



Sheep Licks

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Martok

Monday, November 23, 2009

Photo by Sue Weaver

Shiloh loves the licks!

Last month Mom and Dad went to Hirsch's, the big farm store in Thayer where they buy our tasty food. When Dad came out, he said to Mom (who was waiting in the truck), "They have sheep lips, so I bought some."

"Sheep lips!" Mom cried, "What would possess you to buy sheep lips?"

It turns out Dad said sheep licks. Those are tubs of minerals mixed up in hard molasses-based, yummy stuff. We love our goat licks and now the sheep have their own licks too.

Sheep and goat nutrition experts say we should eat loose, granulated minerals instead of licks. But we don't like those very much at all.

The Boers make protest poopies in their loose mineral feeders. Uzzi and I are far more refined, so we ignore the feeder on our wall (the sheep ignore loose minerals too). Mom says that drives her up a rope (though Uzzi and I haven't seen her climb one yet). She gave up this spring and started bringing us goat licks.

Photo by Sue Weaver

Affinity loves them too. Minerals are important for all kinds of farm animals but we can't all eat the same kind. We can eat the horses' licks and they can lick ours, but the sheep can't eat either one—too much copper is toxic to sheep and our licks contain more copper than they can safely eat.

So, Mom keeps us all in species-specific areas at night, so the sheep don't get poisoned by our minerals. And she puts the horses' lick up high where the sheep can't reach them (though we can climb to reach them if we want some), even if they stand up on their hind legs.

Another thing about minerals is that they have to be formulated for the place you live, to balance out what's lacking in the soil. Our licks have lots of selenium in them because our land is selenium deficient and selenium is something we really need.

We love our licks and Mom and Dad do too. We don't waste minerals the way we used to and each lick comes in a big plastic pan we can eat out of when the lick is gone. There's one thing that makes Mom shake her head, though. The Boers are messy eaters—and it shows!

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