

From the  
Premier Breeder  
of British Registered  
Soay Sheep



SOUTHERN OREGON SOAY SHEEP FARMS

# Viewpoint

THIS MONTH'S FEATURE

## The Expected Unexpected

by Kathie Miller

**A topic that is seldom discussed and so important to any farmer's peace of mind is what to do with the animals in an emergency: storm, fire, earthquake or, in my case, because I live alone, if something happens to me.**

I have always made it my practice to have at least a week's supply of any food that my animals need. When I open the last bag of dog food I immediately go buy another. I don't depend on "I can just get to the store tomorrow".

In January 1994, my husband and I were rudely awakened along with three million other people by the Northridge earthquake in southern California. We had no power, no water and no phone and neither did the grocery stores or the feed store. The roads in and out of our area had collapsed so bringing supplies in from the outside was not an option. For four days we were com-

pletely on our own. Four days without roughage for a sheep can be the difference between life and death. Once their rumen shuts down it is nearly impossible to get it restarted and the animal will die.

Water was the critical



Who will feed me?

issue. The water main was broken thus cutting supply. As it turned out, we lived on the valley floor surrounded by a number of hills. As all of the auxiliary pipes to houses on the hills drained down to the valley and I dis-

covered all my tanks filled. Had the tanks not been full my only option would have been bottled water— if I could have found it. Even though I lived close to Hollywood, *Evian*<sup>®</sup> seemed a bit extravagant for my geese and llamas. On my farm in southern Oregon I am able to leave the water dripping all of the time so that my tanks are always topped off. In the winter this also keeps my pipes from freezing. If the power goes out in the summer, I am at least starting with 50 gallons of water.

Because I have serious health issues and now live alone, the possibility that someone will have to take over suddenly in my absence is always a real possibility. Even for people who do not live alone emergencies can require that all family members are called away and the ability to call on friends in your time of need is crucial. I have been accused of being

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## It Always Happens in the Middle of the Night

by Kathie Miller

**A couple of weeks ago my phone rang at 1:30 AM. "This is your doctor's office. Your blood culture came back positive and you need to get to the hospital right now!"**

"What do you mean right now? It's two o'clock in the morning," I protested. "And I have a farm to take care of." "Right now, Kathleen. RIGHT NOW!" I had no idea what this meant or how long I would be in the hospital. All I knew is I might not be at home in the morning to feed my animals. The only thing that gave me any peace

was that I had always made it my policy to be prepared for such an emergency.

Later that morning I got out the small address book that I always carry in my purse so that I could tell someone where I was and ask them to feed for me. To my shock there was only one number in the book: my friend Christine in Wales, 5400 miles and 8 time zones away! My close neighbor was the one number I remembered by heart. Eventually, word got out where I was and people started to call me. "How are you do-



Feed bins

ing," they asked, and my response was the same to each one. "Fine. Now give me your phone number."

Everything worked out just fine in the end. But the very first thing I did when I got home was fill out my phone book. And I thought I was so prepared. 🐾

## RESOURCE GUIDE

### Lists to Make

- IDs of all animals
- Feed types
- Feed suppliers
- Feeding instructions
- Medication instructions
- How-to contact:
  - Friends
  - Transporters
  - The Vet
  - Your extended family
  - Your doctor
  - Your lawyer
- Warnings
- Where the keys are
- Where to get water
- Where extra fuel is
- How to turn on the heat
- Anything else that will make a caretaker's job easier

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All advice in this newsletter has been used successfully on our farm. It is important to remember that every animal and situation is different. Before you try any of our suggestions, we urge you to consult your veterinarian.

## Unexpected continued from page 1

a bit neurotic about preparedness but what follows are some of the routines I have adopted and that have bailed me out in several emergencies. Everyone's situation is different. Consider this my basic list that should be adapted to your own needs.

I keep a list of feeding instructions, which animal gets which food at what times on a bulletin board in my office (where it will stay dry). Next to this list is a list of all the foods I purchase by name and where I get them. Next to that is a list of phone numbers: my vet, my hay broker and several friends who my caretaker can call if he or she has a problem. Having a network of farmer friends is crucial.

In addition to having a good supply of animal feed, each food container is clearly labeled. I use large garbage cans and the contents are marked on the lid of each can. So many pelleted foods look similar and a well-meaning friend can unknowingly give the wrong animal the wrong food. This can be disastrous. Soay sheep, for example, are

highly sensitive to copper and can easily be poisoned accidentally by being fed copper-rich pig chow.



I always have a dog crate, truck to evacuate, and a place to take them.

Because I have no pasture and thus feed hay year round, I have established a relationship with a local hay broker. While I only buy hay from him once a year, if for some reason I run out and a caretaker needed hay for the animals, George knows what I buy and would deliver whatever I needed knowing he would be paid as soon as my emergency was resolved. I also have a charge card for my local feed store that I never use myself, but which

a friend or house sitter could. It is on the bulletin board in the same envelope with a letter to the store manager authorizing its use.

Occasionally, a specific animal will require special treatment or, for some reason, have to be identified when I am gone. All of my sheep have both scrapie and baby ear tags. Each fall, when my flock has settled for the year, I print up two lists: one sorted by name and the other by ear tag number. These I take to Staples® and, for a very small fee, they laminate them to make them weather-



The Who's Who

proof. They both hang on the wall in the barn so that anyone can identify any animal. (I use this mostly for myself. After nearly 200 sheep even I can't always remember who is who).

The right time to plan for an emergency is always the same. *Right now.* 🐏

## DECEMBER CALENDAR

- Cold season is here. Watch for coughing and runny noses; treat as necessary. LA200 is especially good for upper respiratory problems.
- Trim hooves if needed while they are soft.
- Catch up on catalogs and start thinking about stocking up on supplies for spring. Jeffers, Pipestone Veterinary Supply, Valley Vet Supply, and Quality Llama Products are among my favorites.

### TIP OF THE MONTH

**Relax.**  
Enjoy your farm,  
your family, and have  
a wonderful  
holiday season!