Brown's sheep perform figure eights and "ewe" turns for spectators at fairs and parades.

16-Sheep Hitch Steals The Show

A daughter's plea to save her 4-H lambs from the butcher led to the creation of the world's first 16-sheep hitch.

Darlene Brown, San Luis Obispo, Calif., had just brought her lambs Pete and Teddy home from the county fair. The lambs were on their way to market until Darlene convinced her father Joe to try training the sheep to pull a wagon.

Joe, who raises registered Suffolk sheep, has trained horses since he was four years old, but sheep training was a first for him. The sheep learned quickly and, with the addition of recruits from the rest of the Brown's flock, Joe trained eight sheep to pull a small wagon. That first team has since grown to a 16-sheep hitch and Joe has his sights set on a 20-sheep hitch.

The Browns take the sheep to area parades and fairs, performing figure eights and "ewe" turns for spectators. Brown hopes to find a sponsor to take the team to even more parades and fairs. His ultimate goal is to take the hitch to the Rose Bowl Parade in Pasadena, Calif.

"Training sheep is a lot like training horses except that sheep are smarter," says Joe. He uses both ewes and wethers in the hitch, training the animals to work on either the left or right hand side. Four sheep are trained as leaders. As a precaution against heat stress, Joe shears the sheep once every six weeks.

The sheep harness is made of rope and breast collars taken from horse saddles. The small wagon the team pulls can be outfitted as either a covered or open wagon.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Joe W. Brown, 4313 S. Higuera St., San Luis Obispo, Calif. (ph 805 543-6481).

FULL-SIZE PATTERNS AVAILABLE FOR DO-IT-YOURSELFERS

Decor Animals Dress Up Farm Buildings

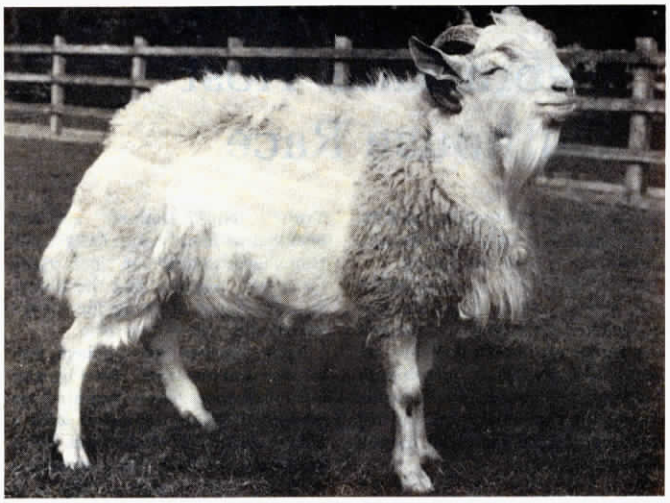
When Minnesota farmer Larry Mages, of Lafayette, finished converting an old dairy barn into a hog house, he shopped around for life-size hog silhouettes to dress up the remodeled building, and to let passersby know that he's a pork producer.

Unable to buy the kind of ready-made animals he wanted, he drew up patterns and made them himself out of 4 by 8 sheets of plywood. Before long, neighbors were asking him to design and paint decor animals for them. One thing led to another and Larry is now doing a booming sideline business in decor animals for farm buildings and mailboxes.

You can buy completely finished silhouettes — cut from 4 by 8 sheets of 1½-in. exterior grade plywood and hand painted — for prices ranging from $49.95 for a full size (about 46 by 76 in.) cow, bull, hog or horse; $34.95 for a large dog of your choice (painted in 2 or 3 colors) and $4.95 for small (10 by 11-in.) chicks or piglets to be used, as murals, with larger hens, sows, and so forth. Animals can be ordered to face right or left, and hand-painted in your choice of colors.

Full-size patterns for do-it-yourself silhouettes are available for $7 each. You simply lay the pattern on a 4 by 8 sheet of plywood, using it to cut out and paint the animal or whatever other silhouette you want to dress up a barn, machine shed, garage wall, or your mailbox. Do-it-yourself patterns are also available for large letters made from 4 by 8 sheets of plywood.

For a free catalog of patterns and prices, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Decor Animals, c/o Larry Mages, Rt. 1, Box 75, Lafayette, Minn. 56054 (ph 507 228-8557).



Created by splitting embryos, "Geeps" prominently display characteristics of both parents.

THEY CALL IT A "GEEP"

British Scientists Create A Sheep/Goat Hybrid

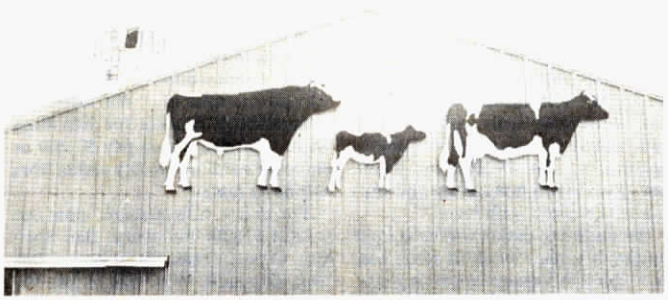
Scientists at the Babraham Institute of Animal Physiology have created a new creature that's a mosaic of characteristics from both sheep and goats.

Dr. Steen Willadsen headed up the project at the institute which is famous worldwide for having done the first artificial insemination and the first egg transfers. Willadsen says they're now pioneering genetic manipulation of embryos.

"We're doing things with embryos that no one else has ever done," says Willadsen, noting that the sheep-goat hybrid — some call it a "Geep" — is not really a crossbreed. When a goat and a sheep crossbreed, an embryo develops but it dies in the womb because the two animals cannot be paired genetically. However, Willadsen's project combined portions of fertilized sheep and goat embryos, using processes he has developed, to form a "chimera", or 2-in-1 embryo, which is then implanted into a female sheep or a goat to develop.

There are about 10 "geeps" at the institute so far. Some of them look sheep-like, some goat-like, and some carry an even number of characteristics from both. Willadsen says the animals usually have patches of both goat hair and sheep's wool and they often have problems with their feet because the two animals have different type hooves. Other parts of their bodies may also have problems, depending on how well the embryos merged. If the resulting animal is fertile, it is fertile as either a sheep or a goat. One male, for example, looks like a goat but carries the sperm of a sheep and will be able to breed with a sheep but not with a goat. "Geep" characteristics cannot be transferred to the next generation.

Willadsen says that as a result of the research, scientists are able to learn more about embryos and how genetic characteristics are passed on. One benefit may be that a sheep-goat crossbreed, which would not survive normally in either a sheep or goat, may survive in a geep if the embryo were transplanted, which would allow scientists to transfer some of the characteristics of goats — brains, agility, etc. — to sheep. Willadsen says techniques learned have already allowed them to split embryos into identical clones. He has a set of five genetically identical lambs, for example, that are unique in the world.



Life-sized animal silhouettes made from plywood dress up farm buildings.