



# *Jacob Sheep Conservancy* **SPOTLIGHT**

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## **Quarantine's Horns**

**By Roy Deppa, President,  
Jacob Sheep Conservancy**

I've been raising Jacob Sheep for 30 years, and I have a saying: "Every year, I learn something new about raising sheep that I didn't want to learn". This past year, it was about upright, sharp horns on a dominant ram.

First, let me explain his name... For 25 years, we've used a different capital letter for each year's lamb names. They haven't been in alphabetical order, or any order for that matter. Just what struck our fancy. When we were in "B" years, or "M" years, it was easy, but we've gotten near the end of our choices, and in 2014, it was "Q". How many names can you rattle off that start with "Q"? As you might imagine, we had some odd names that year, including one cute little 4-horned ram that got stuck with "Quarantine". Little did we realize.

As Quarantine grew, we began to notice that his center horns were growing straight up. Those of you who breed Jacobs and have 4-horned ones know that far more of them have curvy or asymmetrical or fused horns. You come to prize the ones with upright, symmetrical horns. Not only did Quarantine have beautiful markings and a fine fleece, but his horns grew to about two feet long, tapering to very sharp points. He was one of the most majestic looking 4-horned rams I had bred in 30 years, and I was proud.

Before Quarantine came along, we had been using another ram for breeding for a couple of years – Tony, a favorite because he was not only a beautiful ram, but he was sweet-tempered and he was named after my late father-in-law. As time passed, Quarantine and his half-brother Quark (I told you about the names!) grew into a couple of fine-looking rams, and they got along pretty well. Although Quark was slightly heavier, Quarantine was more aggressive and he established dominance. Quark seemed okay with that, and Tony mostly stayed out of the way. When breeding season came around, we put Quarantine in with the ewes, and things seemed to go well.

Last May, as we were getting ready for the Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival, I had all the sheep together for a while as I was sorting out which animals would be going to the show. I suddenly realized that our finest ram lamb – the one I thought had a good shot at a prize – had something odd going on with the wool on his side. Taking a closer look, I realized that air was going in and out of a hole in his side, and I could look in and see his lung and his diaphragm. Quarantine had stabbed him and ripped that hole. It was a mortal wound. Very young lamb should taste especially tender, but it's hard to enjoy when you thought you were going to win a prize with him two days later. We buried him instead.

Quarantine was very well behaved at the Maryland Festival, and we paraded him in front of a very appreciative crowd in the Parade of Breeds.

A few weeks later, we were out of town when my daughter Janetta phoned, in a panic because Tony was limping and bleeding from his neck. She subsequently discovered that Quarantine had blood coating the top eight or nine inches of one horn. I tried to save Tony, giving him antibiotics and separating him from the other sheep while he healed. For a while, he looked like he would pull through. But the internal damage was too great, and he died of massive infection. Later inspection showed that Quarantine's horn had penetrated clear through Tony's shoulder from the front and sheared a rib off his spine. Well, that finally got my attention. Quarantine had never made a move against a human, but realizing he was carrying that kind of weapon changed the game. Naturally I was concerned not only for the rest of my flock, but also for myself.

Problem was, he was a model 4-horned Jacob, had wonderful wool, and threw beautiful babies. I hoped to get one more breeding season out of him.

For the rest of the summer and clear through fall, I kept Quarantine with the ewes, and had the other rams in a separate field. No problems. I got the breeding out of him, but I just hated the idea of getting rid of him. So I came up with the bright idea of putting knobs on his horns, like they sometimes do with oxen.

I had some elm wood, which historically has been used for things like barrel heads, because “it doesn’t split”. I turned two round elm balls about 2½ to 3 inches in diameter using my lathe. Stepson Garrett and I held Quarantine in a shearing stand for an hour one day while we fitted the knobs on the ends of his horns and glued them in place with epoxy putty. I was sure he’d be unhappy with the results, and maybe try to scrape them off, but he never batted an eye. Didn’t seem to realize they were there, or didn’t care, or was proud of the way they looked, I don’t know. Tess, one of our older ewes, walked over to him, tilted her head back and looked bug-eyed up at his horns as if to say, “What the heck?!”.



