

**WRITING EFFECTIVE SHEEP ADS**  
**Opinions from the KHSI Operations Office**  
by Jim Morgan, KHSI Operations - Fayetteville AR

*Author's Note - Most of us raise sheep for income, land management, enjoyment of sheep, and/or the opportunity to eat and sell good lamb. These thoughts are offered for educational purposes, express the author's personal opinions, and are not meant to offend anyone.*

Questions to ask before writing an ad: a) What are the strengths of my Katahdins? b) Who is my market? Questions to ask after writing ads include c) What does my written ad tell the reader about my sheep genetics and management? d) Does the ad compel the reader to reach for the phone?

Let's start with three fictional sale ads. Today is June 1<sup>st</sup>.

- 1) Twin registered red spotted Katahdin ram lambs born on May 27<sup>th</sup>. John Doe, 479-444-8441 or [xxxx@earthlink.net](mailto:xxxx@earthlink.net), NW AR.
- 2) February 07 born ram & ewe lambs. 30 ewe flock. Selecting for ewes that wean twin lambs that reach 80-90 lbs on forage in 120 days. Only the top 10% of the rams and 50% of the ewe lambs are registered. 60 day & 120 day adjusted weights & EPDs available. SFCP, NSIP, OPP tested. John Doe, 479-444-8441 or [xxxx@earthlink.net](mailto:xxxx@earthlink.net), NW AR.
- 3) Spring 2007 lamb crop. Our breeding stock is polled and out of AA coated sires and dams. Sires and dams of scurred or horned lambs are culled and sold to the meat market. Lisa Doe, [www.katahdins.com](http://www.katahdins.com) 479-444-8441.

Who do these ads target? What is being sold?

- Ad #1 tells the reader that the breeder sells colored sheep. With no other information, a reader may think that little else matters to the breeder besides color. The mention of twins provides some production information. It also lists registered rams before they are 1 week of age. How many people can tell if a ram is any good at 1 week of age, let alone 5 weeks of age? Ad #1 may imply that the seller is not selective about registering quality.
- Ad #2 provides information about performance, health and genetics of the lambs.
- Ad #3 is selling polled animals with good hair coats. Are hair and horn character the only important traits for this breeder?

**Color & Katahdins** - This is a tricky subject and can be a double-edged sword. Some breeders only want white, some want color, some breeders stereotype raisers of colored sheep as not being serious about quality. If your goal is to raise and market productive Katahdins regardless of color, then don't mention color in your ad. Be especially leery of writing an ad in which color is the only attribute: the seller may be stereotyped as raising colored sheep and not selecting for quality or production. If you wish to use color in your ads, consider adding information about performance.

**Sheep Ads: Do & Don't List From KHSI Operations**

- Date of birth. Do mention month of birth if lambs are younger than 9 months of age. Don't mention exact birth date. A discriminating buyer doesn't care if the sheep were born on the 15<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> of June. June is close enough. If the sheep are 9 months of age or older, use Fall or Spring Born. (For me, listing the exact date of birth is unnecessary information and might indicate inexperience).
- Don't mention that you have a specific lamb for sale within a month of birth. I find it hard to identify keeper sheep before 120 days of age. A person selling a specific lamb when it is less than 45 or even 60 days of age is less likely to be identifying quality. However, a flock that lambs in May can effectively advertise sheep for sale on June 1<sup>st</sup> if they print that they will have lambs for sale in 75-90 days. By then, quality can be determined.
- Don't mention specific color unless one of the main goals of your breeding program is to sell colored sheep. Be careful how color is mentioned.
- Don't place an ad implying that most of your ram lambs are selling as breeding stock. A rigorous breeder will sell 10-25% of their ram lambs as breeding stock. Just because a lamb is out of two registered parents is not a valid reason to sell it as registered. Many ads imply that a breeder is selling most of their ram lambs as registered.
- Don't mention that you are willing to trade rams in the same ad in which you are advertising your current ram. A person with a good breeding program and well-planned breeding program has a specific ram in mind. Willingness to trade rams can imply that the seller is willing to compromise on their ram choice.
- Do indicate that performance information is available (e.g. weight data, lambing percentage, EPDs (expected progeny differences)). A good registered breeder will be taking weights and adjusting to 60 and 120 days of age. If you are selling commercial stock and large numbers, this may be less important.
- Do list health programs. (e.g. Western Canadian Flock Health Program, SFCP. annual testing for OPP (Ovine Progressive Pneumonia))

Other information useful for merchandizing sheep could include that you a) cull all animals with scurs or horns, b) genotype at codon 171, c) aseasonal breeding.

Track your market; write ads that sell your sheep, offer useful information about your operation and Good Luck!