

B. B. Burroughs

B. B. Burroughs of Homedale, Idaho started his flock of Suffolks in 1936 from stock obtained from J.P. Gray of Napa, Idaho. Mr. Gray was a large producer and major importer of Suffolks. From the onset, B.B. went against the trend of Suffolk type being selected in the show ring. He claimed to breed toward the Norfolk side of Suffolk genealogy by selecting and breeding rams with both frame and depth. He also claimed to select for a thin rind top sheep. B.B. selected top studs from Canadian Pacific Railroad Farms of Tilley, Alberta, Canada. Their shepherd was Jack Stevens. B.B. claimed that Jack was the only man in North America that was unconventional and would bred toward the Norfolk side.

Later, he selected Hampshire studs from Matthews Brothers of Ord, Idaho. At one time B.B. carried up to 3,000 blackface ewes and was one of the largest blackface ram producers in the West. B.B. Burroughs was a major influence when Suffolk type changed to what would become termed by some "The Mountain Sheep of the West." This radical change to sheep that Burroughs was advocating did not take place until the late 1970's and early 80's.

B. B. Burroughs initial influence occurred in the Spanish Fork area of Utah. There was a coalition of breeders who were in the range ram business but also produced, exhibited and sold registered seed stock. B.B. hadn't registered his sheep for many years and he tried to protect his type by not selling studs to his competitors. Breeders acquired some of Burroughs commercial pens at range ram sales and selected the best one to use as stud rams. B.B. referred to these sheep men as "eager beavers."

In the mid-70s interest in Burroughs sheep grew to the point that large sums of money was being offered to him by prominent mid-western breeders. Some of the most well-known Suffolk breeders in the United States purchased or leased Burroughs genetics. Not only was B.B. having an impact on Suffolks on the western ranges, but Burroughs studs and ewes were also seen in flocks in the Corn Belt. He described the wide range of visitors to his flock as the following: "like women going through a dress shop during a major discount sale."

One ram purchased from B.B. by a prominent Iowa breeder was the national champion Hampshire ram at the North American International Livestock Exposition (NAILE) in Louisville, Kentucky. This ram had a marked effect on both Hampshire and Suffolk breeds.

Many of these breeders were looking for that "changer" buck; a ram that would enable their breeding program to progress to what they believed was a higher level

of Suffolk excellence. Their selections were, quite often, a very extreme type of sheep; the taller and longer, the better. B.B. Burroughs was quoted as saying, "They come and pick out of my pistol barrels and pay good money for them and I laugh all the way to the bank." (Pistol barrels was a description of a tubular sheep with no "guts".) The Burroughs sheep had a pronounced impact on making the fitted Suffolk of today the longer and taller sheep.

B.B. sold his sheep in the mid to late 1980s and passed away in June of 2001.