



Short Tales

Finnsheep Breeders Association

Official registry for Finnsheep in the U.S.A. since 1971



Photo Credit: Cherish Duerst

Chief Shepherd's Message

-by Haley Campbell

EVERYONE NEEDS A LITTLE VITAMIN M

Lambing season is either in full swing or wrapped up for most shepherds. While most of us can agree that it is the most wonderful time of the year, it can also bring the most heartache and stress if we are not adequately prepared for the new brood. That is where "Vitamin M" comes into play – management!

One of the phrases I always tell my students is, "You can't manage what you don't measure/monitor." This applies to nearly every aspect of livestock management – lambing records, veterinary practices, pasture rotations – you name it! As the traditional lambing season comes to a close, I'd like to focus a little on what producers should be measuring or monitoring to prolong their successes or create new ones in the future.

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Chief Shepherd's Message ... Continued

LAMBING RECORDS

Every lamb born should have some degree of data recorded. To me, basic data includes sex, birth weight, birth type, dam, and sire. Eventually, you'll likely also include an eartag number. You may also include some metrics on lamb vigor. Did it get up right away to nurse? Did it need to find the meaning of life before it attempted to stand? You should also record if you needed to treat it with Nutri-drench, Survive!, BoSe, or any other oral or injectable supplement.

MILKING ABILITY

For the ewes, it is important to monitor that they have enough milk to meet the needs of their lambs. Ewes will usually start to "bag up" 2-4 weeks prior to lambing. This is when the mammary gland grows in size in preparation for lactation, but actual colostrum/milk production does not begin until about a week prior to lambing. When a ewe lambs, it may be beneficial to help pull the plug from the teat so the lamb can nurse more easily. This can also help to evaluate if she has colostrum. If you have a BRIX refractometer (\$20 on Amazon), you can also evaluate colostrum quality.

BEHAVIOR

Behavior is a culling criterion. Usually, I use this phrase in reference to a ram or other overly dangerous individual in a flock. However, I see no problem in applying it to a ewe that decides motherhood is not for her. Every operation is different, but in my flock, if a ewe rejects one or more lambs, she gets a first strike. I will typically give her a second chance, especially if there are extenuating circumstances (such as maiden ewes, dystocia, weak lambs, etc.). Though, this season, I had two ewes to whom I gave a second shot, and they squandered it magnificently. Moving forward, I will likely be less gracious to ewes with less-than-desirable maternal instincts! Had I not recorded these issues from the past, I may not have recalled which ewes were my problem children.

So, as the year continues on, I encourage you to keep records and use those records to make management and culling decisions.

Remember – a short pencil is more reliable than a long memory!

Take care,
Haley Campbell



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Notes from the Board

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Please fill out the listening survey! We will be reviewing the results in the 2nd quarter. Link here:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc69XJSxReNst48HspptUS1m88GvwP5D4C1zoemlkZWStDa6w/viewform?usp=dialog>

A discussion on the breed standard will occur at our monthly board meetings. Please share ideas you may have to strengthen how we as an Association define the characteristics of our breed.

Please remember that Associated Registries moved in late 2024. Their new address is P.O. Box 27, Sedalia, MO 65302. Work orders, fees, and other correspondence should be sent to that address. The correct work order is on the website with our minimally increased fee structure, as implemented in the beginning of 2025.

The website design person, who was building the means for us to move away from AR, has stopped communicating with us. We have received another quote and are considering the options.



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Get involved in a committee!

Fiber Committee

Contact: Donna Putnam
dputnam.fiber.art@gmail.com
(816) 694-6801

Commercial/NSIP Committee

Contact: Catherine Precht
cclambandwool@gmail.com
(320) 296-8025

Dairy Committee

Contact: Cherish Duerst
2cabbageheads@gmail.com
(218) 556-8159

Youth/Education Committee

Contact: Laura Timney
Fuzzlop@hotmail.com
(302) 354-8151

Constitution Committee

FinnsheepBreedersAssociation@gmail.com

The Board is always looking for volunteers to help with planning and projects. To get involved, contact the representative from the committee you are interested in.



Photo Credit: Catherine Precht

Constitution Committee

Several changes are needed to the constitution... There are items that are no longer accurate that need to be fixed, for example, where our Non-Profit is registered.

Would you be able to give up a few hours and work with some fellow shepherds to help us get this updated?

Reach out to a member of the board and let's get this completed.



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What Makes a Super Sheep?

- by Elizabeth Kinne Gossner



The FBA Breed Standard is a starting point. But attractive photos don't tell the whole story. The challenge is present whenever new sheep are added to a flock.



