

# *Bill Royer*

## Illinois

Bill Royer was a ten year 4-H member and grew up on a dairy farm in Indiana. Raising two sons in Illinois in the late 1970's, Bill initially purchased registered sheep for his sons when they reached 4-H age. After their first year with the sheep, non-Suffolks, they moved to Ft. Madison, Iowa and met a great Suffolk promoter by the name of Bob Mapes. Bob took a liking to Bill's sons, Todd and Scott, and sold them some good Suffolks to get started in the breed. J.D. Stucker of Burlington, Iowa became another good Suffolk friend to Bill. These two men were very instrumental in Bill's start with Suffolk breed. After they spent four years in the Ft. Madison, Iowa area they moved to Davenport, Iowa. It was then that they started to upgrade their flock using genetics from VanArkel and George Brothers. Bill's sons showed sheep in the first National Junior Suffolk Show held in Des Moines, Iowa. Bill has missed very few of the National Junior Suffolk Shows since that time. Bill and his family have always been very thankful to Wayne Skartvedt for his work in developing this junior program.

While Bill's early days with Suffolk sheep were with his sons, his daughter, Melissa, is the one who really took an interest in working with and showing Suffolks. She played the role of fitter and show person. Melissa now has a daughter and son, Avery and Brixton Sullivan, who enjoy showing Suffolks.

Bill's registered ewe flock has varied in size from a few ewes in the early years to nearly 30 ewes in some years. Over the years, Bill worked closely with several other breeders and have developed many, many good friendships. Some of these close friendships developed into ram partnerships with Ken McMillan, Bob Goold, Jon Matthews and Kevin Slack.

While Bill and his family had success in showing, winning has never been their primary goal. They raise the type of Suffolks that they like. Having sheep that are correct and that can produce offspring without problems have always been very important. They have had several National division champions and had the high selling ram and 2<sup>nd</sup> high selling ewe lamb at the Suffolk National Sale in 2022.

The Suffolk sheep provided Bill with an outlet from the stress of work and at times other challenges in life. Bill remembers sleepless nights due to problems at work or from other sources, he would replace those thoughts with how much he was enjoying raising Suffolks and the promise of the upcoming lambing season. Suffolk sheep have also provided many precious hours with his kids and grandkids.

Bill has cited several things that are his greatest accomplishments. While living in Iowa in the 1980's, the Iowa Suffolk Breeders had a great Junior Suffolk Show. After he moved to Illinois, Bill and his wife Debbie met with the Illinois Suffolk Association and convinced them to start a similar junior show. The Illinois Junior Suffolk Show started in 1989 and has continued for 33 years.

Bill served on the United Suffolk Sheep Association board for six years and served as Treasurer for five of those years. Bill helped move the USSA investment fund to a more aggressive status, than was practiced in the prior years. The increase in earnings of this investment is helping the USSA do some things that could not have done if those earnings has not occurred.

Bill absolutely enjoys working with youth and served as the sheep superintendent at the local Woodford County 4-H fair for approximately 20 years. Woodford County has, without question, the best purebred breeding sheep show in the state of Illinois. Serving in a 4-H leadership role in three states (Indiana, Iowa, and Illinois). Bill was recently inducted into the Illinois 4-H Hall-of-Fame in recognition of his outstanding service.

Bill spearheaded the creation of the United Suffolk Sheep Foundation and has served as the President for the last three years. He also created and funded a scholarship within the Foundation.

Bill loves the Suffolk breed and the people in it and has dedicated his life to endeavors in support of the breed.