

## COLORFUL FINN FLOCKS ACROSS THE US

Leanne Mason of Triple L Finnsheep, WA, says, she picked up her first black finn from Max LaRosh at the '87 Finn sale, crossed him with her white ewes with black genes - that she didn't know they had - and went from there. She has lots of colored finns, mostly black, gray and some roans. Some have white faces and stockings; occasionally a white stocking, especially in the rear, that goes up onto the rump a ways, but that is rare. The grays have black faces and legs. When the grays are sheared, they look very uniformly gray. She says, " I've found that while all the lambs start black, the gray ones turn at about a year old. I have a line of rams that are almost all gray after age two. I have total black fleeces, and then a "salt and pepper" type of fleece that combines black, white and gray in an all over combo. Almost all of my blacks have white on their face and legs.

There is a lot of variation in the wool quality, just as there is in the white fleeces. While my first black finns tended to have very coarse, large curled wool, I now have finns with a very fine crimp and high luster. This is as fine a fleece as I produce with my white ones. On the other side of the scale though, I have finns with absolutely no crimp at all in the blacks. It just varies highly with breeding. I have found that breeding my blacks to a high quality white animal has produced excellent fleeces."

Linda Witt says her Misty Mountain Farm, VA, is the largest supplier of Finn fleece, white and colored, to the fiberarts community. We have also provided foundation breeding stock to most of the farms now breeding colored Finns. IWe have been breeding colored Finnsheep for over ten years. At this point, our flock is predominantly colored and we market raw fleece, as well as processed rovings and felting batts, to a diverse group of fiberartists, through our retail division of Misty Mountain Farm. We have been breeding predominantly for fleece production and overall fleece quality. Most of our breeding stock is mature and the flock has supported a 400-450% average lamb production.

In viewing the color genetics, the black gene is a true recessive in the Finnsheep as a breed. Other colors, such as the moorits and grays are recessive to the black. We have encountered a significant diversity in our color range, from light and dark browns to charcoal and pale grays. Most of the color variation, however, is inconsistant and unpredictable.

While we have sold a few rams to commercial sheep breeders, our market is predominately to handspinners and felters. These purchasers appreciate the fine, soft wool, as well as the winning personalities, prolificacy, and easy maintainence of the breed.

White and colored wool both sell equally well and we can never produce enough to meet our demand. Spinners will pay more for colored fleeces, however, since it is not as available. White

fiber can be dyed to meet artists' needs, and therefore from a sales stand point, beautifully dyed fleece becomes even more attractive because of the versatility.

From our experience, Colored Finns have been more marketable. There are fewer colored animals available and those raising them have usually had more interest in the fiberarts, putting more emphasis on fleece characteristics. As a group, I would say that the colored Finns tend to be a bit smaller animal, but carry a much heavier and much more consistent fleece.

Clifford Hatch of Upinngil Farm, MA, says, " I have brown/black Finns that fade to brown/red and black/perhaps spotted that fade to gray depending on age and weathering. They are seldom pure black in the purebred although some of the crosses have been black all over. The purebreds seem to always have a star on their forehead or a white sock at least. Sometimes we get a blaze of white or gray along the neck but usually the white or gray color occurs on the head and legs and feet. I don't believe that my black sheep that fade to brown are true moorit. And I have doubts whether some of my black animals are truly black. I think it might be more correct to say that some of the colored animals in my flock are spotted. That is, a white animal with a huge black spot covering almost its entire body with a blaze of white on the neck or head. If we followed a classification system similar to the one used by Icelandics this would certainly be the designation.

The fleeces sell well and we generally sell more colored fleeces than white to the homecraft types since I guess there is generally a lack of nice colored fleeces. I charge \$7.00 lb for white or black clean, high quality fleece for handspinning. If something has been particularly fine I have charged as much as \$8 lb. Average, good quality fleeces free from trash but from older animals are generally in the \$5 lb range. We have some customers that take all those wonderful fleeces that have felted on the animal for \$3 lb. They continue the felting and turn them into rugs and I am generally glad to be rid of them otherwise they would be on the compost heap (felted fleeces - - not the customer) .

