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## Spring 1997 Lambing Protocol SDSU Sheep Unit

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## Spring 1997 Lambing Protocol SDSU Sheep Unit

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### I. Prelambing

- A. Eight to 10 weeks prior to lambing (Dec. 1)  
Condition score and sort off any ewes scoring lower than 2.5 and feed separately.
- B. Six weeks prior to lambing (Dec. 15)  
Shear ewes, sort off thin ewes, and increase energy in diet.  
Pregnancy check ewes no later than 4 weeks prior to lambing.
- C. Four weeks prior to lambing (Jan. 1)  
Begin feeding grain to all ewes. Work up to 1 lb/head/day, continue until lambing.
- D. Additional  
Watch for any problems or abnormalities:
  - 1. Pregnancy disease (ketosis)-isolate ewe for observation. Administer propylene glycol or other recommended oral nutrient supplement. If ketosis does occur, consider increasing nutrient concentration to entire flock. Watch for anorexia, loss of condition, and avoid sudden changes in ration.
  - 2. Abortions-Immediately isolate affected ewes. Remove any fetal and placental tissue. Submit tissue samples to SDSU Diagnostic Laboratory to identify cause of abortion. Samples should be refrigerated until submission.

### II. Lambing

#### Baby Lamb and Ewe Care

- A. Allow ewe to lamb in her respective group pen. Allow her to finish lambing and clean before moving to the jug unless weather or other circumstances require moving sooner. Teats are stripped at this time to remove wax plugs and to evaluate milk production. Properly dispose of afterbirth material.
- B. Ewes and lambs are moved to the receiving pens in the temperature controlled (35° F) lambing room. With cold weather it is very important to do this soon after lambing to prevent hypothermia.
  - 1. Immediately after the ewe is brought into the receiving area, the lamb's navel is clipped to about one inch and dipped with iodine (7%). If it has not already been done, strip ewe's teats to ensure adequate milk supply and that no udder problems exist.
  - 2. Administer the recommended dose of oral Vitamin E (Baby Lamb Strength).
  - 3. Examine lambs for inverted eyelids, general health, vigor and assist nursing if needed. A "lamb saver tube" (stomach tube) can be used to deliver 6 to 10 oz. of colostrum to unthrifty lambs. If lamb mouth is cold, the body temperature must be raised to normal (warm mouth) before administering colostrum.

4. Move the ewe to the lambing jug after she has cleaned. Grafting lamb(s) to recipient ewes should be done at this time if necessary. The sooner the better!

C. Ewes and lambs remain in jugs for a minimum of 48 hours, if space allows, to create the necessary bond between the lamb and her dam. Hold back poor-doers, weak lambs, etc. as needed.

1. Determine and record mothering ability and lamb vigor while they are in the jug. Ensure that the ewe is accepting all her lambs and that all are suckling properly. Watch lambs closely for any signs of scouring or dehydration, i.e. hunched-up, gaunt, rolled eyelids. Follow veterinarian prescribed treatment protocol.
2. Begin offering grain to the ewe at the next scheduled feeding, for singles the day after she has lambed. Ewes are fed 1 lb grain per lamb nursing. Keep top quality alfalfa and clean, ice-free water available at all times.
3. Groups are enlarged gradually until they have reached the desired size appropriate for the pen (usually 25 to 35 ewes).
4. Group ewes by similar age, number of lambs being raised, and breed type in order to simplify feeding and baby lamb management.

D. **Bonus Lambs.** Ewes are expected to raise twins. Any bonus lambs are either grafted or sold as a bottle lamb if no suitable ewe is available for grafting.

1. Grafting: Keep the closest sized lambs together. Remove the odd sized lamb and compare with grafting candidate. If they differ dramatically, reconsider.

E. **Paint-branding**

1. Ewes and lambs are branded in the jugs, numbered according to the order they lamb (first ewe to lamb is #1, etc.). If

done too soon, may affect bonding of ewe with lambs.

2. A ewe and the lamb(s) she is raising all get the same number on both sides of their bodies.
3. Lambs raised as singles will get branded on the shoulder, those raised as twins get branded on the hip. The ewe is branded in the same manner.
4. Lambs grafted onto a ewe get a bar under their number, as does the ewe.
5. Paint colors are changed at 100's series.

### III. Processing lambs and recording lambing data.

A notebook is maintained to record all pertinent information at lambing time. Ewe and lamb(s) number, date and time of birth, any assistance given, any problems with the lamb(s) or the ewe, any treatment and/or special needs. Mothering ability and lamb vigor scores are made along with any other information deemed important. It's better to have too much written than not enough. This notebook can be taken into the lambing barn to correctly identify ewes and lambs for management tasks or animal health. When not being used, this book is kept on the manager's desk so everyone can find it. The necessary information is transferred from this notebook to record forms that remain in the office. The unit manager is the primary recorder with others doing so only when manager is absent.

1. All lambs are weighed within 6 to 12 hours of birth. Weight and sex is recorded on all lambs, live or dead.
2. Tails are banded before lambs and ewes leave the jugs, within approximately 1 inch of the dock. Appropriate ram lambs are castrated with an Elastrator band at the same time.
3. Ewes are dewormed with Valbazen while in the jug (3 cc per 100 lb of body weight).

4. Lambs are double eartagged, numbered in the order they are dropped. Make sure matching ear tags are used before they are in the ear (different sequence for purebred and crossbreds).
5. Lamb losses are recorded on a separate list along with all information available, including a suspected cause of death.

#### **IV. Vaccinations**

1. At four weeks of age, lambs are given the first Enterotoxemia C&D vaccine. If rubber bands have been used for docking and/or castrating, the C&D vaccine with Tetanus Toxoid should be used. Also at this time, lambs are vaccinated for Soremouth. This is a live vaccine and so precautions need to be taken.
2. Three to four weeks following the first C&D vaccine, a second shot is administered. Once again, use C&D vaccine with Tetanus Toxoid if needed.
3. If lambs are being creeped or will be going directly onto self-feeders after weaning, a third C&D shot can be given three to four weeks after the second. It is cheap insurance and you don't have to save too many lambs to make it pay.

#### **V. Creep Area**

1. Creep areas are set up in a dry, draft-free area before the first lambs are two weeks old.

2. Lights can be used to attract lambs, but no heat lamps are used.
3. Only a small amount of fresh feed is put in the feeders daily, perhaps 2 to 4 lb of creep diet.
4. The creep ration is an 18% crude protein diet containing the coccidiocide, (dequinate).
5. After lambs start consuming feed, the self-feeders are filled completely. Feeders cannot be allowed to run empty. If lambs go without creep feed for over two or three hours, feed highly palatable hay in the creep before refilling feeders.
6. Feeders need to be checked and cleaned daily. Any straw, manure, or excessive fines will reduce consumption. We expect 60-day-old lambs to consume approximately 2 lb of feed per day.

#### **VI. Daily Observation**

- a. All pens will be walked several times a day in order to locate any problems that may occur.
- b. Do lambs stand up and stretch?
- c. Are any coughing or sound raspy when they breath?
- d. Are the ewes udders even or is only one side being nursed?