

COMMENT

Dear Angus, you had to leave much too soon

By Ted Brown
tedbit@hotmail.com



A Ted Bit

It's getting late, as I sit in this hotel room in China.

And I'm feeling incredibly sad.

While I've been on the other side of the world, we had a sad event at home.

Angus, our sweetheart ram, had to leave us.

The day before I left for China, he looked lethargic, laying down a lot.

When I opened the pen, he'd get up and walk around. But once I left, he'd lay down again.

He also stopped eating and drinking.

I gave The Sidekick two emergency contact numbers, and suggested she call the vet on Monday, to check him out.

When the vet arrived, she suspected he had a blockage in his urinary tract. 24 hours later, the blood tests confirmed it.

There were two options: surgery (estimated at \$5,000 to \$8,000, with no guarantee) or the obvious: he had to be euthanized.

The vet explained that if he wasn't dealt with immediately, he would eventually burst his urinary tract, and die a horrible painful death.

There really was only one option. Through Skype, we talked online. It sickened both of us: he had to be euthanized.

The second contact number I left with The Sidekick was the dead stock removal. Somehow, I had a gut feeling this might happen. My gut was bang on.

Wednesday morning, the vet dropped by, and later the stock removal truck picked up Angus.

Back in China, I was in a daze all day. I couldn't concentrate.

He was just an animal: so why would I let that bother me?

I guess because he was such a sweet gentle animal: a trait almost unheard of in rams.

We had such an incredibly special bond, not like a pet, but like a team member.

Morning and night, I'd go to his pen, as he stuck his head out through the head gate. He'd

rub his head against me, asking me to scratch behind his ears, his docked tail wagging like a dog.

He was huge, about 250 lbs., and as quiet and gentle as any lamb.

Wednesday was a horrible day: I thought back to the day we picked him up in Mount Forest, August, 2011. He was six months old.

The breeder showed him to us: he was in the pen with his brother and sister. He was majestic. The breeder opened the pen, placed his hand under Angus' jaw, and led him out without a halter. For the rest of his life, Angus allowed me to lead him with simply my hand under his jaw.

He was so quiet, and actually loving: I knew Angus and I were to be lifelong friends.

Morning and night chores, we shared special moments.

Angus had faced a couple bumps in the road. Two years ago, he had pink-eye during breeding season, and had to be isolated for three weeks while the antibiotics took over. And last August, he had a kidney stone. The urinary tract blockage was not a surprise.

I just hoped I'd be wrong. He had 100 per cent conception with his breeding group, so I'd figured he was on his way.

I felt horrible: partly for his death, and partly helpless that The Sidekick had to oversee the procedure on her own.

We talked on Skype that night, consoling each other.

As I signed off and shut down the laptop, that hotel room seemed to be the loneliest place in the entire world.

I dreaded going home to enter the barn and see that empty pen he's had since arriving in 2011.

I took a deep sigh, crawled into bed, and shut off the light.

And in the darkness: I cried.

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