As for animals I sell no breeding rams white or colored for less than \$300, I ask a minimum of \$150 for white ewe lambs (5mos) and colored ewe lambs \$200 this is probably the only area where I mark up the colored stock. I generally find that buyers who want several animals buy white, and customers buying a single animal buy colored. Occasionally someone will buy several colored but it is not the normal sale. They generally want to add a colored animal to their white flock. Sorry that I have been out of touch with the FBA lately, but I had a serious accident on the farm and am only now catching up with things."

Carol Winchell, of Stoe Creek Farm, NJ, sent gorgeous wool samples to show the actual colors in her Finn flock which even includes a musket or fawn fleece. She has a brown/silver shade, a couple of silver/browns, charcoal/blues or shaelas as well as warm brown and black. In addition she has ewes with panda eye-spots and piebalds. She sent photos of her piebald ewe with her offspring including a piebald lamb. The ewe is mostly black with white head/neck and panda eyespots and white spots on her body, over the back and rump.

Bobby Bayne, of Bittersweet Hollow, IL, has about 20 ewes, of which half are colored. The colors range from dark to light grey and include some with a brownish hue mixed with the dark. She says Finn wool is softer than Shetland wool and has a silk-like feel and luster. She says that what sells best for her is what she seems to have the least of at any given time!

Shawna Valenzuela, Finnlandia Farm says she currently has about 30 head of purebred Finns of which about half are various shades of black, chocolate and grey. You can view some of Shawna's Finns at her website: [www.angelfire.com/ca/finnlandiafarms/](http://www.angelfire.com/ca/finnlandiafarms/)

## Chief Shepherd's Message

### New Fees

The meetings were held in conjunction with the Annual finnsheep sale. A number of items were covered by both meetings and the minutes are published in this edition of Short Tales. While only a very small number attended the AGM other members forwarded written comment which was included in discussion. I thank those breeders for taking time to submit their views on the various Over June 18-19, 1999 the FBA held the Annual General Meeting (AGM) followed by a Directors meeting agenda items.

Two directors, Clifford Hatch and Linda Witt retired from the Board and the AGM elected Sandra DeMaster and Lonnie Cook to fill these vacancies. On behalf of the FBA I thank Clifford and Linda for their time and support of the Board, and welcome Sandra and Lonnie to the Board.

A number of issues were discussed at the AGM including:

- the breed standard where the consensus was not to change it at this time;
- the treasurers report which was referred to the Directors meeting;
- the questionnaire which provided good feed back on issues facing the FBA;
- registration transfers - referred to the Directors meeting, and
- it was decided to offer the combined Shepherd advertisement again next year.

After re-electing the current slate of officers for another year the Directors meeting focused on our financial situation. Discussion centered on how to maintain sufficient revenue to cover our operating expenses. A new regime of fees was agreed upon, effective 01/01/00 and is

published in this edition of Short Tales. In short it includes an annual dues, directory listing fee and to address concerns that some breeders tardily process transfer papers, a late transfer fee.

The returned questionnaires were read by Board members who expressed their appreciation for the time and work Elizabeth Luke put in to producing the questionnaire. The Directors present concluded it had been a worthwhile exercise providing good feed back on health issues, not changing the breed standard not supporting showing and updating the logo. In addressing the health issues Dr. Hunter agreed to head a committee aimed at formulating a health standard for use by breeders on a voluntary basis. (It is interesting to note that health issues are a high priority in the federal governments assistance package announced as a result of the recent 201 action by the sheep industry). More will be published on this in due course. Noting discussion on the breed standard at the AGM the Directors decided not to change the breed standard at this time nor change the policy on showing. As for the logo it was agreed to canvass membership with the aim of deciding the future logo at the next meeting. Any ideas on updating the logo would be appreciated.

For the past year our administration has been undertaken by Elizabeth Luke as Secretary and Sandra DeMaster, Treasurer. On behalf of the Board I thank both members for their work and support of the FBA. Both have agreed to continue with their respective roles for the ensuing year. Harry Koenig has been editor of Shirt tails for the last twelve months producing an outstanding newsletter. On behalf of the FBA I thank Harry for the extended hours of labor and effort necessary to produce such a high quality publication. Harry has retired and Grace Hatton has kindly agreed to take over production of Shirt tails.