Quarantine wore those knobs proudly for about a month. I was thinking this was going to work just dandy, and I could keep him another year. Even got to wondering how the crowd would react at the next Parade of Breeds when I walked him in with his knobs. Got so far ahead of myself I was wondering if I should paint them gold.

Then in late December, we brought all the sheep together in the front pasture where I keep them for the winter. Trying to avoid casualties from the inevitable confrontation when rams compete for dominance, I separated Quarantine out and placed him in a small pen that’s inside a paddock off to the side of the pasture. With this measure, which I intended to last for only a couple of days, I thought I could get them all used to being together, in hopes that Quarantine would settle down and the rams could figure out who was in charge without any major injury.

That setup was more temporary than I intended. Quarantine simply would not be quarantined. It took us a while to realize that the rhythmic clanking sound out in the field was Quarantine heaving himself again and again against the gate that separated him from the rest of the flock. The next morning, just after I’d fed them, Quarantine was suddenly in the pasture with all the others, the balls on the ends of his horns were gone, and sheep were running every which way. I ran out and discovered that he had lifted a 6-foot gate off its hinges, then rammed open the 8-foot gate (that I had chained shut in addition to a sturdy

latch) to get into the pasture. Quark was limping around, holding his head down. Turned out he'd gotten one of his side horns broken off from his skull in a showdown with Quarantine. It took a lot of time and antibiotics before we knew that Quark would recover from his injuries.

A few days later, after I took a series of photographs of one of the most majestic 4-horned rams I ever raised, Quarantine went to what my neighbor calls "Freezer Camp", where he will cause no more injuries, ever again.

Epilogue: I'm making light humor of this, but it's very serious business. Keeping horned animals is tricky and it can be very dangerous. Years ago when I was visiting Jacob breeders in England, one of them told me that more farmers in England get killed by rams than by bulls or any other farm animals. Those horns are quite decorative, but they can be lethal, and the ram is going to use them because it is his nature to do so. That is the irony of this story, an irony that I find very sad: Quarantine was doing just what he was meant to do, what his instincts and his breeding and his hormones compelled him to do. He was a dominant ram, establishing and maintaining his dominance. And part of that dominance came from the fact that he had two sabers sticking out of his head at just the right angle to cause maximum damage.

So the lesson this year was that the 4-horned ram of my dreams could become a nightmare, and we realized that we had to deal with him before he became our worst nightmare. He critically injured 3 rams, but we avoided having him injure a person. As I mentioned before, at no point did Quarantine ever go after me or show any signs of contesting a human. I am always very careful to raise my rams to be afraid of me, never to let them walk behind me, and never to make pets of them...those were the hard lessons of my inaugural year as a shepherd 30 years ago, when I first learned something new about raising sheep I didn't want to learn....but that's a story for another time.

*Would you like to share a lesson that you learned the hard way about raising sheep? Write it down and send it to us at [jacobsheepconservancy@gmail.com](mailto:jacobsheepconservancy@gmail.com), and we will feature it in a future issue of The Spotlight!*

## **Your JSC Board of Directors**

President: Roy Deppa, Poplar Spring Farm, Brookeville, MD,  
<http://www.brightonflock.com/>

Registrar and Webmaster: Catherine Snook, Snook Farm, Stormville, NY,  
<http://www.snookfarm.com/>

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Board member: Kelly Przylepa, Firefly Farm, Glenville, PA,

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Social media: Laurel Snook, <https://www.facebook.com/Jacob-Sheep-Conservancy-274422889257229/?ref=ts&fref=ts>



## Scenes from the 2016 NY State Sheep and Wool Festival



## Looking Ahead to the Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival

The Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival will be held May 6-7, 2017, at the Howard County Fairgrounds in West Friendship, Maryland. The Festival is one of the largest of its kind, with over 250 vendors, more than 600 sheep, and more than 40 workshops on shepherding, fiber arts, and family-oriented crafts. It is a tremendous resource for products, advice, and inspiration, not to mention the wonderful food, music, competitions, and demonstrations that make the Festival a fun and memorable annual event. If you are looking to start or augment your Jacob flock, the Festival is a great place to get to know Jacob breeders. The website with all the information is at <http://sheepandwool.org/>.

