

New lambs are here.

It must be Spring.
I brought three bred ewes home a month ago.
One delivered a fine lamb yesterday.
Another did so today.
The whiter lamb is the older.
I took the photo of the blacker lamb only an hour after it was born.
It had nursed and was resting under its mother's legs.
Many breeds of sheep have been selected to produce twins and triplets.
These particular sheep normally produce single lambs.
Breeders claim that a single lamb will produce a superior meat carcass on a grass (no grain) diet.
When I was a boy, all sheep were white.
That was because sheep were raised primarily for wool and only secondarily for meat.



Dark wool could not be dyed to produce colored fabric, so black lambs were culled when they turned up.
The old saying, "Black sheep of the family", derived from that fact.
Meaning an odd or unsavory member.
Wool is a wonderful material for clothing.
It was in high demand during the WWII and at all time previous.
Shortly after WWII the wool market collapsed, never to recover.
The invention of synthetic material caused that collapse.
Unfortunately, synthetic materials, made primarily from petroleum are very cheap to produce.
Before synthetics were invented, virtually all clothing was made from wool or cotton.
Cotton production was mechanized to reduce the cost, so cotton is still doing pretty well.
Wool production, because it depended on sheep, could not be mechanized.
Blue jeans (denim) for example, are made of cotton.
Now, the market for lamb is based on meat.
Black sheep are in fashion, if for no other reason that they are pretty.
Two of our ewes are black and white.
One of our ewes is reddish and white.
In addition to be multicolored, many modern sheep produce no shearable wool.
Historically, sheep were bred to produce lots of wool which was collected (sheared), every year.
Now, because the wool has no value, sheep have been selected to avoid the necessity of shearing.



There are two ways to eliminate the need for shearing.
One type of sheep has been selected to be "haired", much like goats.
Another type has been selected to produce a minimize wool coat and to shed that naturally each spring.
In fact, our three ewes and their lambs are hybrids of those two types.
The sheep are in what we call the turkey stockade.
It is where the turkeys sleep safely in the summer.
The sheep are in the stockade to keep them safe from eagles and coyotes while the lambs are small.
That stockade is just out the kitchen window.
Sheep are relaxed and relaxing creatures.
We are enjoying the view.
Spring is near. Tom 2018