While the national sale only attracted ten entries it was moderately successful with eight of the ten head being sold (sale results separate). However, breeders in attendance were surprised at the number of inquiries and level of interest displayed in the Finnsheep pens. Much interest came from commercial lamb growers who had 'crunched the numbers' and concluded they were better off with a flock that was prolific rather than one that grew big single lambs, suggesting the market was not for huge cuts of meat but rather tender succulent lamb of average size. From a public relations point of view the sale was very successful in spreading the Finnsheep word to the mid-west.

With so few entries in this years national Finnsheep sale the Board discussed the future of the national sale. While Banner Sales had effectively handled the publicity and sale the meeting concluded that unless there are more entries the annual sale is rather redundant and decided not to hold a national sale in 2000. Instead the meeting agreed to sponsor a display including individual breeder stands at the WI Shepherd's symposium mid next year. The AGM and directors meeting will be held at the same time. More details will be published closer to the time.

In conclusion, I want to mention that our membership numbers are increasing gradually . On behalf of the FBA I extend a warm welcome to those breeders who have become new members

and look forward to your active participation in our organization where the focus is on producing high quality, healthy Finnsheep.

With Fall just around the corner I hope your preparations for breeding and the winter ahead are progressing well and happy shepherding as we enter the new millennium.

## FBA Annual Meeting

Springfield, IL June 18, 1999

The annual meeting was opened by FBA President, Grand Blackburn at 8 p.m.

Those present were Grant Blackburn, Paul Hunter, Lonnie & Patti Cook.

Patti read the minutes from the 1998 annual meeting held in Longmont, CO. Paul moved & Lonnie seconded the approval of the minutes.

### TREASURERS REPORT

The Treasurers Report was read by Lonnie Cook. At the end of 1998 there was a balance of \$813. At the start of 1998 the balance was about \$2500. The large decrease was due to the cost of setting up the new registrar for our registrations and for the cost of the new display. The June 1 1999 balance was \$1617. There was some discussion on the Templeton Mutual Bond. It was mentioned that there were 180 registrations in the past year (1998) and 97 so far this year (1999) .

### ELECTION OF DIRECTORS

The terms of Linda Witt & Clifford Hatch have expired. Lonnie read an e-mail via Elizabeth Luke in which she nominated Lonnie Cook & Sandy DeMaster for directors. Grant nominated Naomi Smith. Nothing was found in the constitution that a person needs to attend 2 of the last 3 general meetings to be elected as a director. It was moved & seconded that Lonnie & Sandy be directors this year and bring in Naomi Smith next year.

### OLD BUSINESS

### REGISTRY

Karey Kleghorn introduced herself to the Finn Breeders at the sale grounds today. Karey runs the breed registry and advised all was well with Finn registrations.

#### SHEPHERD ADVERTISEMENT

It was noted that there was not as much response this year to the combined breeders ad in the Shepherd. There was some discussion on whether or not to advertise again next year. It was decided to offer it again to the breeders.

#### SEMEN IMPORTATION

The semen from Finland has been imported. There are photos of the ram selections on the web page. If anyone is interested they are to contact Elite Genetics. Their phone number is 319-568-4551.

#### DISPLAY

The display has been used several times this past year with good response.

#### WEB PAGE

There have been some 2500 hits from around the world on the web page since December 1997. It costs \$90. every 6 months to run the web page. It was decided that the web sight be paid out of the general fund at present.

#### NEW BUSINESS

The Corporate address for the Finnsheep Breeders Assoc. has previously been Pipestone in Minnesota and due to neglect has not been an active entity. CT Corporate Systems was hired to re-instate the Association as a Corporation. Grand Blackburn will be contacting John Frank, a Finn breeder, in Minnesota to see if we can use his address as the Corporate address which would save the Association \$200 per year.

#### QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire results showed a strong interest in health issues, not changing the breed standard and also an interest in updating the Finnsheep logo. The options as to a health standard were discussed. Voluntary individual standards is a possibility. It was suggested that a committee be put together to form a health standard. The directors will work more closely with these & other concerns the questionnaire presented in their meeting. Paul Hunter is to head up this committee.

