

### Episode 5 – Unto Ewe A Donkey is Born!

The old hand hewn logs of the sheep barn were clearly defined in the brilliant spring sunshine, and the contrast from the sparkling sunlight outside to the dusty gloom inside caused me to stop on the threshold. For a moment, I couldn't quite believe what I was seeing. Moving cautiously forward with my eyes straining in the half light, I realized trouble was afoot, and I experienced that curious sinking feeling when I know I am out of my depth. The object of my attention was a sheep flinging her head from side to side, her eyes rolling backwards while furiously gnashing her teeth. Quite the performance, and who could blame her? Protruding from the birth canal was a great big head. Ouch! Lambs are supposed to come out with their feet under the nose, like a diver. In this instance, it was immediately clear that both legs were back, and the shoulders were stuck. We were both in big trouble.

Knowing I needed backup, I ran back to the house to consult the sheep manual – it said that I had to lift her back end up on a hay bale, stuff the head back in, grope around in the dark, find the legs, then pull the legs out together with the head. “Oh my goodness” I said, “that’s a bit much so early in the morning!” So the book was tossed over my shoulder as I lunged for the phone and called the vet. Luckily the vet was available and gave exact instructions, “Well, the lamb will be dead, and all you can do is save the ewe,” started the vet “so put straps on her hind legs, make a pulley and put it over your shoulders, then hoist her rear end up, so she is upside down hanging from your shoulders. Push the head back in, grope around and find the legs to pull the no-doubt-dead lamb out.” “Whaaaaat?” I wailed “Can’t you come out and do all that?” The vet replied “Sorry, I’ve got to run...” Darn, he must have studied the same sheep manual.

Okay, it was up to me (yes, you guessed it!) and with no cavalry riding to the rescue, I located a thick rope, sterile long blue plastic birthing gloves and KY jelly, all the while quaking in my boots. The sound of hammering on the wall reminded me that Don, the builder, was here. I ran outside and waved my long blue plastic arms and KY jelly in his face “Quick, I need help” I yelled and took off at a run back to the barn with a bewildered but helpful Don running alongside.

“Okay, Don, just lift up the back end of this sheep so I can pull the lamb out!” Don’s face lost its permanent smile “I’ll faint if you do that under my nose!” he replied. “Turn your head away and faint when I’m finished!” I snapped back (actually, that’s the same thing I said to my husband when our daughter was being born...) It was really tough work, all the while Don’s head turned sideways. But behold, the slippery legs were within reach and given that I was assured the lamb was dead, I pulled like mad, praying to high heaven that I could at least save the ewe. Out popped a very dead looking lamb which had a massive head and shoulders. “Wow, this isn’t a lamb, it’s a donkey!” I exclaimed. Don passed me a towel and I proceeded to rub vigorously while clearing the nose and mouth. Suddenly, the still chest heaved with a wheezy rattle and Don and I shared a victory whoop. What a surprise! The “little donkey” had made it after all! Here’s to small lambs, and good friends!!

Una St.Clair, Barnyard Boss  
una@highcroft-farm.com