

February (surprise) Lambs

Gail keeps three ewes over the winter. We enjoy having newborn lambs in May.

We raise many more lambs for customers. To make it easy for ourselves, we buy most of those lambs from a farm family that raises lots of excellent sheep.

We rent a ram each winter from a different farm family to impregnate our ewes in time for May birthing.

Things do not always go as planned, however.

The forces of nature are strong.

Our farm activities are supposed to be at a minimum in the winter months.

In keeping with that plan, Gail and I were spending a week at Shannon's house in South Florida.

Janelle, my main helper was also someplace warm for a long weekend.

Granddaughter Ella, was in Fargo for a weekend tournament.

To my great surprise, one of Gail's ewes produced twin lambs in far below zero weather.

Thank goodness that daughter Amy was watching over the farm.

Amy took excellent care of our small winter flock. She pretty much spent the frigid weekend with the lambs and ewe in their three-sided shelter.

Our good neighbor, Cory, helped Amy separate the goats and the mature ram from the three sheep ewes. Things are safer for the newborns that way.

As is natural, healthy, acclimated animals are born with coats to suit the weather. These lambs appeared with fine wool coats. Once dried and with warm milk in their tummies, they were more comfortable than Amy in the cold.

All are doing exceptionally well.

When Amy sent the first photos, my response was, "That is impossible."

Sheep gestation time is around 152 days. The borrowed ram has only been with the ewes since Christmas.

That was less than 60 days. Not even remotely possible.

As I mentioned above, we raise several dozen purchased lambs.

We pasture those lambs with the older ewes through the summer. We do that for a number of reasons.

As with all mammals, mature adults act as leaders. The ewes calm the entire flock. They teach the lambs what to eat, what not to eat, where to go and when to go there. They serve as role models. They teach the lambs how to be sheep.

Those lambs are both male and female but of course the ram lambs are castrated. In this case by our lamb supplier.

Obviously, that can be imperfectly done.

One of those lambs retained at least one testicle. And one is enough.

On closer examination, it appears that at least one more of Gail's ewes will lamb early.

We will be better prepared for that.

The new twins are one male and one female. Janelle helped me neuter the little ram today. Life will be calmer for him and the rest of the flock.

The first photo is of Amy with the ewe lamb. The lamb is comfy. Amy's bare skin looks a bit cold

The second photo shows the twins with Mom and their good Shepard.

The third photo is of the male lamb. The male lamb has color markings.

The fourth photo features the ewe lamb which is all white. The male lamb has color markings.

Sheep used to be selected for all white wool. Colored wool does not dye to colors as well when made into clothing. That is no longer of importance. The market for wool has collapsed after WWII. Most clothing, world-wide, is made of synthetic material, (plastic).

Sheep are much better clothed than we are.

The fifth photo shows, Auntie ewe, Mom and male lamb. A family helps.
It comes to mind that our farm workforce has developed wonderful depth in recent years.
That is of great comfort to me. Tom



Amy with the ewe lamb. The lamb is comfy. Amy's bare skin looks a bit cold.



The twins with Mom and a good Shepard.



The male lamb.



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Auntie ewe, Mom and male lamb. A family helps.