#### U.S. SEED STOCK ASSOCIATION

Naomi Smith had attended a Seed Stock meeting in Maryland and had suggested to Grant that our Association become involved. Paul Hunter has attended their meetings in the past. He gave some background information on the organization and voiced his concerns in joining. It was decided to not join at this time.

## REGISTRATION TRANSFERS

There was some discussion on having the transfers done on a timely basis & possibly using a sliding scale fee. The directors will approach this matter more closely in their meeting.

## BREED STANDARD

Because of the written correspondence and results of the survey the consensus was to leave the standard as is for now.

Paul Hunter moved to adjourn the meeting at 10 p.m.

## FBA Board of Directors Meeting

Springfield, IL

June 19, 1999

The directors meeting was called to order at 10:30 a.m. Those attending were Lonnie and Patti Cook, Paul Hunter and Grant Blackburn.

The minutes from the 1998 meeting in Longmont, Colorado were read & approved.

## TREASURERS REPORT

Discussion focused on increasing the annual dues, directory listing fees and raising transfer fees along with a deadline. Grant suggested we implement a new regime of fees. It was decided that, starting January 1, 2000, the annual dues will be \$25. Those paying the annual dues would receive a discount on registrations as in the past. Breeders listing will be \$30. The listing in the newsletter will include name, address plus 20 words. Anything over and above the 20 words will be \$1.00 a line. The \$30 charge also includes the web page listing. Transfers will be 2 1/2 times normal fee after 90 days past physical

transfer of sheep. For non-members or if annual dues have not been paid registrations/transfers will be Double the regular fee. New membership will be \$35 which includes the annual fee.

## ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The nominees were Grant Blackburn and Sandy DeMaster for President. Since there was a tie on the vote Paul moved we keep our current slate of officers. It was seconded.

#### SECRETARIAL AND TREASURER DUTIES

Elizabeth Luke agreed to continue as the Association Secretary. Grant will confirm Sandy's decision to stay on as Treasurer.

#### EDITORSHIP OF SHORT TALES

Grant proposed that while Harry Koenig has done an excellent job with the newsletter, we should rotate the responsibility. Grace Hatton has expressed an interest in the editorship. Lonnie moved to allow someone else to take over as it was 12 month trial position and that we accept Grace as the new editor. It was seconded.

#### BREED STANDARD

Per the discussion at the annual meeting, it was the director's decision not to change the Breed Standard at this time.

#### HEALTH STANDARD

Paul Hunter volunteered to take care of putting together a suggested Health Standard. There will be information presented in the next newsletter asking for suggestions.

#### NEXT YEAR'S SALE

The decision was made to have no National Sale next year and that we correspond our annual meeting with a symposium or something of similar nature.

#### NEWSLETTER

If the price of the Short Tales can be reduced, it was suggested that it be sent out 3 times a year. There was discussion as to having the previous edition of the newsletter on the Web Page and also the possibility of sending the newsletter via e-mail to those who have access to help save postage and printing costs. There was no decision made on this subject.

Paul moved and Lonnie seconded to adjourn the Director's Meeting.

## Finnsheep Breeders' Association Fees

Effective 01/01/00

New membership: \$35 (includes annual dues)

Annual Dues: \$25

Directory Fee: \$30

(includes name address plus 20 words.

Anything over 20 words: \$1.00/line.

Listing in newsletter and web-page)

Late transfer fee: 2.5 times normal fee after 90 days past physical transfer of sheep

Non members or unpaid annual dues: Double regular registration fee.

## PROGRESSIVE SHEEP BREEDERS' SOCIETY

By Dr. Paul Hunter, DVM

When the board of directors reviewed the returned surveys last June it was apparent that members were very concerned about health issues. They were concerned about avoiding the introduction of new diseases into their flocks. This was one reason that the national sale was suspended.

After some discussion it was decided that the breed should sponsor some type of voluntary health program. Thus the name above. This will help producers have a guideline in helping them buy sheep from flocks with a similar health status. It is not without precedent as the swine producers have such a program. A side benefit will be to promote the breed. I can also see cooperative advertising by those who choose to join this society.

