

Walking away, my guts in a knot

We had a traumatic event at the farm this week.

It wasn't unexpected— just one of those yearly events ya simply gotta get through.

You see, we had to send out a truckload of ram lambs.

It's an annual event, that time when we select the best candidates from the flock to be raised and sold as sires for another flock— and those left behind which are sent to the stock yards.

It's also a time when we take a hard look at the adults in the flock.

Did this one have a problem this year?

Did that one have a health issue?

Can we rely on her to have two or three lambs next year?

And the worst one of all— are those younger ones coming behind her better animals to represent the quality of the flock?

Raising sheep to sell as breeding stock, our flock is enrolled in a national online production program called GenOvis. We enter all the pertinent data to give us (and our customers) a true picture of what each animal is contributing to the flock.

Is this one a 'hitch-hiker', eating more than she produces? Or an asset to the flock?

Years ago, when we had dairy cattle, we were enrolled in ROP or Record of Performance, a production program recording milking production of each individual cow in the herd.

Sheep were also in ROP— later renamed Sheep Flock Improvement Program (SFIP), and now GenOvis— which recorded their weight gains, measuring every lamb at birth, 50 days and 100 days. As a result, the program calculates an ADG or Average Daily Gain for the first 50 days, and 100 days, which is important to someone looking for ewes to breed and raise lambs for meat. The higher the ADG, the less time (and feed) it takes to achieve that targeted weight for market.

So the past weeks we've spent hours poring over the flock data, identifying those animals in the flock that continue to

Ted Brown



give us good breeder lambs to sell to another shepherd.

But, when one does a production audit, some animals have to go.

And I hate it.

Early Tuesday morning, I loaded a bunch of ram lambs who had little potential as breeders, as well as a couple mature ewes who had health problems.

And they were off to the Ontario Livestock Exchange in St. Jacob's, better known as OLEX.

I always feel sick— almost like I've betrayed those animals who have done nothing wrong, except not grow as big or as quickly as those staying behind.

At OLEX, most are sold for meat, but on rare occasions, some are picked up to actually go back out to a flock.

Mind you, those that do go back out are not likely going to a good operation. Once they've been through the stock yards, they're exposed to virtually every sheep disease known to mankind.

And they take that exposure back to the rest of the 'flock' which most likely has additional health problems.

Seeing the ram lambs go doesn't bother me much, but I absolutely abhor watching an old ewe go out the door.

For the most part, she's been a kind, devoted mother; and we have worked in partnership for years— sometimes together in the wee hours of a frosty morning, bringing a lamb into the world.

As the last one dutifully climbed into the trailer, I stood there and listened as the door slammed shut and the latch bolted.

And I walked away— my guts in a knot.

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Congratulations!
Samantha Nelissen
on achieving your Bachelor of Science in Nursing with distinction, from the University of Western Ontario.
We are very proud of your accomplishments.
With Love from Mom, Rachael & all of your family.

Doug Enman and Cheryl Donaldson and Brenda McDonald and Danny Grelle are pleased to announce the engagement of their son
Jarret Enman
to
Karen Leckie
daughter of Ross and Jean Leckie.
Wedding to take place Oct. 20, 2012.

Jamie Lynn Bond
Congratulations
on receiving your Veterinary Technician Honours Diploma from Sheridan College and your recent completion of the Veterinary Technician National Exam to obtain your Registered status.
Love Mom, Dad & Brandon

Bob & Rita Bairstow cordially invite you to join us at a casual Open House as we celebrate our 50th wedding anniversary

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(rear of building)
Saturday, August 25, 2012
2:00 - 5:00 pm
Best wishes only, please