

**Karen Stormo**

**Avalon Farm**

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I started raising sheep in Oregon, in the early '90s, in the worst way possible. I bought all the \$1 sheep at the sales barn. Sometimes I spent \$5! I also raised Pygmy and

Angora goats and Angora rabbits. I enjoy the fiber arts, especially dyeing.



**I moved to Minnesota in 1994 with 19 sheep**, a mix of Border Leicester, Finn and Dorset ewes. By 2000 I had ~85 ewes, then bought a semi-load of Western whiteface ewes from North Dakota, and started to lamb in May of 2001. I had 440 ewes and a big wreck

about to happen. Between bad weather, and not enough barns, the ewes started dying and the bottle lambs were taking over the farm. It turned out to be OPP, and I culled 75%, and ended up with less than 100. On the bright side, I am good at tube feeding now. I hate doing it, though.

**News Flash: Rick joins this party in progress. It turns out that he likes sheep, so he decided to stay.**

**Fast Forward to 2013, the health problems started to mount up.** Between foot rot, respiratory ills, skinny lambs and more bottle lambs, we jumped at the chance to be in this eradication trial. The ewes were tested and we lambed them all out, trying to keep all positives separate

until weaning, then culled them. It was hard to do, but there just aren't enough pens for two separate flocks.

**We had one ewe test positive last year, and after she lambed (triplet girls), we culled her as well. Two of her lambs were tested this fall, both negative.**

**We have noticed quite an improvement in the overall health of the flock.** Of course it is much younger now, and our lambing percentage has lowered quite a bit, but we can see that improving. We have spent a lot less on medicines and vet costs. There is a real noticeable reduction in milk replacer purchases. This year we had 8 sets of triplets. Those are the good kind of bottle lambs, if there is such a thing.

**It takes more time to do this eradication process, but we both think it has been worthwhile.** With a young flock, growing rapidly, there are bound to be some surprises coming (genetics are fun!). We plan to cull a few more next year, and select more carefully for the replacements. We have also enrolled in Minnesota's OPP pilot program and will continue to test as necessary.

We live in Northern Minnesota on 320 acres, mostly pasture, some corn silage acres; we purchase nearly all of our feed. In addition to the sheep we run ~200 head of cattle and also have horses plus an assortment of alpacas, rabbits, poultry and dogs and cats. In our spare time we like to go camping, especially in Medora, North Dakota.

We both work off the farm as well, Rick at the grain elevator, and I for the local library and also the Census Bureau. We don't have much spare time.

My Favorite sheep quote: *"Never have more sheep than your wife can take care of."* Helmut Lang, Canada

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- **Border Leicester / Columbia / Coopworth / Icelandic:** closed ewe flock; rams both purchased and home bred
  - **Symptoms:** hard udder, little or no milk, swollen hock and knee joints, stiff gait, lameness
  - **Lamb in March/April;** cold open barn; separation facilities limited in winter; pasture in season
  - **Baseline Fall 2013:** 29 adult ewes, 61% test-positive; had also tested in 2001 with 75% pos
  - **Potential replacements** tested during the trial, weaned at 2-3 months:
    - 2013: 8 of 8 (100%) **test-neg** @ 8 mo
    - 2014: 20 of 20 (100%) **test-neg** @ 8 mo
    - 2015: 25 of 25 (100%) **test-neg** @ 6 mo
    - 2016: 29 of 29 (100%) **test-neg** @ 9 mo
    - 2017: 46 of 46 (100%) **test-neg** @ 7 mo
  - All test-positives from the original "parent flock" were gone from the premises by November 2014
  - Original test-neg's not allowed contact with young replacements until the older group had passed two consecutive 100% neg tests
  - Following two whole-flock 100% negative tests with 9- and 3-month intervals, one older ewe came up Elitest-pos but AGID neg; she was segregated, and confirmed pos by Elitest and AGID 3 months later
  - Ewes now number 110, including 7 from the original flock that have remained negative throughout the trial
  - Some yearlings, but not lambs, have tested with high-negative Elitest readings when first coming into estrus, later returning to strongly negative