

## World's Smallest Sheep

When James W. A. Graham first read about Ouessant sheep in the Guinness Book of World Records, which calls them the world's smallest sheep, he decided he had to get some.

That decision led to years of work to bring them to his farm on the Isle of Man, Great Britain.

Ouessant ewes (pronounced "wessont"), stand around 17 in. at the shoulder with rams at 19 in. Mature weight is around 25 lbs. Most have black wool although some white-wooled ones do occur. "They're a total dream to deal with and have exceptionally hard feet, free of foot problems," Graham says.

"Ouessant males are very quiet and easy to manage. Despite their size, there's nothing puny about the Ouessant. The rams are very striking and remind me of a miniature version of Bighorn sheep."

At birth, lambs weigh around 2 lbs. "When they're born they look more like cuddly black Labrador puppies than lambs. You could easily put one in your pocket," says Graham, adding that they're also vigorous and thrive on the attentiveness of their dams. "The ewes are wonderful mothers. They only have single lambs and dote on their offspring.

"Most Ouessant sheep are kept as pets in threes and fours rather than in breeding flocks. A few years ago the breed was on the verge of extinction with less than 300 sheep remaining but now numbers are beginning to improve."

Ouessants originally came from the uninhabited island of Ouessant off the Brittany coast. Their origin remains a mystery, though.

It was once suggested that the breed was derived from stock of Viking descent and had links to Hebridean sheep from Scotland and the Skudde, which is a Nordic breed originating from the Baltic States.

After much research, Graham found a small band of enthusiasts in Holland, as well as others in France and Belgium. There are about 1,500 Ouessant sheep in Belgium, France and Holland.

Graham bought a ram and two ewes from a breeder in France. Before he could bring them home, though, he had to breed a generation that was scrapie-free and would meet other UK veterinary health regulations. This meant leaving them with a friend in Holland.

Within two years, Graham flew his first Ouessant from Holland to the UK. He has a flock of around 30 on his farm and hopes to import more.

Graham doesn't foresee many spare sheep on the market for some time though he admits he may have his arm twisted to part with a few.

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## Tractor-Mounted Header Speeds Straw Baling

Mounting a draper header on his baling tractor slashes per bale costs and creates the ideal windrow for Nathan Hege. The Utah farmer buys standing straw stubble and sells most of the bales.

"The farmer I buy my straw from doesn't like to cut his wheat low, so I have to cut it," says Hege. "I tried running swathers ahead of the baler, but they made a lot of dust, and it can be hard to push the straw through the crimping rollers."

Hege's solution was to mount a draper header on the tractor which eliminates the labor and fuel expense of a pass ahead of the baler. Careful alignment of the draper drop point with the tractor center creates an ideal windrow for his Case-IH in-line baler.

"I have the farmer drop the chaff in a windrow on the 12-in. stubble," explains Hege. "Then I cut the stubble, capture the straw and the chaff and drop it in the windrow."

Hege bought a used header and had a local welding shop fabricate brackets for his Case-IH 5088. A length of 4 by 6-in. rectangular steel tubing provides the main support. Steel plate welded to the tubing bolts to the front and sides of the tractor frame. Two short lengths of pipe welded to either end of the

tube frame act as bearings for a pivot pipe. Header support arms made from 2 by 4-in. rectangular steel tubing are welded to the ends of the pivot pipe. The arms connect to the original lift brackets on the draper header. Removal of a single pin on each arm is all that is needed to attach and detach the header.

A second set of brackets mounted on each side of the tractor frame and behind the support brackets serve as mounting points for two hydraulic cylinders. The cylinder arms engage anchors on the pivot pipe, rotating it to lift and lower the header.

A hydraulic motor mounted on the header provides power for the draper. Hege says his Case-IH 5088 is ideal for the setup for several reasons.

"It has forward air flow on the cooling system so dust and chaff build up are reduced, plus it has three remotes," he explains. "One pressurizes the baler and, using a speed control, runs the header motor. A second raises and lowers the baler header, and the third raises and lowers the draper header."

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By mounting a draper header on his baler tractor, Nathan Hege was able to eliminate the labor and fuel expense of making a separate pass ahead of the baler.



Hege bought a used header and had a local welding shop fabricate brackets for his Case IH 5088 tractor.

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