The Breed Standard Ewe pictured is FBA 23225, Stillmeadow 617 "MINT", a triplet born in her dam's 113th month. Mint became a flawless dam producing 25 lambs in 8 litters, exceeding a 300% lambing average. She was part of the third generation of ewes within our flock which began in 1994.

Photo credit: Elizabeth Kinne Gossner

The Breed Standard Ram is FBA 23900, Stillmeadow 647 "ROAMIN", a twin from Mint's initial lambing at 12 months. He proved his worth as a sire between 2008 and 2013 by creating 65 lambs in 20 litters. Success like this is not promised, but can be predicted as a flock develops.



Photo credit: Elizabeth Kinne Gossner

Our genetic base was sourced from early breeders including Brian Magee, Linda Witt, and Clifford Hatch (UPI). We aimed for gentle temperaments, ease of lambing, and maternal attitude in addition to favorable conformation and high quality fleece. When outstanding traits were recognized we found that selective line breeding was a key factor for strengthening the flock.

I believe much of our progress can be credited to the choices made by the shepherds from whom we acquired our first Finns. I envisioned keeping sheep which would become my friends and discovered that Finnsheep were indeed the perfect choice.



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Shepherd Spotlight - Daisy Timney

Hello, my name is Daisy Timney, I'm 20yrs old and I've been raising Finnsheep for 15 years now. What I love about Finnsheep is their soft and versatile wool that can be used for a variety of projects. I have been crocheting for almost 10 years now, and have made many projects out of wool such as a dress, shawls, scarves, hats, and accessories such as headbands and scrunchies.

Recently, for the 4-H demonstration contest, I presented "Next Level Crocheting" where I reviewed patterns, hook sizes, yarn types, and how to read said patterns and how to make any substitutions to really customize each project. Sometimes patterns will call for a specific type of yarn such as Shetland, cashmere, or Merino.

Recently, for the wool lead line contest I participated in at the Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival this May, I made a shawl using a vintage pattern. The original pattern called for Shetland yarn in roving weight to be used. I ended up using a Merino blend and was pleased with the results. Although I didn't use Finnsheep wool for this particular project, I have done so with many others.





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Shepherd Spotlight - Daisy Timney

One of my past projects was a hat and mitten set where I used a Finn-Merino blend that made my items super soft and very warm and cozy for the winter months. Another recent project that highlights the versatility of wool is a breezy summer t-shirt that I crocheted using a lace weight yarn that contained 40% sheep and 30% alpaca wool and is the perfect light summer top to keep you cool!



If the pattern doesn't specifically call for another type of yarn, I like to use wool whenever I can, not only because of its versatility in colors, softness and weight but also because of its durability. Many of my wool items hold up better and last much longer than if I had used a synthetic fiber such as acrylic.

Something to remember though when working with natural fibers is proper care, knowing the shrinkage rate, whether or not the dye will run and ensuring that projects don't become felted are some important things to consider when thinking about what type of wool you want to use and what project it will be used for. This particular shawl I made was from the book "Crochet the Perfect Gift" and the pattern was the "Shell Scape Cape."



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Help us feature more about our wonderful sheep and our farms that raise them! Some new sections have been added to help us all share the wonderful things that can be done with our Finnsheep.

Also, if you have photos you want to share for us to use in the Short Tales, we would enjoy sharing your submissions!



Let us feature your
farm with a
Shepherd Spotlight
feature



Share your favorite dairy
recipe or an accomplishment
with your dairy Finnsheep



Share your favorite recipe
using lamb meat or an
accomplishment with your
finnsheep in regards to
their commercial production



Share your favorite fiber
project or an accomplishment
with your fiber Finnsheep

*Please send your submission to FinnsheepBreedersAssociation@gmail.com
to get your farm in the next edition of Short Tales!*



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Notes on Milking your Finnsheep

- by Cherish Duerst

Lambing season is upon us! And with that, comes an abundant supply of milk for the lambs, and sometimes also for us shepherds! Although Finnsheep are not technically considered a dairy breed, some of the Finn ewes out there have what it takes to provide milk for both their lambs, and their human family. Here are a few tips for you, the Finnsheep shepherd who has considered milking your ewes!

First off, be sure mama is eating enough. Haley has written some great articles in past Short Tales about nutrition and pregnancy. Also remember that alfalfa is great for milk making.