I would like to emphasize that this is a rough draft of the program and is open for comment. If you have a catchier name please let me hear about it. The program as presented is fairly strict. Keep in mind the stricter it is the better the assurances are. On the other side if it is too strict

very few will participate. At some time it may become necessary to appoint some one to certify producers and maintain the data base.

The diseases to be monitored would include scrapie, johnes, OPP, Brucella ovis, external parasites and foot rot. Caseous lymphadenitis could be added when it becomes available. The program would require annual visits by an accredited veterinarian to inspect the flock, review records and take any needed blood samples. The samples would need to be run by an accredited state or federal lab. Should a producer reach the levels for all the diseases as a package or say be one star for one disease and two star for another?

One Star level requirements:

1. Flock inspection by accredited veterinarian stating there is no evidence of foot rot, external parasites or abscesses. This is to include a written review of your current health program
2. Negative OPP AGID test of all animals over 8 months of age.
3. Enrollment in the Voluntary Scrapie Certification Program. This requires permanent ID and record keeping.
4. Negative Johnes AGID test of all animals in the flock over 8 months of age.
5. Negative B. ovis eliza test on all rams over 6 months of age.
6. A valid working relationship with a veterinarian.
7. A health monitoring system that include all deaths with probable cause, and treatments given.

Two Star Requirements:

1. Repeat all test and inspections and reviews as above.
2. All tests must be negative.
3. Veterinary inspection to include past years health records
4. Any additions to flock must be from a flock of the same level or higher, this includes status date for the scrapie program.

Three Star Requirements:

1. Repeat all tests and annual inspections and reviews as above.

Four Star Requirements:

1. Repeat all tests and inspections and reviews as above.

Five Star Requirements:

1. Must meet requirements to be a certified scrapie flock.
2. Annual inspection and review of records.
3. Test 20% of the flock annually to maintain status.

I hope this preliminary program sparks some interest. Comments can be directed to the author at 1-419-628-3532 or drhunter@bright.net

## NOT JUST BLACK OR WHITE

By Grace Hatton

When I bought my first Finnsheep in 1985, some folks advertized that they had black in addition to white Finnsheep. With the recent popularity of Shetland and Icelandic sheep in an array of colors, Finns are turning up in all sorts of colors as well. The FBA some years back allowed registration of piebald sheep with large spots of a different color from the body color so now it's no holds barred. Genetically, Finnsheep are related to both Shetland and Icelandic sheep and probably have all the same potential for the color variations of those breeds.

In addition to white, Shetland breeders make a distinction on their registration forms of four shades of grey: light grey, grey, bluish grey (emsket), and a dark steely grey (shaela), resembling black frost. Then there is black, of course.

There are the beige to brown colors: light greyish brown (musket), fawn which is off white to beige with brown fiber, the "golden fleece" or light yellow-brown (mioget), shades between fawn and dark reddish brown (moorit) and finally dark brown.

Then the Shetland breeders make distinctions between thirty different markings such as having a blazed face, a circle of a different color from the body around the neck or the entire neck a

different color from the body or stockings or white spot on the top of the head. They list eight distinct types of variegated body coloring ranging from roaning to patterns that would suggest brindle or merle coloration. They recognize ten different patterns of color on the face compared to the body. There are six body patterns that vary between the mouflon coloration and darker or lighter brisket or darker or lighter belly. There is a further general pattern of fading at the outside of the wool.

For Icelandic breeders, white can range from the whitest white through creams and tans. Blacks include blue-black, inky black, silvery black and brown black. Browns (also called moorit in Iceland) range from pale beige, orange-apricot, taffy, milk chocolate, chestnut, dark brown, mocha and silvering browns. Badger-faced includes a wide range of fleece colors, from buff and champagne through oatmeal also parts of the fleece may have gray or silver bases to the fiber. Grays range from blue gray, lilac, medium silver, dark gray, and brown grays. Finally what are considered mixed colors are fleeces that have an undercoat that is a different color than the outer coat which produces a true tweed yarn.

