

MUNTANUI LAMBING DIARY 2012

Date	No. Lambs	Gender and Siblings	Weather	Notes	Total living lambs
Mon 3 Sep 2012	3	1 single ewe Twins: ewe and ram	Rain	The single lamb seems healthy and robust but we're hand-rearing the twins. The mother didn't really seem to know what to do with them. She lost the ewe lamb and then wandered off to feed. Both lambs were shivering uncontrollably and were crying for her but she didn't seem too interested. In the end, we made a judgement call and took them both. In hindsight, we probably should have left her the ram as he was a lot stronger and probably would have hung in there until she returned. Ah well. That's hindsight.	3
Tue 4 Sep 2012			Rain	All seem well.	3
Wed 5 Sep 2012			Rain	Ram lamb found dead in morning and the ewe lamb is getting progressively weaker. Although she's sucking, I don't think she's getting any food. We've started feeding her colostrum through a syringe and she seems to be pulling through. Little field ewe doing really well.	2
Thu 6 Sep 2012			Rain, very stormy at night	We put the little ewe lamb outside in shelter, wearing lamb jacket. The rest of the flock rejected her. Weather turned to custard during the night.	2

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Fri 7 Sep 2012	2	Twins: ram and ewe	Cloud, then sun	Little ewe lamb half dead in shelter. Ewan brings her back in and revives her. Twin ram rejected by mother – not even cleaned off. Also brought inside, fed colostrum immediately and cleaned off. Good appetite, robust and strong. His twin out in the field is doing great.	4
Sat 8 Sep 2012	1	ewe	Rain	Laundry lambs still with us, although ewe lamb still being forcibly fed by syringe. Ram doing well. Outside lambs: yesterday's ewe doing well. Today's new arrival well bonded with her mum and doing fine.	5
Sun 9 Sep 2012			Snow	Woke up to white ground. Two most recent ewe lambs dead in paddock. First ever lamb still alive. All sheep moved into yard. Live lamb dressed in jacket. Hay feeder rigged up and two tarps strung between shelters for extra cover. More snow forecast over the next 2 days. We'll be lucky if any lambs survive. Laundry lambs: Nirvana (neighbour) brought smaller teat for the wee ewe. She has no trouble getting the milk but doesn't seem able to take more than 50ml at a time. Ram lamb scouring. Gave him 10ml of Vigest with sheep milk (not colostrum) and will dilute the colostrum to see if he improves.	3
Mon 10 Sep 2012	1	ewe	Sun, then rain and snow at night	Little ewe laundry lamb dead this morning. Ram lamb no longer scouring. Robbie (builder friend in the village) builds us another shelter in anticipation of two days of	3

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				<p>bad weather. Large ewe lamb born but mum not doing well – staggering and weak. She takes herself into the new shelter. We pour some Vigest down her throat and bottle feed the lamb – she’s starving. Weather turns foul late arvo/early evening. All sheep trying to huddle in original shelter. At around 9pm we attempt to separate out the mums from the rest to ease the numbers in the shelter but give up. We pour more Vigest mixed with Ketol down the sick ewe’s throat but it’s obvious she isn’t going to get better. We bottle feed the lamb and then take her away. We drag the dying ewe into the haybale shelter to make room for the others. It’s horrible and I hate it but it could save the lives of some of the others. At 3am, I go out and check on them. It’s snowing heavily and they’re all still trying to huddle in the same shelter. The sick ewe has died. I decide to open all the gates and let them take shelter where they will.</p>	
Tue 11 Sep 2012			<p>Snow showers and rain. Very cold.</p>	<p>The little ewe lamb is doing great. She’s huge – bigger than the ram lamb, which is three days older. No wonder her poor mum had nothing left. Ram lamb is fine. We’ve got another ewe acting strangely. She stayed in the shelter the night before while we were trying to separate the others. She seems sluggish but there’s nothing obviously wrong. Her belly is large but she hasn’t bagged up. She walks stiffly and seems to be straining.</p>	3

