

## NEW LAMB OWNER'S GUIDE



### INTRODUCTION:

We love our harlequin and babydoll sheep and lambs and want to be sure they get off to a great start in their new homes.

The following guide may answer some of your questions about our sheep and lambs and help you start out with the best chance for success.



### MEDICAL INFORMATION:

Vaccinations - All lambs have had a full series of CDT vaccinations. You can give them an annual booster if you like.

Tail banding – We usually band the lambs tails when we give them their first shot. We use the same tool we use to wether the ram lambs (see below). At first, the lambs do notice it. They will lay down. They will look at their tails. That only lasts about 20 to 30 minutes. Slowly, the steadily restricting band slows and stops the blood flow to the end of the tail and in a few short weeks the dried-up tail falls off.

*Tail banding is important for sheep! It helps them stay clean. Poop, mud, weeds and stickers get stuck in the long woolly, dangling tail creating health and comfort issues. Cropping the tail makes it much easier for the shearer to shear your sheep. Tails are hard to shear.*

Worming - Depending on if we are having a wet or dry season, your lamb may also be wormed. If it is dry and the lambs are not showing any signs of loose stool, we usually do not automatically worm them.

Sometimes, moving to a new home creates stress and if the lamb does have a small worm load, it may multiply. Oral sheep wormers are available at any livestock feed store. Follow the dose on the package. We recommend a syringe to administer wormer.

Wethering - A wether is a neutered ram. We neuter all our ram lambs who are not going to be herd sires. A ram wants to breed and butt things. That's just what makes them happy.

We wether our ram lambs using a technique called banding. We use a tool that stretches a thick, small rubber band very, very wide, slip the scrotum through, make sure both testicles are inside the scrotum, close the banding tool and slip it off leaving the band on the base of the scrotum.

*In case you are wondering; yes... it does cause discomfort. For about 20 or 30 minutes they will feel uncomfortable and lay down a lot... some quite dramatically. But after that, it is as if it never happened and the trade-off is a long, happy, healthy life.*

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## **Our miniature sheep breeds:**

*Both our babydoll and harlequin sheep should mature to between 24" and 27" tall. Both breeds can easily live into their late teens.*

**Harlequin Sheep** are a new, American breed of sheep. Our harlequin lambs are considered "breed up" stock. The ewes are registered as F1 Harlequins. American Purebred Harlequins are eight generations higher.

We do not breed American Pure Breds. The higher-level generations are unfortunately being bred to be too tall, to skidish and just not the pretty way we want them to look. So we don't breed them. We breed our F1 to FP level harlequin ewes to a babydoll ram. This gives us F1 Harlequins who are at least 50% babydoll. Some are 75% if they are from ewes who are also F1 Harlequins who are 50% babydoll.

**Babydoll Sheep** are an old breed first developed in England. Our babydoll sheep are registered with the Old English Babydoll Sheep Society and Registry (OEBSSR).

They are a miniature version of the southdown sheep. Babydolls have very woolly faces with wool growing very close to the eyes. *We shear and shave around our babydoll sheep chins and eyes often as they tend to get weeds and stickers stuck there.*

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## **FEEDING:**

Hay like burmuda grass hay should be the main diet. You can also give alfalfa but alfalfa can tend to make the sheep get fat. Sheep will always tell you they are hungry. We recommend feeding your sheep twice a day as much hay as they can finish casually in about 20 to 30 minutes.

## **TREATS:**

We recommend using grain as treats to keep your sheep tame and interested in you. New lambs are sent home with a pound of Lamb weaning pellets. They are small and easy for the lambs to eat. Each lamb gets about a cup a day. You can introduce other grains like 4 Way

Grain (corn, oat and barely mixed w/ molasses) or if they are getting a little too fat but you still want to give them treats by hand, rabbit pellet size alfalfa pellets mixed with a little grain.

**BE SURE YOUR SHEEP CAN NOT GET INTO THE GRAIN, HAY OR EVEN YOUR OTHER PETS FOODS! Sheep will gorge themselves, bloat and perish. They don't have an off button when it comes to food.**

**SUPPLIMENTS:** Sheep require a salt/mineral block or loose minerals. The minerals can be free fed and left with the sheep at all times.

