

PREPARING A FARM EMERGENCY FOLDER

by Barbara Webb

(This article is being re-printed due to an error during the printing process of the last issue that caused valuable portions of this article to be omitted)

As many of you know, Elaine Clark and I were asked to arrange the dispersal sale for True North Farm, following the sudden and tragic death of Jimmie Londagin. In the course of our work, it quickly became evident to us that every farm needs to have a "Farm Emergency Folder". We were finding ourselves struggling with questions that would have easily been answered if there had been a list of emergency information for Jimmie's farm. This is not meant as a criticism of Jimmie or of his paperwork; who amongst us gets up in the morning expecting to have an accident? But our struggles did immediately bring home to us the need to have a file of farm information available, in case we were even temporarily lost to our farms through injury, or illness. The following is a list of information that we found necessary in our efforts to suddenly (help) take over the care of another shepherd's operation.

First and foremost, are the names and telephone numbers of NEIGHBORS OR FARM WORKERS who are able to come help do the farm chores; availability, as well as work, home and cell phone numbers. Have they worked on the farm before? Are they sheep or animal people? If necessary, make some calls to prospective workers while you are preparing your file. Would this person be able to help on short notice? Do they have a cell phone number to give you, or is there a direct line to their desk at work? Remember that someone is going to be anxious and upset while he or she is arranging for emergency chores; make it as easy as possible for them to reach help. Important to be listed here, is the whereabouts of the farm disinfectant. Farm workers suddenly coming in from off-farm will have to have their boots disinfected. It is the chaotic times like these when farm bio-security is most likely to be compromised.

The second important piece of emergency information is the FARM VET. List the name and phone numbers, as well as the preferred backup vet if necessary. If the farm cats and dogs have a different vet, then list the contact information for that office as well. Important to note here, are any quick notes on health information. My file for example, will note that the farm Maremmas are sensitive to anesthesia and cannot be given the full amount as normally dosed by weight.

Quick notes on FEEDING REGIMEN are also important. Approximately how much hay is being fed out per animal? In my case, how many sheep per bale do I feed? Which type of hay for the ewes, lambs or rams? If grain is being fed, give the amount per sheep and during what time of year. Just as important, what is the farm mixture for the MINERAL FEEDER? The approximate ratio of minerals, selenium powder and kelp, is the information going into my folder. Any notes on selenium supplementation will be especially important. A farm emergency will be stressful for the flock, as well as for the family, and stress will eat up the sheep's selenium supply quickly, making them more prone to illness, particularly if they are then moved off the farm.

If the flock is enrolled in the FEDERAL SCRAPIE PROGRAM, a quick paragraph for that data is important as well. Name and contact information of the Scrapie Inspection Vet is vital, as well as scrapie flock number and enrollment date. This is particularly important if the farm emergency will require either a partial or total flock dispersal sale. The most recent copy of the farm scrapie census list is also useful. Just make a copy for the file when you prepare the census for your annual scrapie inspection. This list provides a complete census of the flock at that time, including their scrapie tag, tattoo, description, sire, dam, and date of birth. This will be immeasurably helpful should a dispersal sale be necessary. With very little work, this census can be made to double as a sales list. Most importantly, the census will be a ready resource for the identification of F1 animals. F1's (the direct product of an AI process) are restricted to scrapie enrolled flocks, and thus cannot be sold outside of the program. Should the dispersal sale become necessary, the inspecting vet will ask for this list of F1 sheep.

Suggested terms for a DISPERSAL SALE will need to be included in this folder. Is there a sheep friend you would want to advise the family in the event of a dispersal sale? Two names are even better; remember to include their phone numbers. Be sure to ask your friends if they would be willing to fill this role before you put them into the folder. Suggested minimum prices will be very helpful, particularly if the family member in charge is unfamiliar with the farm business. My husband Len has his own business in town, and so is not involved on a day-to-day basis with the running of our farm. He would not know what the current market prices are for the sheep, and would be at loss if he were trying to organize a sale. Another important piece of information, is the name, location and phone number for the NEAREST LIVESTOCK AUCTION. If the emergency occurs when meat lambs are normally going to auction, where do they go, when and under what terms?

If you have a nitrogen tank on the farm for semen storage, you will also need to leave a copy of your TANK MAP in the file. If you do not have a map, make one and be sure to keep it up to date. It will be very useful for you as you routinely work with the tank, and vital for anyone else trying to organize your farm affairs. If for any reason you are storing someone else's straws in your tank, keep a copy of those records in this file as well. A farm emergency is difficult already; don't aggravate it with a conflict over straw ownership.

To round out the file, some information on REGISTRATIONS will be helpful. The name and phone number for the Sheep Registrar at CLRC is important, as well as the identity, if anyone, of those who can also sign registration transfers. If there is a pending mystery as to the identity of a flock member, also note it here until it is resolved. For example, if you are submitting DNA samples to determine a lamb's parentage, someone organizing a dispersal sale would need to know that. Likewise, if you are holding back a registration, or if one of yours is being held back, a quick note as to who and why is important as well.

The last step to organizing your file is to familiarize one or two family members with its contents. Go over your information with them to be sure it is clear, or to determine if anything is missing. Explain how the registration system works, and the whereabouts of the registration papers, lambing books and farm receipts. Remember that someone else may need to complete your registrations or transfers, and will need access to that information. Point out where the breeding plans are filed, and indeed, a quick survey of the entire farm file cabinet could be very useful.

I am very fortunate here at Jager Farm, that my teenage daughters and my husband, are all fairly familiar with the farm. They can do chores unsupervised, they know the whereabouts of my registrations and lambing records and they know both of my vets personally. They also know my sheep friends and how to reach them.

Someone coming in from outside our family however, will not have that knowledge, and indeed on some farms, even the family does not have some of that information right at hand. For instance, my family would be at a loss as to how to arrange a dispersal sale, or how to contact my Scrapie Vet or the CLRC. As I write this, I also realize that no one else is authorized to sign checks on my farm checkbook, nor can they sign the registration transfers. Resolving these issues will be part of my assignment as I put together my farm emergency file.

I hope you too will take the time to gather together the information necessary to enable someone to step in and run your farm operation in an emergency. No one likes to think of death or injury, and we are all busy enough to put off tasks that don't feel immediate or important. But in the same way that we purchase life insurance or make wills in order to protect our families, likewise, we need to provide for the care of our sheep as well. A file of emergency farm information will ensure that your sheep can be easily cared for, in the event that you are incapacitated by accident or illness. For the sake of your family and of your flock, please don't delay in putting together your own folder of emergency farm instructions.