



Bruno At Cleon's **Corner**

Presented by [Optimal Livestock Services, LLC](#)

Bruno's Introduction to Fleas

This past summer we had one of the most pristine environments a dog could imagine. We were high in the Big Horn Mountains of Wyoming. The forage was great. Every afternoon a cloud rolled in and gave the grass and forage a shot in the arm. The sheep were content and it was no problem keeping them on the allotment and out of trouble. We would bed them down in the evening and by day break, which comes early at that latitude, they were ready to move out and enjoy a delightful breakfast. Mid day we would all take a break and bed down in the shade of the big spruce trees. We had one of our own species drop in for a visit from the next allotment three ridges over. He was a good friendly companion and stayed for about 2 days until he was returned to his own unit. Wow! He introduced a bed full of fleas. For the next 2 weeks these little varmints irritated me so much that I would have to stop and scratch every time they decided it was time to feed. When the camp tender came by on his weekly supply my boss ordered some *Frontline Plus* to give us some relief. This cousin of mine, Binge, works for an outfit on the Edward Plateau. They have a heartworm problem plus fleas. Binge sent me a sniff message (this is comparable to a text message in human language) telling me about their problems. His boss uses a product called *Revolution*.

The summer grazing season was wonderful. We came off the mountain with a beautiful healthy flock with lambs ready to top the market. Late in the summer some stray sheep from the adjacent allotment joined our band. They were a bit scruffy. The wool had been rubbed into tags that looked like some hippy hair-do. We sorted them off and returned them to their unit. The mating season went great. Topping was like a three ring circus. Each ram had 5 ladies to serve each day. Sorry I reverted to some of the language I carried up from down under. These terms are colloquial terms for the breeding season and its activities where Granddad Dog taught me sheep husbandry. In 20 days turn out the lights the party is over.

Winter was cold and harsh but plenty of good feed to nourish those developing fetuses. Then I happened to notice a lot of wool on the fences, brush, posts and tree trunks. The condition got worse. As the rubbing continued the wool begin to look like a shaggy commodore dog. The boss man had me sort out a few. This is a task that brings back memories of trials on a Sunday afternoon in the high country on the South Island when I would separate out certain sheep and put them in a pen. The Petron legged out one of the rattiest ones for examination. At first glance he didn't notice anything. He had to adjust his bifocals and take a real close look.

Prepared by Cleon V. Kimberling

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These little creatures are small and the same color as the skin and wool. Our fine wool sheep had picked up a lice infestation from those few neighboring visitors.

Last season, at shearing time, during one of my breaks from putting sheep through the race (another one of those down-under terms) to the shearing crew, I overheard comments from the blokes about all of the poor wool due to lice and keds (*Melophagus ovinus*). It seems that keds do more damage causing a weak spot in the hide and some gummy residue that is called cockle in the wool. To the big boss this is mega bucks lost due to lower quality of wool and pelts. When I was just a pup Granddad Dog told me about sheep keds causing such an irritation that ewes would get rolled up on her back trying to scratch. If sheep happened to roll into a slight depressing she could not get up and would die in a few hours.

For information about sheep lice and keds log onto optimallivestockservices.com.

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