

Bone Dry Ridge

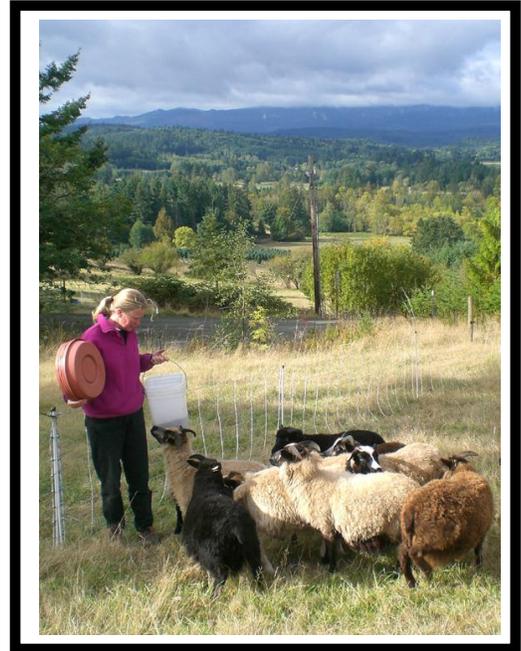
A little bit of everything farm



Fall 2007 news

Dear lamb customers:

Fall is here and my duties as a shepherdess are changing. The days of moving my flock from one good pasture to another are coming to an end. The ewes and the new ram Baldur are back in the barn while the lambs grazed the pasture until their last day. I was a bit surprised at the range in hanging weight this year. The lambs born and raised on my farm were within normal range whereas the lambs from E- Washington were quite a bit smaller. I contribute that to their forage. Therefore, next years should I need additional lambs I will bring them over as soon as they are weaned. This will maximize their time on our good pastures. On the other hand, if lambing season goes well next spring and most of my ewes have twins I should have enough lamb for all of my current customers.



The E- Washington lambs came in early August and were absolutely thrilled to munch on fresh green grass. Wilbur, were they came from was experiencing a very hot and dry summer so they had been eating hay for some time. They were on the small side so I decide to supplement their diet with about a cup of grain each morning. They were thrilled. At first they were afraid of me but as I came to see them often during the day they got used to my presence and eventually I could walk right in their midst as they grazed. I do spend a lot of time with my critters. It gives me a chance to notice if anything is out of the ordinary. I don't want the lambs to be afraid of me since I am the one who hands them over to the butcher. Which is, as you can imagine, my least favorite task as a shepherdess. But this is the cycle of life. I'm with them at birth and I'm with them at death. I told my self, if I could not handle the whole cycle I should not be in this business. You can rest assured the slaughtering here on the farm is as quiet and calm as can be. It is over in no time.

My fall and winter tasks are going to the barn at least twice a day to check on every one. Sometimes I just sit there and look at them. I feed them the big round bales so they always have plenty to eat. It takes the sheep about 10 days to eat through one. Then I clean out the barn and put in a new bale. Their water comes off the new metal roof and they share their pail with our little horse Doolie. Our sheep live with Dali our Llama. He protects them from predators like coyotes or stray dogs. In the seven years we have been raising sheep we have never lost a lamb. We contribute that to Dali, our

dogs and the electric fences. Dali loves Doolie. We never thought Doolie loved him back until this August when we had to catch Dali to give him his biannual sheering and toe trimming. Dali is totally wild so sheering him is a big ordeal. We have tried all kinds of methods but felt each one of them stressed him out too much. So this year we got the vet to come and sedate him. As Dali was falling asleep Doolie got concerned and came over and tried to get him up. He kept licking his face and saying (or so we thought) "hey buddy, get up, get up. This is not normal, let me help you out". The sedation was supposed to last two hours. So we were not in a great hurry to shear him and clip his toes. We are glad however, that we started with the toes (the most important task) because in one hour he woke up, stood up, stared at us as if to say "thank you but that will be all". He was 70% sheered. He has tufts of wool on his neck and his butt is still in full wool. This does not seem to bother him so we are not letting it bother us. He just looks funny.

This spring I went to a workshop on how to shear sheep on a stand. Sheering the old fashioned way is so hard on the back that I often hire a sheerer for that task. Sheering on a stand is easier and in the future I see my self doing it all on my own.

This spring a professor from the Evergreen College in Olympia asked if he could bring his class to look at my farm and learn about my farming practices. This was a pleasant surprise. I raise my animals the way I think they should be raised. I farm the way I think is right and don't really try to emulate anyone. I have gone to farming workshops and at some of them practically disagreed with every thing. Never did I think someone would come my way and want to learn about my way of farming.

I had a wonderful time with these students and passed on some of my philosophies about farming and low and behold the professor has contacted me again. This time he is bringing 50 students. And not just a visit but wants part of his class to study our farm model and compare it to others. This is all very exciting and I wonder where this will take us.

Icelandic sheep are very individualistic. They are not just a flock of sheep they are a group of individuals. There is a hierarchy and until this year my lead ewe Sigga had been in charge. She was getting old and had in the last few years been giving me lambs later and later in the spring until this spring she did not give me any. During the summer she gave up her leadership role to her daughter Mæja. It has been very interesting to observe this passing of the torch. Sigga would stay in the middle of the flock as Mæja lead the way. Mæja is doing beautifully and I'm very happy to have her as the lead. Sheep run a matriarchic society although once in a while a weather (castrated male) is the lead but never an intact male.

This has been a wonderful summer. It is such a joy to live with happy animals. I hope you all will enjoy the gift of life the lambs give us and if you ever feel like coming for a visit please do. I'm hoping to spend part of the winter felting rugs using my fabulous Icelandic wool and experimenting with making rugs out of sheep-skins. This should keep me very busy.

Your Shepherdess