

SHANNON BROOK FARM

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CHICKEN & LAMB

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Shannon Brook Farm Newsletter

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Where do Lambs Come From, Anyway?!

There's nothing cuter than a bunch of bouncing baby lambs...but getting all the lambs we want each year isn't always an easy feat. Our first year with the sheep flock we had a significant number of lambs. The second and third go-rounds we had fewer and fewer lambs. It became apparent that our main ram, which we had obtained from a highly respected sheep farm, was not doing his job. To add insult to injury our backup ram wasn't doing much better.

After a few disappointing seasons we got a new ram, Samson. He is a very well built, registered Katahdin ram. In order to keep track of what he's doing on the breeding front, we placed a marking harness on him that carries a very large crayon in front of his brisket. Each time there is breeding activity the ewe involved will be marked with a red crayon that is designed to work in cold weather.

Since we put Samson in with the ewes he has marked about a third of the group. This seems like a pretty good rate as we currently have 40 ewes. Of the two-thirds remaining at least half are already bred so he only has a dozen more to go. As with breeding most animals, timing is everything. The rest of the ewes may not be at the right point in their cycle for a few more weeks so the ram will wait until then.

Below are images, left to right, of Samson wearing his marking harness, the back ends of some marked ewes and one of Samson's full-grown daughters with her little ewe lamb that was born this winter. We brought two of Samson's daughters to the farm two years ago. They are large and healthy with nice dispositions so we are looking forward to having more of his offspring.

The lamb born this winter is the most active we've had in three years. Because she arrived right before the severe weather we put not one but two lamb jackets on her. The first layer is red synthetic and the top layer is natural wool. They seem to be doing the job, as she's a real live wire, bouncing around the barn, boing, boing, boing, then bouncing off her mother's side as if it were a vertical trampoline. She's as silly as silly can be. She's so hilarious that we find ourselves observing her latest antics each day.



Samson wearing his marking harness



Ewes marked with crayon



Katahdin ewe with lamb wearing her coats