

He Makes Old-Fashioned Shepherd's Crooks

Scottish Blackface sheep have lost popularity for meat and wool as other breeds gain faster and do better on pasture. One place where the hardy, Scottish Blackface sheep still excels is for making traditional walking sticks and shepherd's crooks. Dick Harward has a lifetime of experience making sticks with Blackface horn, beginning with boyhood training in Scotland where stick dressing schools for shepherds were held in the winter.

"Blackface have good massive horns that are ideal for traditional Scottish sticks," says Harward. "Dorset horn can also be used, and South Country Cheviot have a jet black horn referred to as ebony, but neither of them have the size."

Harward once had plenty of horn to choose from, as he has kept as many as 3,000 Scottish Blackface ewes. He was raised in Scotland, but as a young man he came to the western U.S. to work as a shepherd. Over the years he worked for many of the great sheep breeders in the West and once helped drive a flock of 4,000 ewes from Arizona to Alberta.

Now he keeps a small flock of Blackface. Ironically, he gets requests from cousins in

Scotland for ram's horn to make sticks with. Though there are many more Blackface in that country, the habit of using a blowtorch to spread ram's horns to prevent them from curving into the skull often ruins them for carving. The high heat can create bubbles in the horns.

"You want a horn from a ram of at least two years and preferably three," explains Harward. "If a ram is too old, the horn often has started cracking, and if too young, there isn't enough solid inside the shell."

The natural spire of the horn has to be taken out before it can be worked. Harward prefers to soften his horn by boiling it in hot water until it is flexible enough to shape. Others use blowtorches, hot air guns or other devices. He then plunges it in cold water to set the shape.

"You have to decide where to cut it depending on how much you want to use and if you are going to carve a shape into the horn or keep it as a plain stick," says Harward. "That determines how much you file it down to get it smooth. A horn that's 5 to 8 in. in diameter may be only half that once it has been filed down smooth."

Harward keeps the core in his horns, though others prefer to remove the core and flatten the horn before affixing it to a stick.

"If you are going to carve a traditional Scottish thistle (the national flower) or a dog or fox head or family crest, you need to heat the horn tip and roll it back on itself to carve on," he says. "Once you get it shaped and carved the way you want, you fit the horn to the stick."

Harward prefers Scottish hickory or ash sucker growth for his sticks, cutting them in the winter when sap is down. The straight sticks are laid flat and seasoned for a year or more. He disdains using heat to straighten a stick as curves may return over time.

A rod or bolt is drilled into the ends of the horn and stick and a strong epoxy is used to hold them in place.

"When I was a boy, I would use sap from a tree to glue them together, but now we have fantastic glues," says Harward.

Although some horns will revert back to their natural shapes over time, Harward still has sticks he made 60 to 70 years ago that have retained their shapes.

Even though he no longer makes sticks, he still collects them. A Scottish cousin will send him a finished stick for each two horns Harward sends him. While most shepherds



Dick Harward has a lifetime of experience making shepherd's crooks, using the horns from Scottish Blackface sheep.

today will use aluminum or plastic sticks with their sheep, handmade sticks are used at sheep shows and sheep dog trials. In Scotland, Harward says, there are stick-judging contests with classes for different types of sticks.

"In this country, they've become collectors items and can sell for as much as \$300 to 400 each," he says. "The same stick may sell for only \$40 to \$50 in Scotland."

Though Harward says he doesn't sell ram horns for stick making, he can provide a list of Scottish Blackface breeders.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Dick Harward, The Scottish Blackface Breeders Association, 1699 H H Hwy., Willow Springs, Mo. 65793 (ph 417 962-5466, spsba@fidnet.com).



These Herefords are born wild and roam free on a mostly uninhabited island in Alaska. A Wisconsin company is marketing the organic meat to consumers.

Wild Alaskan Herefords Produce The Ultimate "Organic Beef"

Beef from a 6,000-head herd of wild Hereford cattle that roam free on Umnak Island in Alaska might be the most unusual "organic" product ever offered to consumers.

The Stone Group in Green Bay, Wis., is marketing the "wild and woolly" beef.

"We've had bulls attack the herding helicopters, and weeks-long storms have isolated the roundup crew on the island," says Mike Stone, president. "Seismic activity shakes the whole area frequently. Beef from these wild cattle is as organic and pristine as any food can be."

The wild Herefords are born wild and roam free on the mostly uninhabited volcanic island. Their natural diet of seaside native grasses and volcanic mineral water contributes to high levels of Omega-3 fatty acids and other nutrients in their meat.

Consequently, Alaska Organic Beef is one of very few raw meat products that has received USDA approval for the "excellent source of" claim for Omega-3, among other nutrients.

Located in the Bering Sea, Umnak Island

is also home to Fort Glenn, a World War II military installation.

Stone says the herd's environment is predator-free (no bears or wolves). "This herd 'from the land that time forgot' has never eaten processed feed. They've never received any growth hormones or inoculations of any kind. They are truly 100 percent organic. This is a herd made stronger by natural selection and not by genetic engineering or other man-made enhancements."

Stone says legend has it that the original herd was established on Umnak Island by the Russians back in the 1700's, and later by ranchers in the 1960's. The animals have a long, thick, curly hair coat to keep them warm. Adult bulls only reach about 1,200 lbs.

Currently, the wild beef is being sold in the continental United States under the "Alaska Organic Beef" brand.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, The Stone Group, Inc., 1968 Evans Dr., Green Bay, Wis. 54304 (ph 920 494-7249 or 920 562-2302; thestonegroup@hotmail.com; www.thestonegroupinc.com).



Paintings like this one can be personalized with the customer's name on the mailbox.

Personalization Turns Art Prints Into Originals

Five years ago, Greg Bordignon put a new twist on the way he markets much of his artwork. In addition to the original acrylic paintings he produces, the Robins, Iowa artist personalizes many of his wildlife prints by integrating the buyer's name right into the scene.

For example, a name can naturally be added to the side of a mailbox in one scene, or onto a fence-post-mounted sign in another picture.

"I add the personalization so that it blends into the scene," he says. "I don't want the name to distract from the painting, so I use browns and soft colors to make it appear naturally part of the picture."

"Hand-painted personalized art" is a way of turning a print into an original, he explains.

"I generally make 500 prints in each edition, and in my mind, by personalizing them, each print becomes its own edition because there are no two alike," he says. "I've been selling regular prints for about 15 years now. Five years ago, I painted a picture that had a mailbox in it, and a buyer said they'd like to

give it as a wedding present if I could put the couple's name on the mailbox. That's how it started."

His personalized art prints are all the same price, regardless of whether the buyer chooses to add the personalization or not.

"I'd say that more than 50 percent of my new paintings are now for personalized art prints," he says. "I can personalize one in about 15 minutes and as far as I'm concerned, it's just good for business, so I have no problem sitting down and taking the time to customize them and get them to the customer."

Bordignon currently has five different personalized prints out, ranging from 13 by 21-in. horizontal scenes to 15 by 19 1/2-in. vertical scenes.

He charges \$75 each for the various works. Free catalog available.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Greg Bordignon, Bordignon, Ink., 630 Grand Court, Robins, Iowa 52328 (ph 319 389-2793; catalogs@bordignonink.com).