

From the
Premier Breeder
of British Registered
Soay Sheep



SOUTHERN OREGON SOAY SHEEP FARMS

Viewpoint

THIS MONTH'S FEATURE

Coping With Teenagers

by Kathie Miller

At about three or four weeks Soay lambs turn into mischievous, rambunctious teenagers, especially if there is a mob. A little planning and creativity, however, can help prevent, or at least reduce, problems.

Teenagers will continually butt and chase each other, trying to dominate, which is all just practice for adulthood. They ignore their mothers, who often chase after them bellowing, trying to get their attention. And they are constantly getting into mischief which can sometimes lead to serious predicaments. Sneaking under gates and fences can lead to obvious trouble. Although this ability can serve a useful purpose, as explained below, you should plan accordingly and block escape routes you don't want them to use.

If, as on my farm, you do not

have pasture where the youngsters learn to graze on fresh grass, a **creep feeder** uses the lambs' natural ability to access food without competition from the adults. The idea is to provide a small pen with feed where babies can come and go, but mothers cannot. It is also ideal for transitioning lambs, especially bidders, from milk to hay and regular feeds.

There are many ideas for creep feeders, but I discovered a very simple one that has worked very well. In my barn I built two small, modular pens using a heavy-duty Shaul panel

(www.shaulsmfg.com) with two gates (one at each end) and two light-weight panels. One panel serves as a divider, the other as an outside fence. The corner of the barn closes the box. All the panels have 7 rails with graduated spaces between the bars, the two biggest at the top. By flipping the end divider upside down so that the wider spaces are at the bottom, the lambs can pass through but the mothers cannot. When the babies have grown tall enough to eat at the adult feeders, the panel will be flipped back to its intended position and the creep feeder



Creep Feeder

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Lights Out!

by Kathie Miller

I had been leaving the lights on in the barn at night so that if I heard a noise I could run down and check without startling the sheep by turning on the lights.

After two weeks I was comfortable the little ones were okay, and after bottles about 10:00 P.M. I turned out the lights and went into the house. Shortly after going inside, barking dogs and noisy geese got my attention. I stepped outside

to investigate. The noise coming from the barn was deafening — every lamb was screaming at the top of its lungs.


Fearing the worst, I ran down to the barn and turned on the light. Instant silence. Not a peep.



Nothing was out of sorts.

I suddenly realized the lambs were afraid of the dark! In their short lives the sun had never gone down, and in the dark they could not find

their mothers.

The next night I fed earlier and turned out the lights before dusk. All has been well ever since. 

CREEP FEED RECIPE FOR PICKY EATERS

In one bucket soak a cup of Ewe and Lamb (E&L) pellets in just enough water to cover. Soak ¼ cup of beet pulp in another bucket.

When they are a soft, moist (not soaking) mash, mix a **very small** amount of beet pulp with the E&L ration and add 1 Tbsp. of soybean meal (**if you have it**) and a little cob for flavor. The sugar beet pulp should be used **very** sparingly as the lambs can't digest it well at this point and it is only added for flavor to entice them to eat.

Gradually replace this formula with dry E&L pellets or cob (corn, oats, and barley with molasses).

Hay should be offered at all times.

Notes: Feed E&L very sparingly to ram lambs because it has too much calcium from the alfalfa. This recipe is for short-term use only.

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All advice in this newsletter has been used successfully on our farm. It is important to remember that every animal and situation is different. Before you try any of our suggestions, we urge you to consult your veterinarian.

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will instantly be reconverted to an escape proof catch pen for both lambs and ewes.

Of course, teaching lambs they can walk through fences

can get them in the habit of sticking their heads through fences! This is not a problem until they reach 8 to 10 weeks old, when their

horns have grown to the point they can force their heads out through the wire but cannot pull them back in. Obviously, this can lead to disaster, and if you have field fence vigilance is vital. One lamb, Fiona, forced me to come up with a creative solution to the problem. By resting a 28" length of ½" PVC pipe across her head and securing it to the back of her horns with electrical tape I was able to make her head too wide to get through the fence. Horns must mean something special in the sheep world, because



Fiona's new horns

Fiona's demeanor changed when she got her new ones; she strutted around the barnyard as if she'd just gotten a well-deserved promotion. This contraption needed to be re-taped weekly, but I used it until her horns were large enough to not get caught.

Teenagers' horns can easily be broken, especially when a trapped lamb panics and

bashes its head against the fence trying to free itself. Soay view any hole they can see through as an escape route and will try to jump through it whether they fit or not. Sheep horns are composed of a bony core encased with a sheath of keratinous material. Sometimes the horn sheath will pop off with no ill effect, but

other times the core itself will be damaged. (In the latter case there can be considerable bleeding and you will need to use a styptic powder to stop it. If you cannot get it under control, call the vet. In such cases, confine the lamb and keep it quiet until you are certain the bleeding has ceased and will not start again. As a precaution, I also start a short course of penicillin.) In either case, the horn will continue to grow but will be deformed or stunted, both to a greater extent if the core is damaged.



Playtime

Teenage lambs are simple creatures. When it comes to play they all love to rumble. If you have boulders or logs or simply a mound of dirt they will be in heaven.

King of the Mountain, *Tag*, and *Race Around Anything* are favorite games. They smash into each other, frolic, kick up their heels and fall down. Evening seems to be a universal after dinner recess. Nothing will bring a smile to your face faster than watching the utter joy these wonderful little critters exhibit during playtime at sundown. 🐏

JUNE CALENDAR

- ❑ Give lambs their second vaccination (21-28 days after the first).
- ❑ Worm lambs at two months with second shots.
- ❑ Band (castrate) ram lambs between 6 and 8 weeks depending on size. Vaccinate for tetanus at castration if it is not done with second shots.
- ❑ Begin to collect wool. Roo (hand pluck) as it sheds.
- ❑ Evaluate rams horns, trim as needed.
- ❑ **Black Sheep Gathering**, Lane County Fairgrounds Eugene, Oregon June 20-22.

TIP OF THE MONTH

Hang an old push broom on a gate or fence for sheep to scratch themselves.