

## Sheep Shearing February 29, 2024.

We have ten ewes and a ram this winter.

Four of those ewes are “hair” sheep, the others are normal wool sheep and need annual shearing.

Janelle arranged for a Shearer to do that last week.

It is common practice to shear ewes shortly before they lamb.

The wool ewes in our flock are due to lamb in two weeks.

The ewes will tend to spend more time in their sheds.

That is a better environment for new-born lambs.

Shearing also makes it easier for lambs to find their mother’s teats.

For millennia sheep were valued more for their annual wool crop than they were for meat.

The value of wool has been diminishing since the end of WWII.

That is when cheap plastic clothing became available.

You can still find clothing made from wool and cotton, but most clothing and fabric is plastic based.

The value of wool is now so low that small quantities like the yield from our seven sheep are worthless.

Gail and Janelle will use this for chicken nest and shed bedding.

There is a cost for shearing though.

Twenty-five years ago, it was at least break-even.

We could then pay the Shearer with the wool.

Now the Shearer charges \$100 minimum per farm or \$6 per sheep.

That has encouraged the development of “hair” sheep.

Hair sheep do not require annual shearing.

FYI, wool is just specialized hair.

Ancient farmers selected sheep to provide that wonderful wool fiber.

So, hair sheep, are back to the future.

The first photo shows the Shearer, two sheep and Janelle.

The ewe in the lower left has been sheared.

The sheep behind the shearer is next.

A fleece is at the shearers’ feet.

The wool tends to hold together as a loose rug.

The shearing machine is hanging

between the shearer’s head and the tree.

The second photo shows shearing.

In skilled hands, shearing takes about five minutes.

If held correctly sheep struggle very little.

They often seem relaxed.

Photo three shows four newly shorn ewes on the left, four hair sheep on the right.

All went back to munching alfalfa hay.

The fourth photo shows some of each type.

All ewes appear to be pregnant.



Notice that the nearest ewe is “bagging”.  
That means she is close to parturition and her bag is filling with milk.  
Best regards. Tom

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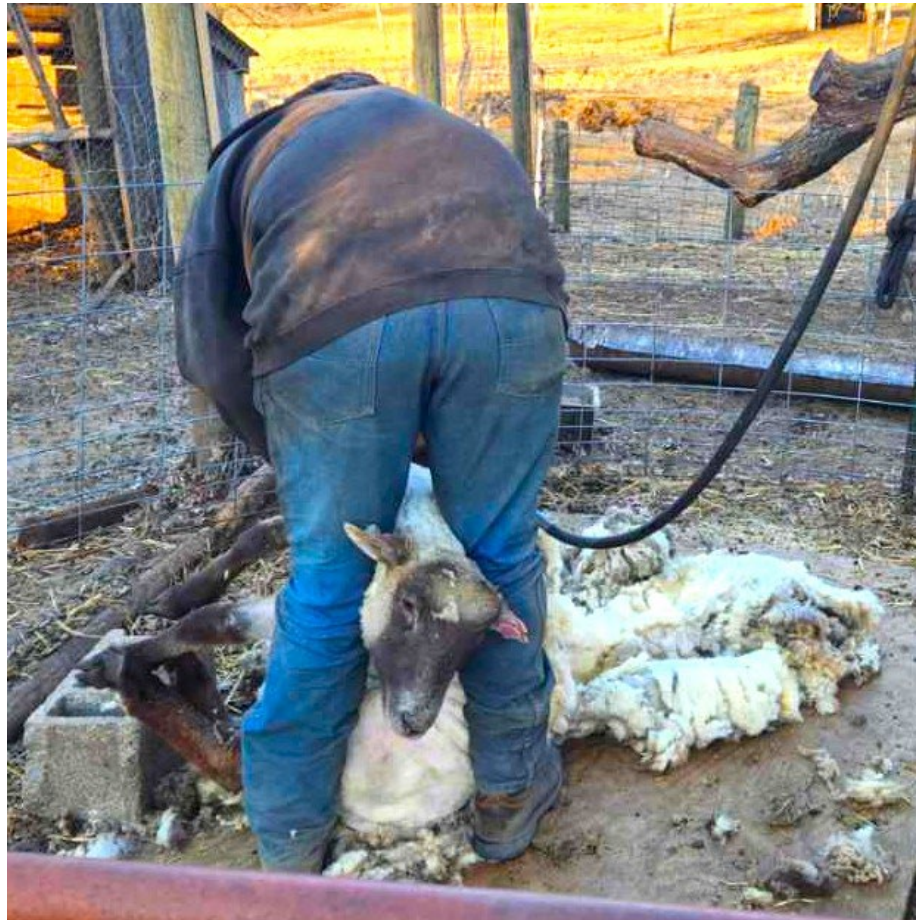


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