

There is no period of the year that is not busy for us, but, if there is a time when we really have a little more to do that we sometimes would like, it is April. April is lambing month. The uncertain weather that is typical of our part of Michigan this time of year adds to the suspense when the lambs begin to come.

This year, “April began on March 23rd,” at least as far as the lambing season goes. We did expect a few of the first births about the 26th, but the ewes were ahead of us, and by today, April first, we have nearly a hundred new lambs.

It will never cease to be interesting, no matter how many years we have breeding sheep. That first lamb is always a treat, and, hopefully, a sign of a successful lambing season.

Weather can be an issue. This year, the last week of March was fine—good for both lambing and maple syrup making. But, the month did not “go out like a lamb.” If it weren’t a full-grown lion-like ending, it was at least more akin to a lion cub than a baby lamb.

It was the wind that complicated the weather. A cold north wind is never the most pleasant of weather phenomena, but the bitter, biting chill this past weekend made us much more vigilant about keeping track of new babies in the lambing barn.

Now, at six in the morning on April second, I just returned from my five a.m. barn check. Runo was in the lambing barn all evening and into the early hours of this day. He took care of two new sets of triplets and some twins, and the little pens we call “jugs” are rapidly filling up again. The ewes usually give birth in a larger communal pen—usually about ten sheep to a pen in the beginning—and then, we move the new mothers to the small individual jugs for a couple of days of bonding with their lambs.

This morning, I had just one big single lamb born while I was in the barn, but there is another ewe who is obviously “thinking” about lambing, and I will go back to take another look before breakfast.

When I went to the barn, there were a few snowflakes in the air, and when I came out after bottle feeding a few lambs and taking care of the new arrival, the ground was white. Perhaps, when I go back for my second check, the snow will have changed to rain. That is April. And every little “maaa” brings us closer to grass and turnout time.