Where do all the colors come from? They are buried in the genes of your sheep - - even the white ones. The gene interactions are pretty complex. If you want more info on color inheritance, join the sheep-color-genetics mailing list on onelist.com or if you want all the really heavy duty technical mendelian stuff, check out the website at [http://www.angis.org.au/bin/Databases/BIRX/birx\\_doc?mis+13](http://www.angis.org.au/bin/Databases/BIRX/birx_doc?mis+13) which even shows dominant black as possibility in northern short tailed sheep. Substituting mis+1, or +2, or +3, etc in the above address will bring up other inheritances for colors and patterns.

## COLORED FINNSHEEP IN FINLAND

By Sandy De Master

Finn wool is soft and lustrous. This characteristic makes Finn wool unique because luster is very rare in medium grade wools and is most often found in the longwooled breeds which tend to have a higher micron count and a coarser hand.

My interest in raising Finnsheep grew out of my appreciation for their wool. Upon researching the breed, I learned that Finns are white, black, brown, and gray. In this country I was only familiar with white and a few black Finns and thus decided to make a trip to Finland to learn more about these sheep and determine if I would be able to import semen from colored Finn rams. I contacted a breeder of moorit Finnsheep, Jill von Weymarn, who kindly arranged a week's visit with some of the leading Finnsheep breeders in the country.

First of all, a bit about the history of Finnsheep: The Finnish Landrace Breed developed from original home-bred stock. It had originally existed in the eastern portion of Finland, where it remained "purebred" or not crossed with any other breeds of sheep. These early ancestors of today's Finnsheep were descendants of the Nordic Short-Tailed Breed. It is said that the Vikings were largely responsible for disseminating this breed in their travels. Today's descendants of this breed include Finnsheep, Icelandics, Shetlands, Spelsau, and Gotland sheep. All of these breeds are characterized by a short woolless tail.

Two of these cousins, Shetland and Icelandic sheep, are known for their variety of wool colors. Shetlands have eleven recognized colors and Icelandics seventeen. (For more information see "Colour Inheritance in Icelandic Sheep and Relation between Colour, Fertility, and Fertilization" by Stefan Adalsteinsson).

Interestingly enough, Finnsheep have shared these colors and markings for centuries. In a meeting with a handspinner and owner of Finland's only spinning shop, Satu reported to me that the ancient sheep of Finland were known as "Avenanmaan lammas". These early sheep were dual-coated, badgerfaced (pigmented belly, light dorsal part), and horned. I was actually able to see some of these sheep at a living history museum in Turku. They were smaller than today's Finns and both sexes were horned. Many of them were piebald (black and white) and they appeared to be dual-coated.

In 1918 the Finnish Sheep Breeders' Association was founded and the systematic improvement of Finnsheep began. Mr. Eino Huatagangas, director of this organization, told me that in the 1920's and 1930's 30% of Finnsheep were colored - mainly black, brown and gray. In 1986 only 7% were colored. Currently the number of colored Finns has increased to 12%. Of these 12 %, 8% are black, 3% brown, and 10% gray.

This renewed interest in colored Finnsheep has been spurred on by the resurgence in handspinning and the quest on the part of handspinners and weavers for quality natural colored wool.

Most of the breeders I met breed like color to like color for the purpose of achieving the purest depth of shade of each particular color. They believe that breeding black to brown, for example, can dilute the outcome in the next generation. They also select away from any white markings even on the face or top of the head. When I met with Marja-Leena Puntila of the Agricultural Research Center, she showed me pictures of spotted and patterned Finnsheep that would have brought a great sum of money in the US.

When I asked her if I could see these sheep, she informed me that they had been culled because their wool was not uniform in color! Thus, the trend today in Finland is to select for solid colors with minimal if any white markings.

Those of you that are familiar with Shetland or Icelandic colors will notice that I have not mentioned the color "fawn" or beige. This color had not been observed in Finland for quite some time. But last year I received a letter from my friend Jill informing me that in breeding for moorit Finns, she had a fawn-colored lamb born! She said the Finnsheep Sheep Breeders' Association was so surprised that they were sending a representative out to her farm to observe the color! She did send me a picture and wool sample of the lamb,

which was indeed fawn. This birth was in keeping with genetic theory as gray/fawn is a "pattern" which is recessive to white but dominant over no pattern (black or brown).