**BE SURE YOUR GRAINS AND SUPPLIMENTS ARE LOW COPPER!**

Copper is toxic to sheep. Many grains and minerals that are on the market are for horses, cows, goats and pigs and have too much copper for your sheep. Keep your sheep away from the other animals grains and supplements. High copper is very dangerous for sheep.

**WATER:**

Your sheep should always have access to clean, cool water. If you are using a bucket, be sure it is very sturdy and heavy so the sheep can not turn it over or, if it has a handle, clip it to the fence so it stays upright.

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**HOUSING:**

Sheep require a night pen for safety from predators including dogs. The night pen does not need to be very large.

We use a three enclosure system:

- 1) the night house or barn that is sheltered from the elements and predator safe.
- 2) the primary enclosure that is attached to the night house large enough to gather the sheep in when you need to catch them up.
- 3 the pasture... a large grazing area.

*If all you have is a large pasture, two things will go wrong: First, predators will get your sheep. Second, you will have a very hard time getting control over them when you need to. Even a well-trained sheep that loves treats will run away from you if you are trying to catch them. They are prey animals and survival will always trump their trust in you. If you move quick to grab them, they are gone.*

*When we need to examine or handle any one of our 20 + sheep, we first call them into the primary enclosure with treats. The area is large enough that they feel comfortable going in and are not afraid of being “trapped”. Then we either catch them in there or herd them into the smaller night house. We even have smaller pens inside the night house too.*

**A word about heat and shade.** Although sheep can graze out in the sun for hours, they will get hot, pant and seek out shade. Always be sure your sheep can get into the shade in a well-ventilated area. If the area is not well ventilated than consider hanging a barn fan.

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Lambs are also more susceptible to over-heating so this is doubly important for young lambs.

## **SHEERING AND FOOT CARE**

### **SHEERING YOUR SHEEP:**

Does a sheep really need to be sheered? Isn't the wool natural insulation?

Wool is great insulation for cold weather. The lanolin (feel your sheep's wool down near the skin... it will feel a little greasy... that is the lanolin working as a water proofing substance for the wool.

*It is good to note that if you feel your sheep is dirty and needs a bath... if the wool is over a ½ inch or so long, the lanolin makes it impossible to clean the sheep. Yet another good reason to keep your sheep sheered.*

A lamb does not need to be sheered. At about a year, you will probably want to have your sheep sheered for the first time. We highly recommend having someone who sheers sheep often shear your sheep. A competent sheerer can shear a sheep in minutes and not nick or cut them with the sheers.

*We recommend keeping your sheep comfortable walking on a leash and going into a crate, van or trailer for treats. If you only have one two sheep, it is less expensive to transport your sheep to where the sheerer is working on a large flock of sheep and let them shear your sheep there. House calls usually start at \$75 but sheering a single sheep is usually \$10 to \$18.*

### **FOOT CARE:**

Sheep are two-toed undulates. Each toe has a soft pad on the bottom with a horn-like toenail that grows down along the sides. If the toes do not wear down naturally, you might get some over lapping or laying over of the toe-nail horn part. A good pair of garden pruning sheers can be used at an angle to easily cut this away. Lots of videos out there!

You also may also find a sheerer who will trim your sheep feet at the annual sheering

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## TRAINING:

Sheep are very food motivated. Grain is a great treat and can be carried in a little pouch on your belt or in your pocket... if you have big pockets.

Sheep are not obedient. They do not respond to commands like a dog might. Dogs work together and look for an alpha.

Sheep just want to be the fastest to outrun the wolf.

But if you offer them a treat, take a hold of their collar gently while they are eating the treat and/or clip the leash on... you are good to go.

As you want them to walk forward towards you on the leash, you can apply just the littlest amount of pressure on the leash... just a tiny amount. And call them to come to you showing them the treat the whole way.

They will follow you and the treat. They can learn to hop up on a little stand if you start by leading them slowly with the treat and say a command like "up" or "seat". Pretty soon, you can just point at the stand and say the command and they will leave your side and go to the stand. They can learn to stay with a hand signal and come with another one.



Without the treat... it does not have meaning to them.

Eventually, the treats will diminish. They will wear their leash and just walk right along with you. But start with the treats and wean that away slowly. It just makes for a happy experience.