



Icelandic Sheep Breeders of North America

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Editor, Deb Kimball

Goodbye to Old Mori

Stephania Sveinbjarnardottir Dignum

Old Mori (188Z, Brownie as Louise used to call him) is dead. He was put to sleep on the morning of the 14th (of 1999) by our veterinarian. There are probably not many of you out there who do not have Old Mori somewhere in your sheep's pedigree.

Mori was an extraordinary animal. He was gentle and loving. When I selected him in Iceland in 1990, he was just a lamb and one of two moorit ram lambs that came over in the 1990 shipment. At that time he was as wild and skittish as one would expect from an Icelandic lamb that has spent most of his life out on mountain pastures, never being close to humans. He did not improve any while in quarantine in Iceland or here in Canada. The first winter he and his buddies spent at our neighbor's farm in a barn that had been rented for these new arrivals to Canada. Shortly after getting out of quarantine his other moorit buddy went to live with Nancy Pease so Mori became somewhat of a favorite, being the only moorit ram. In the beginning, he did not want to have anything to do with humans, but after a while, Louise managed to tame him so that he became friends with her. He got so that he waited and greeted her by the gate when she came over to the barn where they were. Soon afterwards he decided to try the other humans out and became somewhat friendlier. He seemed to have had good experience with us because after his first winter he became quite human friendly.

Mori was not one of the biggest rams that came over. He was somewhere in the middle and did not dominate for a few years. In the first winter I had not intended to breed any of this group, but one of the young rams (191Z) broke through some boards in the wall that separated him from the ewe lambs and got in with the ewes two or three times. A few lambs resulted from that. In the second year, Mori was naturally one of the rams used for breeding because of his color. I was quite impressed with his lambs and used him for the next two years. By that time he had made a name for himself, even though he was not yet among the top dominant rams. In 1995 he was again used and by that time he was getting to the top on the dominance scale. The year after that he was the top honcho and remained so for a year or two. That is when he broke his horn in fighting a challenger and his dominating days were numbered.

Mori was a very handsome ram. One he had discovered that humans were OK, he really took advantage of it. When visitors came he really put on a show. He greeted the guests by coming up to them, he asked to be scratched and petted and put on his best face and stood for photos. In the winter he always greeted us when we came into the barn by a loud baaaah. I never remember him showing any hostility towards any human, even Adam (our grandson), from the time he was old enough to walk into the barn, could pet Mori and so could all the other children. During the winter he usually lost a lot of weight so by spring he was very thin. It took him about three weeks on pasture to become a waddling ball of fat. I cannot think of any ram that regained condition as fast as Mori did - right up until the last two winter he lived.

A year ago he was hit by a flystrike. It was so bad that he lost a good part of his skin on his back down his right side. Some part of that never recovered so he had a naked patch on his right side. His teeth started falling out a couple of years ago and earlier this spring he was having trouble with his knee joints. One of his eyes had clouded over, but still his love for humans and his gentle nature was the same. Old age was really catching up with him in the last few months. When his buddy Finull (195Z) died this last spring, I decided that I would not put him through another winter all by himself. He and Finull had shared winter pens for the last three or four winters. This summer, his last, he spent around our house, being free to go wherever he felt like going. He did not go far, preferring to hang around the dog pens and the back door. When a couple of weeks ago he wandered in with the breeding ewe flock, he still knew what his purpose was. He found a ewe that stood for him and he mounted her. But his legs would not cooperate and he fell over. He tried and tried again until the ewe lost patience and walked away.

Mori was a wonderful animal and he will live in our memory for a long time.