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				<p>She paws the ground and isn't eating – usually signs of imminent birth. We ring the vet, who says she might be aborting. We catch her and pour some Ketol down her throat and decide to wait and see. She's one of four sheep still in the yard/lamb paddock; the ram is sticking close by her, there's a ewe who lost her lamb in last week's snow and another heavily pregnant ewe that we suspect is having twins. We think she's the last to go.</p>	
Wed 12 Sep 2012	1	ewe	Sunny	<p>Off-colour ewe seems better. She has broken through the temp electric fence (we forgot to switch it back on) and is eating. The only sheep left in the yard/lamb paddock is the ram. Another ewe has birthed – we didn't realise we had another pregnant one (that's now six out of ten who have given birth). The lamb seems healthy and is feeding. Finally – a sunny day in which to greet the world. The laundry lambs have spent the day outside in a fenced-off section of the yard. They're both wearing lamb jackets but we'll bring them inside for the night, as there's a heavy frost forecast and they don't have mums to snuggle up against. The very heavily pregnant ewe is back in the yard/lamb paddock with the ram, where we can keep an eye on her.</p>	4
Thu 13 Sep 2012			Sunny	<p>More respite from bad weather. New wee ewe doing well. Laundry lambs spending all day outside but</p>	4

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				nights indoors in their new LAMBorghini, courtesy of Ewan. Heavily pregnant ewe and ram went through the temp electric fence, as we'd turned it off to get to the lamb yard.	
Fri 14 Sep 2012			Drizzle	Everyone doing well but heavy rain forecast for the weekend and everything here is still absolutely sodden. We have a small stream running down our driveway – runoff from the overflowing duck pond.	4
Sat 15 Sep 2012	1	ram	Rain	Another surprise lamb – a little boy, who's been feeding and has a good, attentive mum. I hope he does okay in the rain tonight. We're still waiting for the 'full to bursting' ewe to drop. I'm almost certain that she's carrying twins and our ewes don't have a great track record with them. It's Ewan's last R&R day and he's been working like a madman, trying to get everything done before he leaves in the morning. Here's hoping there aren't any crises in the two weeks while he's away.	5
Sun 16 Sep 2012	1	ewe		The 'full to bursting' girl finally popped but the result was a single ewe lamb, not the twins that we'd expected. Mind you, she's huge. She's also healthy and hungry. That's probably the last of them and it was timed perfectly – the ewe dropped the lamb just before we were due to leave for the airport for Ewan's last swing over in Oz.	6

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Mon 17 Sep 2012				I chased our newest lamb and her mum around the paddock for half an hour this afternoon, trying to put a jacket on the wee one. There's snow forecast down to 700m tonight and I didn't want to risk it. Eventually managed to get the jacket on at the second attempt. Everyone/thing involved was mightily relieved when it was over.	6
Tue 18 Sep 2012			Fine	Glorious day. No sign of the snow forecast for last night. Maybe it's time to relax a little – PLEASE.	6
Wed 19 Sep 2012			Fine	Another wonderful spring day. All the wee ones doing well.	6

SUMMARY

- Lambing period: Mon 3 September to Sun 16 September
- Eight out of ten ewes gave birth, two were dry
- Ten lambs born: seven ewes, three rams
- Two sets of twins (a ram and ewe per set); only one lamb survived – a ram, rejected by his mother and hand-reared
- Losses: one ewe and four lambs (three ewes and a ram)
- Lamb survivors: six (four ewes, two rams)

LESSONS LEARNED FOR NEXT YEAR

1. Put the ram out to the ewes later – end of April. This year he went out at Easter. One of the bigger farms near the village puts their rams out on ANZAC Day (25 April) and they're at least 100m closer to sea level than we are.
2. Separate pregnant ewes out from the rest just before they're due to lamb.
3. Make sure there's enough shelter in the event of bad weather.
4. Get plenty of emergency supplies for lambs and ewes well in advance.