



Helen and her family



Ella correcting a backward facing leg

Sheep and cattle can't store magnesium, in spring when grass is growing so fast their relative intake of it is lower and, with the added stress of feeding hungry lambs and the bad weather, this deficit had become critical. But I can assure you that since then the sheep and cattle are never out at pasture in the spring or autumn without high magnesium buckets.

This year didn't pass without a blunder either, only not dead sheep this year, but more than we had planned for. We don't normally lamb the hogs (last year's lambs) and we send them to Nick's parents where the pastures are greener and drier for winter holidays. However, somehow when the ewe lambs had got on the trailer they had a stowaway with them, a Blue Faced Leicester ram lamb.

He had a great time and when I realised what happened and called the scanning man back for round two we found out that an extra 16 of them had a lamb in the oven. Hence this year all of the male lambs have a green tag and all the ewe lambs have orange tags from birth!

One of these teenage mums lambed prematurely and had our smallest lamb this year weighing in at a mere 1.6 kg, but it still came out shaking it's head, bleating in seconds and trying to suck in minutes. Unlike our heaviest lamb born this year that weighed 9.1 kg and, although he had a pounding heartbeat on arrival, despite my best attempts and even after me successfully getting a little tube down his trachea and ventilating him, he just wouldn't take his first breath and much to my frustration died.

One of the lows this season was when we found one of our lambs in the field, eyes battered and bruised, and blood covering his nose and mouth. He was a really strong single Texel lamb that had been very sloth like since he was born,



Archie checking all present and correct

he just ate and then slept. Unfortunately for him while he was sleeping a raven had pecked rather large chunks out of his tongue and we arrived to check them just as the bird was flying off. Nature is cruel sometimes! We treated his wounds and fed him with a stomach tube, but the stress was just too much.

## “Securing the purchase had taken a lot of begging and a bit of bartering with my dad”

There have been highlights. All parents take pride in their children passing their gymnastics exam, swimming 100m or having a good school report. But there was no one prouder than me this year when Archie lambed his first ewe and Ella uttered the words “I've got it” as she managed to retrieve a backwards facing leg from a Shropshire ewe. I was glowing with pride!

At four and six this is the first year that both our children have been a lot more involved at lambing time, it seems no time since they were in the lambing shed in the double buggy.

With the use of antibiotics coming under strict scrutiny recently and with us all needing to play our part in preserving the efficacy of these vital drugs we are always looking at ways to minimise the exposure of the young nieve lambs to potential pathogens. We always spray each individual lambing pen down with disinfectant between occupants and fully clean them out regularly.

One of the most important things we find pays us the greatest dividends is colostrum, if we have any ewes with extra milk or a single lamb, I milk her and freeze it in breast milk pouches. They are the perfect size and have a double seal. If a lamb needs additional colostrum at birth we always try and use this ewe's colostrum first and then powdered colostrum in subsequent feeds.

At this point I was about to sign off and say that hopefully we will have had plenty of calves arrive by the next edition, but I have just been out to the cow shed to find our first arrival of the season.

One of the first time calving heifers has just popped out a very petit heifer calf, it is a little premature but now we've milked the cow and tubed her, she is up and suckling on her own just over an hour later.

Hopefully by the time I next update you we will have had a lot more and this little lady will be out in the field with her mum enjoying the spring grass.

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**In the next issue Helen will update us on what she's expecting to be a busy calving time**