Jacob Sheep Conservancy members can help support the JSC during the Festival in a couple of ways, which we hope you will consider:

- If you have Jacob fleeces, skeins, roving, knitted or crocheted items, or other farm products that you would like to sell for consignment sale through the JSC booth, please contact JSC Treasurer Joan Schnieber at [jacobsheepconservancy@gmail.com](mailto:jacobsheepconservancy@gmail.com). Income from the sale of your items goes to you, minus a 10% contribution to the JSC. Joan can provide details and answer any questions you have.
- Show your Jacobs during the Jacob Show on the afternoon of Saturday, May 6. The JSC Spotlight, Winter 2016-2017

Festival requires a minimum number of exhibitors and sheep to maintain a class in the Show. In recent years, the Jacob Show has been on the verge of failing to meet those minimums, so we are concerned that we may lose the class. You don't need to be a seasoned exhibitor in order to show sheep. Our JSC Board members will be at the Festival and will gladly give you tips. You can download the rules and regulations and entry form at <http://sheepandwool.org/festival/sheep-shows/>. Entries must be postmarked by April 1 (or by April 10 with a late fee), and there is an online entry option as well.

- Visit the Jacob Breed Display Booth (Barn 7 & 8) and the JSC Booth (Barn 4) during the Festival and get to know the members of your JSC Board.

We hope to see you there!

*Register your Jacob Sheep with the  
Jacob Sheep Conservancy!  
For application and instructions, visit  
[www.jacobsheepconservancy.org](http://www.jacobsheepconservancy.org)*

## **Jacob Sheep “Returned” to Israel by Canadian Couple**

In late 2016, Canadians Jenna and Gil Lewinsky transported 119 of their Jacob Sheep by air from their farm in British Columbia to Israel with the help of private donations and financial assistance from the Israeli government. The Lewinskys believe that Jacobs are the original sheep described in the Book of Genesis, and for the past two years have made it their spiritual mission to “repatriate” the sheep to their biblical homeland.

Since Canada is not an approved country for livestock import to Israel, the Lewinskys obtained a one-time exception from Israel's Agriculture Ministry to allow the sheep to enter the country.

Sheep experts point out that Jacob sheep originated in England and are not connected to the breeds of ancient Israel. However, believers maintain that Jacob Sheep did originate in the Holy Land and are being returned to their rightful biblical homeland. Once they decided to be the agents for the return, the Lewinskys had to learn how to be shepherds, since they had no experience with farming or with livestock.

The Lewinskys are in the process of setting up a heritage farm for the sheep in northern Israel, which in addition to being an educational and scientific center, will contain a woolery for turning Jacob fleeces into religious clothing. The farm also will collect Jacob ram horns for making shofars, instruments used in Jewish rituals. According to news reports, the Israeli Foreign Ministry was planning a “welcome home” ceremony for the flock.

*The information in this article was obtained from a variety of news sources, including National Public Radio, the New York Times, and Christian Today.*

## Seen On the Farm....



Baby girl lambs born to Sprite, our oldest Jacob ewe, with shepherd Roy Deppa on Poplar Spring Farm, February 2017

*Interested in being involved in the JSC?  
Have a question about raising Jacobs?  
Want to contribute an article to The Spotlight?*

*Please write to us at  
[jacobsheepconservancy@gmail.com](mailto:jacobsheepconservancy@gmail.com)!*