

*"Black Ram For Sale, Merino hand raised, very tame, to good home only"* The advert in the local paper read.

We had a good home, three and half acres, and some more grazing on a neighbours block for our small flock. The ewes would love a Ram about the house. "Sold" I thought, and whizzed around to grab what turned out to be a very nice looking Ram. Into the old XC panel van he went, to his new home as king of the flock.

Playful little fella he was, butting and craving human attention. He loved to wrestle and to get you from behind. But he was small enough to be flipped over by his horns when he got too rough. He was good fun and he was very tame. We were lucky to get him and he was such a good looking ram.

Rams don't stay small for long on good pasture but they do stay tame. It's amazing how big those lambs turn out to be. He loved to play with people. What was cute at first had become a pain. Rocky, as he was now called, began to terrorize us. Flipping him on his back was no longer possible as his playful butts were enough to break bones, I'm sure he remembered the times he was flipped over though and he was keen on returning the favour, but he was such a nice looking ram and the ewes really liked him.

Our orchard had now become a no go zone. Rocky ruled that half of the property. Any approach was met with horns. The organic growers had said to graze sheep in the orchard to keep the grass down and to add some fertilizer in the form of sheep poo. Great idea we thought. What they forgot to add was that some sheep graze like giraffes and now we needed to be 6"8 to reach the fruit the sheep hadn't eaten. But he was such a good looking ram and he had started to work. The lambs would be very tasty, if we could get anywhere near them.

Down to town for some advice from some experts. We hit the local agricultural supply store, still very green we started to milk the store owner for some expert advice.

"What you need is a cattle prod." He said pointing to one he happened to have on special. "That will sort him out." With a sparkle in his eye he demonstrated the sparks it could generate zapping it against the metal rail

near the counter. " Soon all you will need to do is carry a stick and he won't come near you, as he will think you've got the zapper. Sheep are pretty stupid you know."

Great, things were looking up and while I was there, I thought, I will grab some sheep wire to fence off that orchard and save some of my fruit. "This will do the trick." said my expert. "Sheep don't jump. They might try to get under it though, so make sure it's tight."

Wool is a great insulator. The cattle prod did nothing on the woolly parts, which just happened to be almost all of Rocky. And rams have very hard heads which seem to be resistant to pain. But that makes sense as they will fight to the death butting each other. Not only did the prod not work but Rocky seemed to enjoy the challenge in butting it back as we zapped him. It was very hard to get a decent zap out of it while your were running backwards or leaping a creek to get away from a very upset large black ram.

But at least the fence would work and we could get back our orchard!

Black sheep can Jump!

He was like a gazelle, and with each additional strand we put up, the higher he jumped. Sure he lost some belly wool on the barbed wire, but if the cattle prod didn't bother him a couple of barbed wire scratches was all in a days play. Now nowhere was safe from Rocky. He would spot you leaving the house. And he seemed to smile as you reached for the cattle prod. "Play Time" was what he was thinking I'm sure.

But that black wool would be in demand from the home spinners. We had read that somewhere. Merino wool is the best there is remember, and he was such a good looking ram.

The shearer was a local. A retired gent who did small flocks for some pocket money. Wool was actually worth something as our small flock had even qualified us as primary producers.

"Do the black one last" I warned " He's a bit of trouble."

"City folks giving me instructions" he must have thought as I headed off to work.

Arriving home later that day, it seemed like the shearer had made a hasty exit. The sheep were shorn alright but he had forgotten some tools and had left a note.

*"That Black ram's a bastard." It read. "I did him first to get him out of the way and he was nothing but trouble!"*

The shearer was an older gent and used a back strap for support fixing it to a high post. He had done Rocky first and let him out. Rocky was not impressed at the indignity of having his wool removed. He waited until the shearer was comfortably shearing his first ewe and decided to give him some of his own medicine. Rocky lined him up a charged butting him around the kidney region and swinging him off the harness.

He was like a punching bag for Rocky the Ram, striking him again as he swung back. The shearer was a tough old guy and scrambled to his feet. Rocky would have loved this new challenge. But the shearer had a plan, he knew about sheep and wrestled Rocky down and hog tied him, putting him in that well fenced paddock with the barbed wire strands.

It took about four more sheep for Rocky to undo the hog tie. And the shearer was amazed at how high that black ram could jump. Hastily the shearer clambered for the release on his harness as Rocky trotted over for round two.

Bruised and sorry the old shearer left some names of other shearers we might contact next time.

Wool prices crashed and farmers were shooting sheep on the big farms. It was time to move the flock on.

"Free to good home or any home Black Ram hand reared." Our advert in the local paper read.

"He's a good looking Ram" the guy said knowing a bargain when he saw one.  
"I'll take him."

An hour later the phone rang. " You know that ram" He said. "It can jump fences, it's over the neighbor's having just flogged his prize Billy goat, eating their vegies, you want it back??"

He's all yours mate !

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