

News Column
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BARN CAMERAS AND COWHERD NUTRITION

You would think a guy could just be thankful for the relatively nice weather we have had so far in early January.

As I write this, nighttime temperatures are predicted to stay above 20 degrees for several more days and that should get me through the big group of A.I. lambs due to be born at our place in mid January.

Our experience has been that lambs born out of the wind and moisture will get up and survive on their own if the temperature is 20 degrees Fahrenheit or higher. If it is colder, then I need to be there to help them, often bringing them to the house to dry off and warm up.

While I keep telling myself to just be thankful for moderate temperatures and good facilities, my mind keeps going back to February of 2021 when we had negative 20 degree temperatures for a week. The year before that was the year we had temps around zero during my busiest lambing period in January. We brought 18 of 22 lambs born during that cold spell to the house to warm up.

While a heated lambing area would be the best way to solve my cold weather challenges, that's a bit more money than I'm ready to spend on what I have to admit is just a hobby. We don't make enough money to call this a business.

Because heating the barn wasn't in my budget, we installed cameras instead. I have been talking about barn cameras for at least five years, and probably ten. This year I saw an

opportunity,....and we made it happen.

The opportunity was a son-in-law (plus Kelsey and granddaughter Addie) coming to visit for six days around Christmas time. It hit me about a week before their visit that Austin, being an engineer, might have an interest in and knowledge about cameras and wi-fi technology.

To make a short story longer than it needs to be, Austin was interested enough to reply to my text. He consulted with his brother-in-law (his sister's husband who is a software engineer) about options for getting wi-fi from the house to the barn, then he ordered everything we needed – cameras, Ethernet cables, a point-to-point wireless bridge – to get the job done.

It was really cold during their visit but we found a few hours when the temperature was in the 20's to get started hooking up the wi-fi on Christmas day. Progress was slow the 26th, with Kelsey and family scheduled to visit friends at noon, and our family Christmas gathering scheduled for 5:00 p.m. that evening.

The temperature dropped to the mid-teens on December 27 but my help was leaving the next day so it was time to power through the cold and get the job done. In the end, we managed to spend parts of three days completing what should have been a half-day project. It took longer than we expected,....but it is done.

I don't know if my son-in-law will ever come to visit again but this was a great Christmas in my book. For now, Austin is my favorite son-in-law. Never mind that he is my only son-in-law, he has earned his "favorite" title.

As usual, I'm off on a tangent. I started down this cold-weather-story path to lead up to inviting you to our next Coffee Shop Meeting, featuring Jason Warner, KSU Cow-Calf Specialist. Jason's topic is cowherd nutrition, a topic that becomes more important during calving season and during cold weather.

Join us at 10:30 a.m. on Thursday, January 26 at The Farmhouse in Riley. We will have refreshments, fellowship, and a conversation about cowherd nutrition and any other cow-calf topic you want to discuss. Register online at www.riley.ksu.edu to let us know your are coming.

If you have questions, you can reach me at the Riley County Extension Office at 785/537-6350. Or, you can send e-mail to gmcclure@ksu.edu.

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