

Alan Culham

Michigan

Alan's father John Culham purchased their first registered Suffolk ewe in the fall of 1961. This bred ewe, Smalley 60-14, was bred, and purchased from Norman Smalley of Williamston, MI, a prominent Michigan breeder at the time. By the time Alan enrolled in college in the fall of 1974 the flock had grown to twenty ewes owned in partnership with his 13-month younger brother Brian.

While attending Michigan State University to obtain a degree in Animal Husbandry, Alan worked under the guidance of shepherd George Good and faculty coordinator Dr. Harold Henneman at the MSU Sheep teaching and Research Center. The MSU Suffolk flock was of national prominence at that time having purchased both the world record selling Suffolk ram and ewe in 1973 from Olsen Brothers of Utah. Great success was gathered in the show ring with MSU having the Reserve Champion Suffolk ram in 1976, Grand Champion ram in 1978, as well as Grand Champion ewe in 1979 at the National Suffolk Show in Louisville. More importantly the MSU flock focused on individual animal performance and sold many rams whose offspring dominated the ram test stations of that era. In 1977 Alan spent the summer trimming rams for Jack Larsen in Spanish Fork, Utah for the National Ram Sale in August.

Alan participated on several judging teams while attending MSU including the Meats Judging team in 1976 and the Livestock Judging team in 1977. Highlights included winning the high overall individual award at the National Meat Animal Evaluation Contest, the High Sheep judge at the North Central Contest, and as the top individual in the halter division of the All-American Quarter Horse Congress.

Upon graduating from MSU in 1977 Alan purchased 400 commercial ewes and entered the sheep business on a large scale while still maintaining around 50 Suffolk brood ewes. Starting in 1984 Alan joined in partnership with Morrie Stevens to form the Culham & Stevens flock which had replaced the commercial flock with over 400 registered Suffolk ewes. Due to the tax advantages of purebred livestock at the time, Culham & Stevens had 14 investors in their Suffolk flock. Facing the impact of the Regan era tax law changes and the increased prevalence of the "Spider Lamb Syndrome" a decision was made to disperse the investor flock in the fall of 1987.

With the dispersal of the investor flock Alan returned to graduate school in Animal Science at Michigan State studying in the area of Growth Biology. He taught classes in live animal and carcass evaluation while coaching the meat judging team. The Suffolk flock was re-established with sheep believed to be free from the "Spider Lamb Syndrome" and enrolled in the National Sheep Improvement Program (NSIP) with a renewed emphasis on performance.

In 1986 Alan was elected to the board of directors of the National Suffolk Sheep Association (NSSA). Appointed to the chair of the Animal Health Committee Alan helped guide funding for research into the “Spider Lamb Syndrome” and published an article in the September 1988 *Sheep Breeder and Sheepman Magazine* “The Spider Lamb Syndrome: Where are we today – Where do we go tomorrow?” that established the genetic origin of the defect. While serving for a total of 12 years on the NSSA board Alan represented the association in the Federal Negotiated Rule Making Process that established the USDA Voluntary Scrapie Certification Program and was part of the merging of the National Suffolk Sheep Association and the American Suffolk Sheep Society into today’s United Suffolk Sheep Association.

In the decade of the 1990’s Alan served as an independent meat quality consultant for the Meijer department store chain while still managing the Culham & Stevens flock.

2006 found Alan returning to Michigan State University as the manager of the Sheep Teaching & Research center. While there he taught the Sheep Management course, the Live Animal and Carcass Evaluation class, as well as coaching the 2011 and 2012 MSU Livestock Judging teams. In addition, he oversaw the reemergence of the MSU Suffolk flock, this time as one of the preeminent NSIP flocks in the country.

In 2015 Alan was hired by the American Sheep Industry to oversee its “Let’s Grow Program” which funded 58 grants totaling \$1,012,766 to increase the efficiency and productivity of the U.S. sheep industry.

Starting in 2019 to present Alan serves as the Operations Director of Katahdin Hair Sheep International while still being the managing partner of Cuham & Stevens L.L.C..