 'The grandest mutton sheep on earth'."

In 1906, the Association's name changed to the American Hampshire Sheep Association. In the year 1910, 2,245 Hampshires over one year old were imported. The 1909-10 flock book contains 11,391 entries, as registrations grow "by leaps and bounds".

In 1919, the association announced an aggressive advertising campaign, appropriating \$2,000 for advertising in 11 different, nationally-read newspapers and magazines. The hope was to reach more than 3 million homes at least monthly and, in some cases, weekly. New members totaled 174 that year.

Through the 1920s, importations continued, but American breeders were reaping the fruits of their efforts. Hampshire in the range country in the West and Hampshire in the show rings; seemed as though everywhere you turned, there were Hampshires.

1930-1939: THE DEPRESSION ERA

The United States was engulfed in a great depression that caused undue hardship on the entire country, bringing it to its knees. The association also felt this impact as registrations fell by nearly 4,000 in 1931. 1932 showed another large decrease in registrations, down nearly 6,300. The turn around year was finally 1933, as over 2,000 more Hampshires were registered than the previous year; and 1934 again shows an increase. The downward spiral was over.

Recovery was slow but sure, in 1935. Registrations were again up from the year before, but new memberships increased by 174, with 24 of them from one state, Missouri. 1939 shows registrations at an all-time high of 25,776.

1940-1959: UNPRECEDENTED

Hampshires surged to the front with popularity previously unseen in the purebred sheep industry. 314,319 Hampshires were registered from 1940-1949, and 4,105 new members were added to the membership. Missouri led the charge, with 101 new members on its own.

Equally astounding is the number of rams recorded on the Associations books during this rapid growth and popularity period. Over 12,000 rams were registered in 6 of the years during the decade, as Hampshires dominated the range-ram market as never before. The 1950s picked up where the 40s left off. Six of the top 10 years for registrations occur in this decade with a total of 324,233 (including 115,497 rams) for the 10-year period. New members totaling 3,254 paid dues to the treasury. Hampshires were in top demand and proved their usefulness from Virginia to California, and it can truly be said the Hampshire is the universal breed.

For the first time in the Association's history, a national show was held. The Ohio State Fair was the selected site. In 1958, Illinois replaces Missouri as the top state in registrations. The 1950s ends with the Board and the secretary beginning a push toward carcass information, production records, and indexing, as the Hampshire Sheep Improvement Program is about to be set in motion.

1960-1979: RAM CERTIFICATION AND PRODUCTION RECORDS

Trying new and innovative ways to improve the Hampshire in other than show-ring situations, the Association embarked in a new direction. First, the AHSA announced a Ram Certification plan designed to identify and promote rams capable of siring fast gaining lambs with high-yielding, superior carcasses. Unfortunately, the program never caught on like many hoped; and it eventually died.

Total registrations drop 2,900 in 1960 and fell below 30,000 for the first time since 1940. Unfortunately, this would become a continuing trend. In 1973, registrations totaled 18,700. This marks the first time since the depression year of 1935 that registrations fell below 2,000. Although by 1979 registrations climb back to 20,962.

Even with registrations down in 1970, Hampshire capture the Grand Champion Wether at Chicago, and the Grand Champion Truckoad. In 1972 a Hampshire won Grand Champion Wether again and in 1973 won Grand Champion Pen of Three and Grand Champion Carcass at the prestigious show.

A national show was planned for 1972 in Chicago where new features would include a Ladies Lead Class, crowning a national Hampshire queen, performance classes for junior and senior ram lambs, and additional prize money. In 1937, there was a new top prize for a Hampshire ewe at \$1,050 at the sale held in conjunction with the Chicago show.

The International Livestock Show in Chicago is now in its waning years; and in 1976, the show is canceled. The North American International Livestock Exposition (NAILE) takes its place as the "big-name" show in this country. The National Hampshire Junior Show is held this year, and is the first National Junior Show ever held for any sheep breed. Annual meeting attendance was 243. This year, registrations hit 17,030.

Finally in 1977 registrations increased by 1,000; and transfers were up. Hampshire posted the high average over all breeds at the California Ram Sale at \$374. The final year of this decade ends on a positive note. For the first time since 1972, registrations are back over 20,000; 20,962 Hampshires are recorded by the Association. Also transfers increase over 2,000. The National Show and Sale is held at the Cow Palace in San Francisco.

1980-1989: THE CENTENNIAL

Although the "long and tall" phenomenon began in the 1970s, it carried over into the 1980s. For several years, many "meatless wonders" were produced in the Hampshire and other breeds. Substance of bone, body capacity, soundness of feet, legs, and mouth, and muscling were abandoned in an effort to get bigger animals. In some ways, this backfired and may have let to the proliferation of the recessive "spider" gene.

Total registrations are down again for the decade by about 11,000, as sheep numbers in the US tumble to an all-time, modern-day low. But some significant things occur this decade. Artificial insemination becomes a reality, as some of the problems of earlier efforts are overcome.

A Hampshire was the Grand Champion Lamb at Houston in 1982; and it sells for a world's-record price of \$71,500! Also a new chapter was written in the 1980s, as the Association embarked on computerizing records. Early efforts proved very frustrating to the members and the office staff. But in time, the program was fine tuned so that, instead of swearing at it, we can now swear by it.

Who can forget the 1989 Centennial year and the events leading up to it? The Centennial's culmination came at Louisville where the National Centennial Show was held with the Association's 100th annual meeting. Festivities were enjoyed by all exhibitors and member that were in attendance and the 100th meeting was marked with great enthusiasm!

1990-TODAY: NOT STANDING STILL, THE NEXT YEARS BEGIN...

The 1990s brought new challenges to the Association. In March 1990, The New Hampshire World was published making the Hampshires the first sheep breed association to have a so-called 'Breed Magazine.' Later this magazine became what we know today as the Hampshire Heartbeat. The Association also decided to participate in the All-American Junior Show, a youth show only that is sponsored by participating breed associations. The Hampshires continue to sponsor this event and it is now one of the largest youth shows in the country, and Hampshires always have a large showing.

The so-called "wether sire" shows and sales emerged around the country in the 1990s. Many wether or market lamb shows during the summer months in the northern states and in the Fall and Winter shows in the southern states made this Hampshire type a very popular commodity. As such, Hampshire rams and ewes of this mold commanded some of the very highest prices at both private and consignment sales from coast to coast. They still maintain some of the highest sale averages today!

In 1993, the Midwest Sale in Sedalia, Missouri was designated as the site of the National Sale and still is today. The quality of the animals sold at this prestigious sale maintains that it is indeed the National.

Registrations continued to fall as registrations were 16,460 in 1990. Down by 1,000 from the 1989 figure, and transfers fell below 10,000 for the first time since the 1920s. However 1995 and 1996 provided Hampshires with some bragging rights, they were named as Supreme Champions at the NAILE.

Hampshires have the luxury of being one of the most versatile breeds today. This popularity has come about because of the commitment and dedication of Hampshire breeders who continue to raise good and useful sheep for a variety of markets. We look forward to the future of the breed!