

# *Andrus Suffolks*

## *Ken & Jim Andrus*

Andrus Suffolks is a partnership of brothers, Ken and Jim Andrus of Lava Hot Springs, Idaho. They were raised in Kamas Valley, Utah where their father ran 400 commercial sheep.

Ken went to work for Brigham Young University in 1967 as the first livestock herdsman for the Animal Science Department. He was in charge of the beef cattle and swineherds as well as the sheep flock which consisted of approximately 40 Suffolk ewes that had been purchased from Olsen Bros. of Spanish Fork. Twenty of these ewes were closely related to and may have been half-sisters to the great stud ram "Thousand Peaks", who was a foundation ram and type changer for the whole Suffolk breed. This was the beginning of change in type from small, squatty sheep to Suffolks that had more frame, yet maintained bone and body capacity.

In the winter of 1970, Dr. David Ames of Kansas State University visited Utah and after having evaluated the sheep in Utah County, encouraged some breeders to consign sheep to the Midwest Stud Ram Show and Sale in Missouri. Olsen Brothers, Jack Larsen, and BYU entered Suffolks and Mark Bradford of Spanish Fork entered Columbias. The event was held at the new livestock center at the University of Missouri in Columbia. Sales after were held in Sedalia at the state fairgrounds. This was the beginning of several breeders from the west consigning to the Midwest Stud Ram Sale.

Ken bought some Suffolks of his own in 1970 and had his brother – partner, Jim run them in Idaho where Jim lived. In 1975 Ken left BYU and moved with his wife, Colleen and new baby to Idaho to raise Suffolks full time. At first a farm was leased, then in 1980 they purchased the family ranch where they still live and run 225 commercial Angus cows in a cow-calf operation. When Ken and Colleen's children grew up and moved away and Ken in the State Legislature and not able to be home during lambing season, a decision was made in 2013 to sell the sheep.

In the 70's and early 80's Andrus Suffolks exhibited and sold sheep at most of the major sales in the Midwest and West. These included the International Livestock show at Louisville, Kentucky, Midwest Stud Ram Show and Sale, Top of the Rockies in Colorado, the Golden Nugget in Reno Nevada, the National Ram Sale, the Spanish Fork Ram Sale, the Idaho Ram Sale, the Idaho Falls Ram Sale, Rocky Mountain Ram Sale in Salt Lake City, and Craig Colorado Ram Sale.

In 1975 they exhibited the supreme champion ewe in Sedalia selling to Ben Huff of Oregon for \$8,000, which was a world record price for a ewe selling at public auction. The record was of course broken the next year and the great interest in Suffolks was in full swing. In 1980 they sold a ram a Sedalia for \$14,000, another at 13,500 and one privately for \$15,000.

The economic recession of '79and '80 caused the Suffolk bubble to burst and prices and general interest in Suffolks declined from there.

Ken and Jim have always sold quite a number of commercial rams and after the recession, that became the main focus of the operation. They had commercial (range) ram customers in Idaho, Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, Montana, Nevada, South Dakota, Washington, California and Arizona.

Raising Suffolk sheep has been good to their family. Ken and Colleen have eight children and Tonia the oldest is now serving as the Executive Secretary of the Utah Wool Growers.

Coyotes have been a problem, but good guard dogs helped mitigate the loss. Their biggest challenge was to find outside bloodlines that would improve or maintain our breeding program. They sold 150 commercial rams per year and usually had demand for many more. Their customers wanted rams that live, have body mass, ruggedness and transmit gainability and a thick-bodied lamb that will grade.

Their journey in the Suffolk business was a great one. They have traveled to many places and states we would not have otherwise seen. One year sheep were to Costa Rica and delivered them to Florida.

They have met many quality people who have become lifelong friends.

They started with nothing. Suffolks enabled them to raise a family, pay off a ranch and have a good life along the way. Their children learned to work. Suffolk sheep have greatly enriched their lives.