

DEDICATION

This story is dedicated to my children, Kyle, Kevin, and Melissa, who put the word FUN in raising sheep!

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122 Dutton Rd.

Pelham NH 03076

603-635-8553

daowens@erols.com

DISCUSSION GUIDE

While not every child dreams of owning sheep, there are transferable skills demonstrated in this story which apply to any interest or hobby.

1. Q. What skills did the Shepherd need to take care of her sheep?

We saw her catching sheep, docking tails, installing ear tags, shearing, giving medicine, and trimming feet. She knew how to repair the electric fence, decide whether the sheep had enough grass to eat, and buy the right hay and grain for winter feeding.

2. So, if you wanted to own a sheep (and your parents said ok!), how could you learn what to do?

(Note: there are two discussion threads here– sources of information, and the value of mentoring).

Sources of information– read sheep books, join a 4-H club, study Cooperative Extension publications and attend educational meetings, join a statewide sheep producer organization, research sheep websites.

Mentoring--find a sheep producer who can show you the hands-on skills required and help get you started.

3. Planning ahead is the key to success in any project. What activities did we see in this story which required the Shepherd to plan ahead?

She wormed the sheep the daybefore they went out to pasture. She sheared, brought them into the barn, and began feeding grain weeksbefore lambing. Remember her 'toolbox'? She made a list and purchased supplies waybefore lambing.

4. Do you think she Shepherd kept written records about her sheep?

We know she only kept the ewes who had twins. How could she remember who had twins– all the sheep were white and looked alike! She kept written records of each sheep, identified by its eartag number. We know from question 3 that she must have written down on a calendar when the lambs were expected.

The Shepherd did the same things to my sister, then captured Mom. In front of my very eyes, she turned my mother upside down and started to cut off her legs with scissors! At least, that's what it looked like to me. "Don't



worry," laughed Mom. "She's just trimming my feet– it doesn't hurt. Sheep's hooves grow constantly, and can break or grow into funny shapes if not taken care of."

The Shepherd's last step was to squirt a clear liquid into Mom's mouth. "Yumm– apple-flavored worming medicine," she said. "There are nasty little creatures called

chewed down on hay and grain, and waddled around growing heavy with pregnancy. Mom explained that the lamb inside me would put on 70% of its weight in the last 6 weeks of pregnancy, which was why The Shepherd was feeding us grain. It would take a lot of energy to nourish my lamb and produce milk. My Mom also told me not to be disappointed if I did not have twins. "Most ewes have a single the first time," she said. "That doesn't count against you. What The Shepherd will be watching for is how good a mother you are."

This threw me into a panic. "How will I know what to do?" I asked nervously.

"You'll just know," smiled Mom. "It's called instinct– something you know without being taught. And if you do have any problems, The Shepherd is always there to help."