Thus, the introduction of Finnish semen into the US gene pool should provide us with wool that is uniform and a variety of natural colors that have been selected for depth of shade and uniformity. Also, the combination of these new genetics with the existing ones in this country could make for some exciting surprises in the way of possible recessive traits coming to the foreground.

In summary, breeding for wool color and pattern in our Finnsheep should prove to be very exciting! Those of us who have imported semen should keep good notes and document our results. Hopefully, we will soon be introducing some new colors and patterns to our Finnsheep gene pool in the United States.

## OUTCROSSING TO BUILD FLOCK QUALITY

by Elizabeth K. Luke

Fascination with fleece character has led quite a number of individuals into the shepherding lifestyle. Though color variety is available in several established breeds, the docile nature and friendliness of Finnsheep makes them an excellent choice for the small flock setting. In our own experience, if a lamb is frequently handled during its first weeks of life, it will learn to trust rather than fear. Of course this can be somewhat overwhelming when more than 10 sheep at a time want personal attention! An important factor to consider in the establishment of any flock is genetic diversity. This is especially true when beginning a natural colored flock due to fewer sources. Our flock of 52 purebreds at Stillmeadow Finnsheep has been developed out of nine distinct bloodlines acquired from six source flocks. Pedigree information on the seedstock has proved useful for breeding decisions.

At this time we have fourteen colored ewes which range from solid black to silver grey. Ten of them have a variety of white markings on face, legs, and tail. A favorite is the "panda bear" look - black body with white head and throat, black ears and black circular eye patches. This comes directly from their dark sire whose white head shows grey freckles and a single black eye patch.

Another sixteen ewes are white, but carry genes for color. All of them result from using our elder colored sire on pure white outcross ewes. These Finns will produce either white or colored progeny depending upon breeding ram choice.

The remaining group of seventeen ewes are from our carefully preserved pure white lineage. We feel it's as important to retain a distinctly unpigmented line as well as to develop color. The white wools are generally soft, lustrous, and consistent in each generation. Handspinners have discovered the silky handle and the demand is strong. Well kept, skirted fleeces sell for \$5 to \$6 a pound.

With the blacks, consistency of fleece type in a flock takes longer to establish. Due to the recessive nature of color in wool, variety of texture also can surface. We have experienced the entire range from finely crimped all the way to the Icelandic style straight coat. One dark ewe with very soft, gently wavy fleece exhibits a mane on the back of her neck. Her daughter appeared to have lustrous straight "fur" as a young lamb. It fell out at two months and was replaced by soft, wavy ringlets of wool. A set of black quadruplets produced two entirely different fleece types. The two solid color lambs grew open wavy fleeces which became grey at six weeks. The pair showing facial spots grew close, well crimped fleeces which are still black at seven months of age. For the ever increasing group of fiber enthusiasts, the handspinners & felters, this variety of wool pigment and texture is a world of inspiration limited only by their own imaginations.

The challenge to the Finn purebreeder is to insure quality in our colored Finns equivalent to the quality found in the best white flocks. We must accentuate the strengths of this breed; prolificacy, maternalism, and multiseason lambing. Naturally, fleece quality, micron count, and luster in colored Finnsheep are also important selection criteria. As we achieve these goals, our strong lambs will join new flocks and "speak for themselves".

## PALAK GOSHT

(Spinach Lamb Curry)

You need:

2-2 1/2 lb leg of lamb

1-2 red chillies

1-2 green chillies

pinch tumeric

pinch cummin

1" green ginger

a few cloves

8oz onions

2oz ghee (clarified butter)

1/4 bunch spinach

3tsp salt

chopped coriander leaves to garnish

Wash and cut meat into even portions. Grind chillies, tumeric,, cummin, ginger and garlic. Slice onions

Heat ghee. Fry onions, add ground ingredients and fry thoroughly. Add meat and a little water, leave to cook until meat is nearly done.

Wash and chop spinach. Add salt and cook without water. Grind cooked spinach and add to meat. Continue cooking until meat is tender. Serve hot sprinkled with chopped coriander leaves.

## Who Ya Gonna Call?

### Board & Officers

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