



FINNSHEEP *SHORT TALES*

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CHIEF SHEPHERD'S MESSAGE FROM NAOMI LEITH SMITH

Notice of Annual Meeting of the Finnsheep Breeders' Association
Friday May 16 2003 at the Ag Arena on the campus of Penn State
University in conjunction with the Keystone International Sheep Show and
Sale

10am - sheep show

5pm-7pm hospitality hour and picnic

7pm-8pm Annual Meeting

Saturday May 17 Sheep Sale

Follow directions to the PennState football stadium , the Ag Arena is
diagonally across the street from the stadium

Naomi Leith Smith

President

Finnsheep Breeders' Association



GENERATIONS OF LEANNE HUGHES TRIPLE L FINNSHEEP

FINNSHEEP IN THE STATE OF WASHINGTON BY LEANNE HUGHES OF TRIPLE L

I got into Finnsheep in 1982. I had a small flock of crossbred ewes that managed to give me one lamb apiece. A friend told me about Finns, so I went to Ladd Mitchell in Moses Lake, WA and bought three - a ram and two ewes. He had to tell me what the purebreds looked like since I had never seen one before. The two ewes were sisters, and the next year they had twins and quads at 12 months of age. I was hooked! I went back and bought a third sister, their dam, and a couple of others. The next year I bought the entire flock - including the one who jumped a 4 foot fence - when he went sold out.

I have crossed Finns with Suffolks, Hamps, Columbias and Dorsets. All have produced great crosses. Many times my 1/2 Finn ewes would produce as well as my purebreds. We sold crossbreds as commercial ewes. The Dorset/Finns were especially popular. Those ewes can easily raise triplets, and the lambs get good gains. I had a 3/4 Finn, 1/4 Dorset market lamb place third at a county fair (after the reserve champion) in 4-H showing. They can produce good carcasses.

I have had as many as 175 ewes, but currently only have 30, all purebreds in white, black, gray and piebald. I just finished this year's lambing, and had 68 lambs out of my 20 ewes aged 2 and over, and

16 lambs out of 9 yearlings (one is left to lamb). I had one set of sextuplets, 4 sets of quintets, and 3 sets of quads. Most of my ewes raise triplets, but that still leaves a few bottle lambs running around! Lambing is a family affair. It is my hobby, but everyone gets involved when the lambs start coming.

People say they would not raise Finns because of the extra babies. I use a cold milk bucket that I get from Caprine Supply. It feeds 10 lambs at a time, and I fill it twice a day. This gives me good gains out of my lambs, and also gets me out of those 2 AM bottles! For years we milked goats for the extra milk - now I mix milk replacer. I work full time, so this time saver is a must! Little newborn orphans go to work in the back of my van in a dog carrier until they are old enough to stay alone.

I start the lambs out with a regular baby bottle that I cut a slightly bigger hole in. When they start chewing on my hands, and nursing very well, they will take to the bucket feeder. Once they find out there is milk in there, they do well. I keep the milk cold so they don't over-eat. I wean at 4-6 weeks, depending on size. I like Land O Lakes replacer because it mixes well. I've used others with good success though, and they all did great with goats milk. We once had 23 goats that we were milking to provide milk for the lambs. (We were a lot crazier then.)

If I have a ewe with quads or above, I give them all a bottle for the first 48 hours until mom's milk comes in. I leave the lambs on her, and then I only need to bottle twice a day. If there is a problem with milk supply, I have noticed that these lambs will come to a bottle weeks later, even if the only one they have received was when they were newborn.

I bought my first black ram in 1987 at the National Sale from Max LaRosh in Kansas. I was amazed at how many of my white ewes carried a black gene. I guess I'm a closet genetist. Lambing is like Christmas to me. It is fun to see how many lambs each ewe has, what colors, and what kind of fleece. I love it! It is this reason that I have stayed with the Finns so long. I have made an effort to improve the fleece, size and productivity of my sheep, and I enjoy seeing the results. And I think changing to a breed of sheep that only gave twins would be boring.

I have difficulty parting with my older ewes, and keep many of them until they die. My first Finn ewe, FSW 2061, lived until she was 13. She left me with twins the year she died. She had 43 lambs in 13 years, for a lifetime productivity of 330%. Not too bad for a 13 year old! Her great-granddaughter gave me a set of sextuplets this year. She has had 23 lambs in 6 years, for a 383% lifetime lambing. Two great-great granddaughters gave me quads and triplets at 24 months of age, and a great-great-great granddaughter gave me twins at 12 months. A very productive ewe line.

