

We finished the sheep shearing just in time. As we were working on the last pen of ewes on Saturday, we heard a tiny “maaa.” Of course, it was no mystery where that sound originated. But, we had not expected any lambs, even early ones, quite so soon. We figure that we can begin lambing—not in any great numbers, but a few—about four or possibly five days before the average five month gestation period. As of today, right at that five-day estimate, we have a dozen lambs. As we sheared, we noticed how many already well-developed udders we were seeing, and now we are seeing the results.

We were about finished with the last pen that was mixed, some ewes of our regular white-faced crossbreds, and four Icelandic ewes, three with horns. They are difficult to shear this early in the spring, and we probably should just leave them until May, but we want to have the wool off all the ewes before lambing, so we do shear them in March with the others.

Runo was finishing the last of the “regular” ewes, so I thought I might as well start on the Icelandics. Runo shears faster than I do, so when we have an uneven number in a pen, he gets the extra. I had thought to wait until he was finished to catch one of the Icelandics, but then decided that I might as well be doing something instead of just standing around for the few minutes before he was done.

So, I caught a little black ewe with horns. The Icelandics are very wild—a sheepshearer friend is nicer and calls them “active”—but they are little, and I had no problem moving Åsa toward the gate. All of a sudden, I was hit on the side of my knee by a heavy blow. It was Fina, not aiming to do anything to me, but just making a wild dash to get by and giving me a good clout on the leg. I let Åsa go and stumbled out of the pen. I walked up and down the alleyway for a few minutes, hoping that Fina had not done any real damage.

We came to the house and ate our lunch, and I still hoped that the blow Fina had dealt had caused just temporary pain.

And, I guess, in one way, that is right. Two days later, I can walk—with a limp—and the swelling in my knee has begun to go down. But, I haven’t been able to help with barn chores yet. Walking on any uneven surface is not easy, and I can’t lift that leg to step up in the sheep feeders as we must do when we feed hay. And, I am not quick enough now to do my other chores with any efficiency.

So, I am relegated to house duty for another couple of days. There is a small compensation for that. I had time to clean the cabin and also bake a big batch of pumpkin cookies. And meanwhile, lambing season is definitely under way.