



Harlequin sheep are cute with fluffy spotted wool, and are small and gentle to handle. Some of them even have blue eyes.



"It's an amazing breed that has everything anyone wants in a sheep," says Hope Bennett, who sells breeding stock.

Harlequins: The Perfect (And The Cutest) Sheep Breed

When Hope Bennett first saw Harlequin sheep she figured she had found the perfect breed. They had no horns, were small and gentle to handle, yet hardy enough to take care of themselves. Best of all they were cute with fluffy spotted wool. But, the clincher for Bennett was their blue eyes.

"I love animals with blue eyes," says Bennett who has about 400 animals on her combination zoo/petting farm in northeast Georgia. "A lot of people like blue-eyed animals. They are usually the first animals to sell."

The Harlequin breed didn't develop overnight. The breed is the result of three decades of hard work by Maryland breeder Kathleen Sterling, who recently passed away. Bennett met Sterling six years ago, and

has since taken up the cause of preserving Harlequin sheep as an American breed. With the help of her assistant Shauna Smith, she is seeking people who purchased sheep from Sterling in order to create an official registry for the breed.

"The way Kathleen brought so many breeds in, it's amazing how the breed is now so consistent," Smith notes.

The breeds Sterling used include: Karakul, Tunis, Corriedale, Lincoln, Border Leicester, Romney, Montadale, Finn-Rambouillet, Dorset and Southdown rams.

"It's an amazing breed that has everything anyone wants in a sheep. No horns, hearty, not too heavy or light," Bennett says.

Another attribute is that they can be bred off-season to spread lambing out throughout

the year. That trait works better in cooler climates from Maryland north, but is possible even in the south.

To be part of the registry, the animals must be less than 24 in. tall, though most of Bennett's sheep are 20 in. tall or less. Animals weigh anywhere from 60 to 120 lbs. The wool is spotted and a fine to medium texture that is appreciated by wool spinners. The sheep cannot have horns. Eyes are large, bright, yellow to brown, or blue.

Baby Doll sheep are the only allowed breeders with Harlequins to qualify to be in the registry.

Bennett also sells breeding stock — often to hobby farms and zoos that also feature rare livestock. At \$1,000 each, they are not cheap, due to the limited number of animals

available.

Harlequins sell themselves, Bennett says. Since buying her first pair from Sterling, she is even more convinced they are the perfect sheep breed.

"People like pretty sheep," she says. "Harlequins are beautiful, practical, small and friendly."

She invites anyone interested in the breed to contact her, and she encourages Harlequin owners to contact her to become part of the official registry.

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1/2-Scale Tractors Built From Garden Tractors

Kurt Smith, Milan, Mich., recently sent FARM SHOW photos of a pair of garden tractors that he converted into 1/2-scale tractors. He turned a 1968 Cub Cadet into a 1/2-scale IH 826 model, and a 1973 Deere 110 into a 1/2-scale Deere 2030.

"I've been reading your magazine off and on since I was about 10 years old — that's been 23 years now. I grew up on a 1,600-acre farm that had both these tractors. In fact, over the years we were split right down the middle regarding tractor loyalty. When I was young, we had seven green tractors and seven red ones. I put about 800 hrs. on an IH 826 as a teenager.

"I designed both mini tractors on my computer. I came up with the exact measurements of various components that mount on the frames. For both projects, I stripped the tractors down to the frame first.

"Both tractors have rear 'hub caps' that replicate the original cast rims found on each real tractor. Such detail adds a lot to the realism of the tractors."

Smith is willing to make tractors for people, or parts for customizing your own tractor. He writes a blog about his projects at www.BrushfireDesign.blogspot.com.

International Harvester 826

Smith says the IH 826 project started by accident when he bid on eBay for a Cub Cadet 125 — without talking to his wife about it first. "I bid \$180 and didn't expect to get the tractor, but I did. Then I had to tell my wife that we now owned an old garden tractor and that we had to drive 6 hrs. round trip to get it."

The tractor rides on 31-in. rear tires mounted on 16-in. wheel rims off a 3/4-ton pickup. The front wheels are original, but have newer style tires mounted on them. The Kohler 12 hp engine is original. Smith lengthened the tractor's frame by 3 1/2 in.

He hand-built a new hood, fenders and grill and made a new front axle. He also made extensions for the rear wheel hubs to widen the tractor's footprint by about 6 in.

The seat is from an old Case IH 815 combine that his dad scrapped out. He replaced the Cub Cadet's original fenders with handmade ones.

"I built a 3-pt. hitch for the tractor, and used it last summer to pull a single bottom moldboard plow at a local plow day. The tractor's big rear wheels gear it a lot higher, so the tractor really had to work hard," says Smith.

Deere 2030

According to Smith, the Deere 2030 was easier to build because of the experience he gained building the IH model, and because Deere made its lawn and garden tractors quite similar to their big tractors.

"We gave the Deere model to my dad's long time employee last fall as a retirement gift," says Smith. "He has worked for my grandpa, dad, and now my brother for more than 50 years. The farm paid for all the material, and I built the tractor over the course of about 6 mos. The employee had no idea it was going to be his tractor, and it was fun to see his reaction when we gave it to him."

The Deere tractor has its original 10 hp Kohler engine, as well as the original hood, fender, and front axle. Smith cut off the front

spindles, and then made extensions to widen them and lift the front end. He replaced the rear wheels with 28-in. high tires that are mounted on 15-in. wheel rims off an implement. He made extensions for the rear wheel hubs to widen the tractor's footprint by 6 in. He also replaced the tractor's one-piece fender deck and footrest with a round cover for the clutch pulley, center metal plate, handmade fenders, and old Cub Cadet footrests.

A friend used a metal brake to bend a new nosepiece. He paid \$100 for a new seat.

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Kurt Smith turned a 1968 Cub Cadet garden tractor into this 1/2-scale IH 826 model.



He started with a Cub Cadet 125 model (left). He stripped tractor down to the frame, which he lengthened by 3 1/2 in.



Smith turned a 1973 Deere 110 garden tractor into this 1/2-scale Deere 2030.



He cut off tractor's front spindles and then made extensions to widen them and lift the front end (left). He replaced the rear wheels with 28-in. high tires.