Next, there's the lamb logistics. Some ewes produce extra milk beyond what their lambs can drink for the first week or two. After a day or two and you're confident the lambs have had adequate colostrum, you can try milking to see how much extra she has. This amount will vary depending on how recently the lambs have nursed. If you're worried about taking too much from the babies, you can supplement them with milk replacer and creep food. The more is milked out, the more milk your ewe's body will think she needs to make. After a couple of weeks, your lambs will keep up with the milk she is producing and there will be none left for you. At week 4, you can start separating the babies for a few hours at a time (up to 12 but I personally recommend a max of 8). After some time without her lambs, you can milk and then return the lambs to mama. After weaning, you can continue milking 2-3 times a day until it's not worth the effort anymore.





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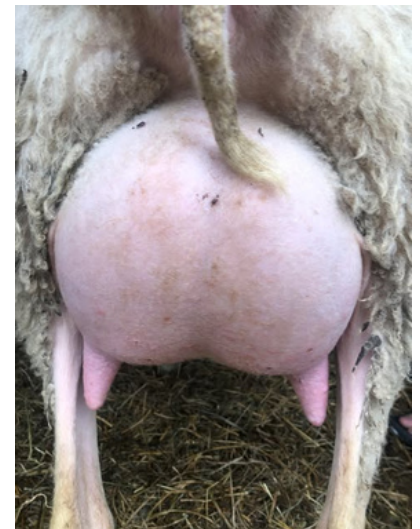
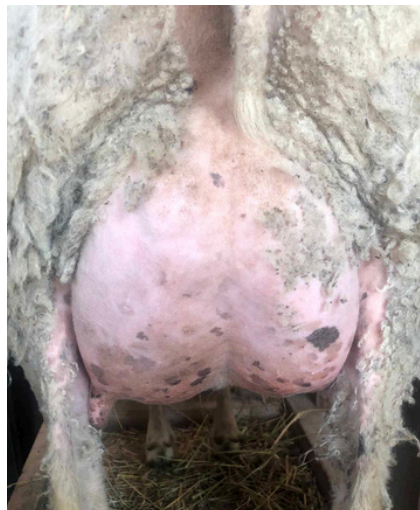
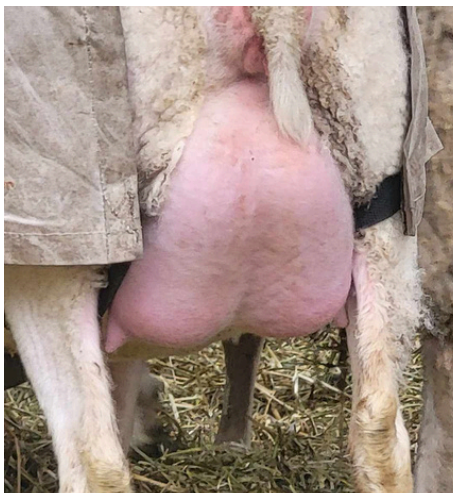
Notes on Milking your Finnsheep - Continued

- by Cherish Duerst

Photo Credit

As to milk withdrawal times: you will need to do some trial and error to find out how much time to keep the babies off. I recommend starting with no more than 8 hours for the sake of your ewe's udder. If she is a good producer with less udder capacity than milk making capability, you could ruin her by keeping the lambs off for so long that she gets engorged too far, creating lesions in her udder, scar tissue, and worst case scenario this opens the door to mastitis. If your ewe is not seeming overly swollen at 8 hours, it may be alright to increase your milk withdrawal time. Just keep an eye that you're not making her overly uncomfortable.

Finnsheep teats are wildly inconsistent. Some ewes have fist-sized downward facing teats that are hard for 4lb Finn lambs to latch onto, and are also a handmilker's dream. Other ewes have jelly bean teats that point straight forward and are wonderful for little mouths in the springtime - but you'll want some coconut oil or other slippery substance to make handmilking feasible, and you will need to milk from the side (not the back). Sometimes, what looks like a tiny teat will stretch and be surprisingly easy to milk from - it's always worth a try!





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Notes on Milking your Finnsheep - Continued

- by Cherish Duerst

Photo Credit

There are lots of options when it comes to milk stands. You can make yourself a halter with a soft rope and a slip knot, tie to the fence, and kneel in the mud with a mason jar. You could then decide that your knees and back didn't appreciate that experience, and build a little stand next to that fence, with a few bricks or some lumber and plywood, to get her up off the ground. If sheep wrestling is not on your bucket list, you may wish to employ some grain or another favorite snack to lure them onto your stand, and entice them to stick their head through the headpiece to access their favorite treat in a bucket on the other side. Close the headpiece, and commence to milk. Some ewes still need wrestling onto the stand the first time or two, until they remember that there are treats involved. Premier One and Sydell sell some nice milk stands with auto-locking headpieces. I personally have drooled over both, and then decided it wasn't worth the cash and went and built something instead.

