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Creep Feeding Lambs
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Creep feeding is a means of providing supplemental feed for lambs during the nursing period. It is usually more advantageous with an early lambing program than with a late lambing program. Creep feeding has the following advantages. 1) It increases gains, especially for lambs from multiple births; 2) the lambs use supplemental feed more efficiently at this time than after weaning; 3) lambs can be marketed at a younger age; 4) for early lambs, earlier marketing usually means higher prices; and 5) early lambs can be sold without going to pasture; thus more ewes can be carried on available pasture and the lambs will have fewer internal parasite problems.

Lambs will begin to nibble at grain and hay when they are about a week old. However, they will not eat much supplemental feed until they are about four weeks old. Set up the creep when the lambs are 7 to 10 days old, and construct it in a convenient location close to the brood flock. Provide water in the creep or as close to it as possible. A heat lamp over the feeder will help to attract the lambs, especially at night. Sunlight shining into a creep during the day will also attract them. Keep the creep area well bedded and the feeders clean.

Use Home-Grown Feeds

Make maximum use of home-grown grains and roughage when formulating the creep ration. Corn and oats as well as leafy, high-quality legume hay make excellent feed for young lambs. Barley can also be used, but it may not be quite so palatable as corn and oats, at least for the first couple of weeks.

Until the lambs are 6 weeks old, grain used in the creep ration should be cracked, crimped, or rolled unless a pelleted ration is used. After 6 weeks, whole grain can be used unless it is extremely hard, and then it should be cracked, crimped, or rolled for several more weeks.

Rolled oats are excellent to use in the creep ration or even to start lambs on feed, but they usually cost too much to justify their use. Molasses is sometimes used primarily as an appetizer or to hold down dust. If molasses is to be used, it should make up 5 to 10% of the ration. Bran can also be included at the 10 to 15% level. Many people include bran in the creep ration because of its high palatability and laxative properties.

High-quality legume hay should be self-fed in either long or pelleted form in addition to the concentrate ration unless a high-roughage complete ration pellet is being fed. If no legume hay or pellets or only poor-

quality hay is fed in the creep, then include a protein supplement (soybean oil meal, linseed oil meal, or commercial supplement) in the ration. In this case the creep ration should contain 15 to 16% crude protein, and rations for early-weaned lambs (60 days old or less) should contain approximately 18% protein. Use the protein supplement that costs least per pound of protein.

Suggested Rations

A concentrate ration that is commonly used when high-quality legume hay is fed is 50% corn and 50% oats. When high-quality legume hay is not provided, then one of the following rations is commonly used: 1) 35% corn, 35% oats, 15% bran, and 15% protein supplement or 2) 40% corn, 40% oats, and 20% protein supplement. Studies at Ohio State University indicate that lambs can be creep-fed successfully on dehydrated alfalfa meal pellets alone until they are 8 weeks old. At this time corn and a protein supplement are required in addition in order to obtain maximum gains and feed efficiency. Many people are using complete pelleted rations for creep feeding. Lambs on pelleted rations normally eat more feed daily and gain more rapidly than those on unpelleted rations. For a complete pelleted creep ration, start with 65 to 70% of roughage, and gradually work down to 50 to 55% by the time the lambs are $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 months old.

The usually recommended rate of antibiotics for use in creep rations is 15 to 20 grams per ton, which is the equivalent of 7.5 to 10.0 milligrams per pound of feed. Aureomycin (chlortetracycline) and terramycin (oxytetracycline) are the two used most commonly in creep rations. Most studies have shown the following beneficial results from use of antibiotics: increased gains, improved feed efficiency, reduced scouring, lower death losses, and a more uniform group of lambs.

Simple Rations Can Be Good

Creep rations do not have to be complex to be good. Research in various states indicates that lambs will perform as well on simple creep rations as on complex rations. However, there are times when a variety of ingredients or a change in ingredients may be desirable if lambs go off feed. This problem is not so serious with creep-fed lambs as it is with lambs after weaning.

Creep rations can be either hand-fed or self-fed. Many sheepmen hand-feed until the lambs begin to eat regularly from the creep and then self-feed from then until weaning or marketing. The creep feeders must be kept clean at all times to get maximum consumption of the ration.

Three University trials were done to determine water consumption of finishing lambs under different management and environmental conditions.

In two trials, three feeding methods on pasture and in drylot were compared. The feeding methods were, self feeding grain, hand feeding grain,

and self feeding a complete ground mixed ration.

It was observed in the first trial that lambs self fed grain consumed 7.6% more water than those that were hand fed. Those self fed the complete ground mixed ration drank the most water--14% more than the next highest group. Dry-lot lambs drank 33% more water than pasture groups.

In the second trial--a repetition of the first--it was noted that water consumption was closely related to the weather. The higher the temperature, the more water was drunk.

It was also shown that generally, the more feed eaten by lambs, the greater the amount of water consumed.

As in the first trial, lambs self fed the complete mixed ration consumed the most water. Pastured lambs drank less than did those in drylot. Researchers learned that average daily gain did not always increase as animals drank more water.

The third trial was conducted to determine the effect of shade on amount of water consumed by pastured lambs. The study was made from September 7 to October 3. As was expected, lambs which did not have access to shade drank more water--30% more--than those sheltered from the sun.