A few other notable ewes from my line are FSW 9088, who had 35 lambs in 12 years. Her granddaughter had quintets this year. 3L 235 died last year at 10 after raising triplets. There are 11 and 12 year old ewes out of my bloodlines who are still producing lambs,

and a ram aged 12 that is still breeding. And 3L 422 had triplets this year at age 9. She has had 30 lambs in 9 years (2-3-3-3-4-4-4-3). This old ewe is a pet, and will still take a bottle if offered!

I have found the Finns to be a very easy breed to handle. The rams are docile, and my girls, 9 and 11, are safe in the pens with them. Many of my sheep carry names like Angel, Pocahontas, John Smith, Kermit - depending on the current Disney movie the girls have watched! There is something irresistible about Finn babies!

For me the most important traits are productivity, size and fleece. I contend that there is no reason to produce large quantities of lambs if they aren't good for anything. Fleece uniformity has been a big issue with me. Many of the original Finns I got 20 years ago had hairy britches, which were common then, and the wool wasn't uniform. I have no sheep that are hairy now, and just produced a black ram with the most perfect fleece I've ever seen on a black Finn. It has a nice crimp, high luster, and uniform throughout. He looks like he has just been carded and clipped. One more ram in the flock! The "potato chip" factor is alive and well in my flock - "no one can have just one". I breed for size so the big bellies of the ewes aren't dragging on the ground. Large udders are another priority for me - I don't have time to bottle extra lambs.

I have flown lambs everywhere. I sell the wethers locally, and sell the lambs that do not sell as breeding stock as market lambs. There is a strong ethnic market here.

I don't actively market the wool. I don't have the time to keep them covered, or to ship the wool. I do have a few local buyers who get fleeces right after I shear in Feb. I do shear about a month before I lamb. I have had better luck with lambing if I do that. The ewes stay under a shelter instead of lambing outside, and the lambs do not get cold. This greatly reduces the number of lambs who get pneumonia.

FINNPOWER: Grace Hatton's purebred 7 year old Finn ewe Grillka, named for the Klingon warrior princess, had quintts this year in Pennsylvania. The twins she had last May each had twins this April.

Elizabeth Luke's ideas for low maintenance bottle lambs: A new management technique I have tried this year for my two bottle lambs is leaving a hanging pig feeder filled with a half&half mixture of ground soy(48% protein) and ground corn(7% protein), in the creep which has a heat lamp. It's also available to the other lambs. This allowed me to go to just two milk feedings per day for the bottle lambs when they were two weeks old. They get as much as they can hold from the bottle, about 12 oz for the hungriest one. At three weeks of age there is no size difference between them and the dam fed lambs. Of course I put out mineral salt, good grass hay free choice, and water on a daily basis as well. The dams get a simple mix of 25% soy meal to 75% whole corn (by weight) twice daily, with the amount adjusted for the number of lambs suckling. The ground creep mix is a lot more palatable to the lambs than the high energy pelleted feed which was pretty much ignored by young lambs in past years. Mixing it this way costs me about \$11.50 per hundred lbs. Gradually I will adjust the ratio and go to whole corn as the lambs grow. All lambs are protected from overeating disease by the colostrum from their dams who were vaccinated about 3 weeks prior to lambing. Once pasture season arrives the grain feeding will be eliminated in favor of management intensive grazing. I have found that as long as there is fresh grass presented twice a week, the need for grain is totally eliminated.



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OPP negative & entered in  
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[www.geocities.com/finnsheep](http://www.geocities.com/finnsheep)  
eeppa  
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Grant W. Blackburn  
"Anzar Sheep"  
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(540) 463 4594  
anzar@rockbridge.net  
Purebred Finnsheep  
Breeder of Finnsheep since  
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livestock. We have never  
had scrapie, foot rot or  
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Beautiful healthy reg. rams  
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#### WISCONSIN

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Wee Croft Finnsheep  
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(920)699-7420  
weecroft@execpc.com  
www.weecroftfinnsheep.com  
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White and colored  
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roving, and yarn.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:**  
*Please send all  
corrections,  
complaints, great  
ideas, Finnpower  
items, etc to Grace  
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hatton@microserve.  
net*