Be careful graining your girls on the milk stand. Always start small and work your way up so as to avoid acidosis. Keep baking soda available to them free choice (your local family-run or co-op feed store probably has the best deal on bulk baking soda) and keep an eye on their feces. If it starts to clump up, back off on the grain. Learn the signs and treatment for acidosis "just in case."

If you're serious about venturing into milking your Finnsheep, and you've read the article this far, your mind is probably spinning with questions. Jot them down and submit to finnsheepbreedersassociation@gmail.com, and I'll do my best to help with these questions in your next edition of Short Tales! Happy lambing!



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Upcoming Events

Please share about events in your area by emailing finnsheepbreedersassociatin@gmail.com. We are hoping this can be a place that members can learn about events that are going on in their area, maybe we will draw other Finnsheep shepherds to join at the events

May 2 - Texas A&M AgriLife Livestock Guardian Dog Field Day - Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Center in San Angelo, Texas - sanangelo.tamu.edu/events/

May 3 - 99th Annual Cloverdale Ram Sale - Cloverdale (Calif.) Citrus Fairgrounds - www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100064713562773

May 3-4 - Maryland Sheep & Wool Festival - Howard County Fairgrounds in West Friendship, MD - www.sheepandwool.org

May 5-7 - American Lamb Board Targeted Grazing Workshop - Sulphur Springs, Texas - lambboard.com/grazing-workshops

May 9-11 - Shepherd's Harvest Sheep & Wool Festival - Lake Elmo, Minnesota - <https://shepherdsharvestfestival.org/>

May 14 - IU-USU-SDSU Extension Sheep & Goat Monthly Webinar - Online - www.uidaho.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_fWiLWKvuS2-dx3AJnWotNw

May 20-23 - International Wool Textile Organization Congress 2025 - Lille, France - www.iwto.org/congress-2025/

June 10-13 - National Grazing Lands Coalition Pacific Pastures Bus Tour - Richland, Wash. - www.grazinglands.org/pacificpastures

July 16-17 - Colorado Wool Growers Association Annual Convention - Montrose CO Pavilion - www.coloradosheep.org

July 23-25 - American Lamb Summit - University of Idaho in Moscow, Idaho - lambboard.com/lamb-summit

Sept. 12-13 - Utah State University Shepherd's Symposium and 50th Year Anniversary of the Importation of St. Croix Hair Sheep - USU's South Farm in Wellsville, Utah - chad.page@usus.edu

Oct. 10-11 - University of Florida Small Ruminant Short Course - Gainesville, Fla. - animal.ifas.ufl.edu/smallruminant/

ALABAMA

Artful Acres
Michelle Vilamaa
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ARKANSAS

Thistle Springs Farm
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homestead@castricumranch.com

Gray Farm
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thecgrayfarm@gmail.com

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NORTH CAROLINA

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919-452-3539
mauser338@yahoo.com

This directory is based on the information sent to the FBA by the Associated Registry. The board has also included everyone who sent us their receipts to ensure inclusion in this publication. If you paid for a 2025 breeder listing in the past year, but are not listed here, please let us know!

NEW MEXICO

Hyer Woods
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Stanley, NM 87056
505-459-9927
kerryjmower@gmail.com

NEW YORK

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Wandering Feet Farm
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Board of Directors

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cclambandwool@gmail.com

Director

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Photo Credit: Keeli Gay



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Photo Credit:
Haley Campbell

Visit us on the web: www.finnsheep.org

Associated Registry Office

P.O. Box 231, 305 Lincoln

Wamego, KS 66547

P: (785) 456-8500 F: (785) 456-8599

asregistry@gmail.com

Finnsheep Breeders Association, Inc.

Finnsheep breeders are now found across many States producing purebred and crossbred Finnsheep. Breeders look to the Finnsheep Breeders Association, Inc. to provide record keeping of registrations and transfers of the breed. Since the inception of the Finnsheep Breeders Association, Inc. the organization has drawn on the expertise of leading research authorities to enhance the Finnsheep breed and provide leadership in promoting the Finnsheep qualities and characteristics.

FBA Mission Statement

The American Finnsheep Breeders Association:

Provides a national pedigree breed recording system for Finnsheep. Maintains the Finnsheep breed standard for the USA. Promotes animal health within the breed and nationally. Fosters and promotes the proliferation and marketing of Finnsheep within the national sheep industry and abroad Is a national focal point for Finnsheep Breeders. Disseminates timely information to members on all matters relating to the breed