

Spotted Hair Sheep Aimed At Trophy Market

Rare Painted Desert Sheep have a lot of good qualities, but it's their horns that attract buyers. The colorful, prolific ewes breed year round, lamb twice a year and produce two, three or more lambs at a time. Painted Desert sheep require no shearing, have few disease and parasite problems and handle heat and cold equally well, thanks to their heavy, winter-hair coats which shed naturally with the return of warm weather. Yet, it is the big horned rams with their heavy manes that bring in the money.

"A gold medal class ram may sell for \$800 to \$1,500 or more at an exotic animal sale in Texas," says Anita Garza, Painted Desert Sheep Society founder and registrar, Needville, Texas. "A black and white ewe will easily sell for \$500 or more, bred or not. Fancy colored ewes sell from \$250 to \$500."

Although the breed has only had a registry for about 10 years, the roots of the breed include Corsican, Merino and Rambouillet. Some breeders have introduced Jacob or the Navaho Churro to get four or more horns, while others have used Alaskan Dall and Rocky Mountain Bighorn to improve horn



It's the horns that attract buyers, say breeders of rare Painted Desert Sheep.

size and shape.

Breeders select for multiple colors as well as horn shape and size. All animals have to exhibit the natural shedding characteristic, leaving only a hair coat over the summer. Rams may reach 200 lbs. in size and be 30 in. or more at the shoulder. Ewes may range from 60 to 120 lbs. and 21 to 25 in. at the shoulder.

It is the small size that attracted Judy Jenkins, a breeder from Crosby, Texas. She

runs 40 head on a small acreage near the Gulf of Mexico and selects for color and size of horn. Ironically, success at producing a trophy-potential ram also limits breeding opportunities.

"It's tough finding a really good ram, because they get sold to the hunting ranches," she says. "Most animals go to hunting ranges or for breeding stock."

Ewe lambs are retained for breeding stock,

while surplus ram lambs often go for barbecue. The lack of lanolin in the fat of the hair sheep is thought to reduce the strong flavor of lamb.

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The animals shed every year, leaving only a hair coat over the summer.

"Scooter With A Cab" Gets Around Town, Rain Or Shine



"Smokey" Stoll made a cab for his electric scooter that lets him drive comfortably around town no matter the weather. Cab has a hinged door on each side, a waterproof cloth top, and a plastic windshield and rear window.



"People in town stop and wave at me all the time. In fact, I don't think there's anyone in the county who hasn't seen me driving it down the street," says 82-year-old Clarence "Smokey" Stoll, Girard, Ill., who made a cab for his electric scooter that lets him drive comfortably around town no matter what the weather.

Smokey uses his Rascal scooter mostly to get to a nearby restaurant a couple times a day.

The cab has 1/4-in. thick plywood sides, a waterproof cloth top, and a plastic windshield and rear window. Hinged doors on each side are held in place by latches, and there are open side windows above each door. The entire structure bolts onto the scooter's frame. The cab is built in two parts. By removing two

bolts on top of the windshield, the entire structure can be lifted off.

"People like to kid me about it, but I think it's a practical way to get around, especially since I have a bad ankle," says Smokey. "The cab is no wider than the scooter, so if I want I can drive the machine right into grocery stores. I fly the American flag on top of the rig, which makes it more visible in traffic. There's also a slow-moving vehicle sign on back. I can drive the scooter in snow up to 4 inches deep.

"If it rains I can roll down curtains on both sides of the cab to cover the open side windows."

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Strange Rocks Appear Overnight

Jerry Steinlage has been a rock collector most of his life, also picking up Indian artifacts as he worked on his St. Henry, Ohio, family farm or walked fields and along nearby creeks.

Some of the most interesting rocks he's ever seen, suddenly showed up recently on ground he's searched dozens of times before.

The rocks are different from anything he's found in the past. He suspects they're pieces of a meteorite that exploded or fragmented over the area in March of 2001. He even thinks he may have heard it, mistaking the noise for thunder. "I'd gone to bed after noticing how clear the sky was that night," he recalls. "Before I went to sleep, though, I heard what I thought was thunder, but didn't give it much more thought than that."

A couple of days later, he found several of the funny looking rocks in the snow in an area of his yard. "I started looking around and filled my pockets with rocks of the same material," he says.

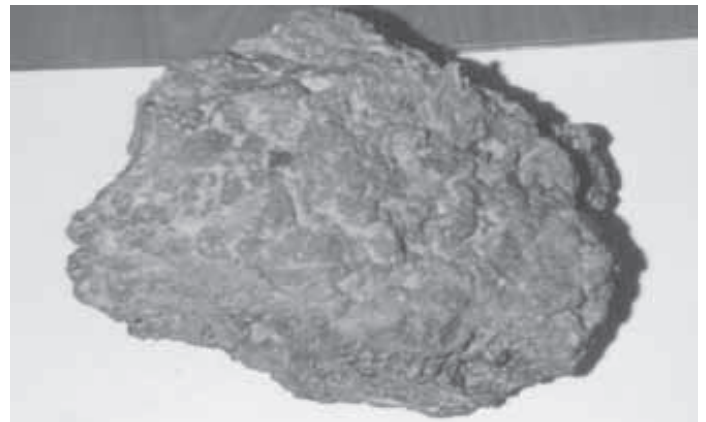
Then he began to notice a pattern. The odd rocks were in an obvious streak east and west

across his field. After putting up markers where he'd found the rocks, he followed the east-west line in both directions onto neighboring farms and found even more of the same type of rock.

Over the next few days, he collected more than 1,000 pieces, ranging in size from about 10 lbs. to bits the size of pinheads. The pieces were spread out over two miles from east to west, in a pattern about 300 ft. wide. The pattern runs across three farms and crosses a couple of creeks. "There's a lot more of it out there than I've picked up," he says.

The find piqued his curiosity and Steinlage sent some of the rocks to geologists and metallurgists for identification. So far, only one of the scientists has responded. "He said it was likely they weren't rocks, but foundry slag. I worked at the foundry for New Idea for years and I know what foundry slag looks like. This isn't it," he says.

"I found what I thought was a meteorite when I was a kid and I still have it. It doesn't look like this rock I found recently," he admits. "But I'd really like to know what I



Jerry Steinlage found this strange rock, along with many others, on his farm near St. Henry, Ohio. He suspects the rocks are pieces of a meteorite.

have here. I've researched it on the Internet, but haven't found anything that explains it."

While he continues to look for someone who would actually analyze the content of the rocks and perhaps identify the source - or at least help him explain where it came from - Steinlage would like to talk with other

people who have found strange rocks. He says he'd even consider buying some artifacts or oddities to add to his collection.

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