LOUISVILLE, KY – November 18, 2014 – Sixty-seven Corriedale sheep showed in the National Corriedale Show, while 281 Suffolk sheep showed in the neighboring ring in the North American International Suffolk show. Those two shows took place at the North American International Livestock Exposition (NAILE) during the 41st expo appearance.

Corriedale sheep originated in New Zealand and Australia in the late 1800’s when shepherds crossbred Lincoln or Leicester rams with Merino females. The breed is described as a large-framed sheep that produces bulky, high yielding wool (Australian Corriedale Association). While Corriades are known for their wool and meat, Suffolks are known only for their high quality meat. Suffolk sheep originated in the 1800s in England. They’re a black-faced sheep with white wool. Over the years, the Suffolk breed has become more popular than the Corriedale breed (United Suffolk Sheep Association).

There is a substantial difference in entry numbers between the two breeds, and that has been true for several years. Northern Oklahoma College students, Ashton Folsom, 18, Claire Christerson, 19, and Elena Hill, 20, were a few exhibitors showing the Suffolk breed at the NAILE. Their college shows Hampshire and Suffolk sheep because they produce high quality meat. Ashton mentioned meat breeds are more common in Oklahoma compared to wool breeds because the wool market has decreased in past years.

All students claim that breed choice has to do with the likelihood of winning Grand Champion over all breeds. “Suffolks are so popular because black-faced sheep typically win overall,” said Ashton. These students admitted that Suffolk sheep are harder to handle than the Corriedale breed, but they still prefer to show Suffolk. They added that showing aggressive sheep is tolerable because they feel winning makes it worthwhile. Ashton said, “Corriedales are good for families with younger kids because they are calmer sheep.”

Sisters, Ellen, 15, and Emma Peters, 12, of Versailles, Ohio raise and show Corriedale sheep. Their grandfather and father showed Corriedales when they were younger so the tradition is continuing. Their mother, Cathy, and father, Scott Peters, help them show. The Peters prefer Corriedales because they produce wool and meat. Spinners who make scarves, sweaters, and other items prefer the wool of a Corriedale. That sheep breed is also a great milk producer. Another reason the Peters family enjoy showing Corriedales is because they believe they are the prettiest sheep when well-groomed.

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Scott stated, “Corriedales are very family oriented. We love other families who show Corriedales, and everyone is always willing to help each other. When we need an extra showman, families that are ringside never hesitate to jump in and help us.”

Overall, breed choice usually comes down to personal preference. Although the Suffolk breed is currently more popular, breed popularity changes over time due to meat and wool markets and the age of exhibitors.

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