Lamb and Wool Production: Your Contribution to Victory

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Your Contribution to Victory

This leaflet is a brief, concise outline of the best sheep practices and rations recommended by your State College of Agriculture.
**Lamb and Wool PRODUCTION In South Dakota**

By G. A. McDonald, Extension Animal Husbandman

The United States government requests a 2 percent increase in sheep production during the present war emergency to meet army, navy and civilian demands. In 1941 South Dakota produced 1,282,000 lambs and 15,019,000 pounds of wool, representing an 18 and 27 percent increase, respectively, over 1940. Ample feed supplies, improved grass conditions and a favorable market situation indicates that South Dakota will have little difficulty in meeting a sheep production goal of 6 percent increase over 1941.

In consideration of present economic conditions experienced sheepmen are maintaining ewe numbers, are culling closer, are replacing with ewe lambs of good type and quality, are using rations of outstanding breed type and character to increase returns in wool and lambs per unit, are practicing improved management and feeding methods, are paying off mortgages and in general are putting their sheep enterprise on a sounder basis so that they can face inevitable depressing post-war conditions. The major factors involved are hereafter discussed.

**Winter Feeding and Management**

The pregnant ewe is developing one or two lambs, is growing a crop of wool, gaining 15 or 20 pounds in weight and carrying on body processes which require an adequate balanced ration. An unbalanced ration will result in weak or dead ewes, a poor wool crop, little milk and perhaps loss of the ewe. Pregnant ewes may well receive one-half to one pound of meal per head daily for six weeks before lambing consisting of:

1. Equal parts by weight of shelled corn and whole oats.
2. One-third Sooner milo, one-third barley and one-third whole oats.

Protein should be supplied with the above grain at the rate of one pound of cottonseed or soybean oil meal to five ewes per day. If alfalfa is available throughout the winter, no protein supplement will be necessary. Silage may well constitute half the ration. An unbalanced ration will result in weak or dead ewes. Pregnant ewes may well receive one-half to one pound of cottonseed or soybean oil meal to five ewes per day depending on the quality of the feed. Three pounds of silage will replace one pound of dry roughage. Exercise should be provided through grazing or by feeding roughage on the ground some distance from the buildings.

**Minerals**

Ewes, rams and lambs require calcium and phosphorus under most South Dakota conditions, and should have a mineral mixture consisting of the following before them at all times:

- 20 parts salt
- 40 parts ground limestone
- 40 parts steamed bone meal

Common salt should be provided in addition. Adequate feeding of protein feeds and minerals along with sufficient exercise will reduce losses from "pregnancy or lambing disease."

**Lambing Critical Time**

Lambing is a critical period and may spell profit or loss to the sheepman. Factors that may well be observed are as follows:

1. Use individual lambing pens made of 3 x 4 foot panels hinged together and one end placed into the side of a barn in a L-position. A series of these placed side by side will serve effectively and are practical for the average sheepman.
2. A week before lambing, put lambing pens in order with bedding. Trim wool away from udder.
3. Reduce grain before lambing. Restless ewes with milk and appearing sunken in front of hips should be placed in individual lambing pens.
4. Be on hand at lambing time in case assistance is necessary.
5. Be sure the lamb nurses. Keep ewe and lamb in the individual lambing pen for 2 or 3 days or until the ewe readily accepts the lamb.
6. Dock and castrate the lambs at 10 days to two weeks of age.
7. After lambing gradually increase the grain ration of the ewe to about one pound per day.

**Creep Feeding Lambs**

Lambs intended for early market should have grain beginning at about two weeks of age. Start feeding the lambs in a "creep" as soon as possible. Feed what grain the lambs will clean up and keep the troughs clean at all times. Feed any left-over grain to older sheep. The "creep" should be located in a convenient corner of the barn or lot. Upright openings about eight inches wide in the enclosing panels will permit only the lambs to the "creep" enclosing the grain troughs.

After the lambs have started to eat, equal parts of shelled corn and whole oats are satisfactory and as the lambs get older, the amount of corn should be gradually increased, as it is the best fattening feed. Barley or Sooner milo may replace the corn. Lambs should also have access to good leafy alfalfa hay in a rack. If alfalfa is not available, feed a grain mixture of one-third corn, one-third oats and one-third bran. If the bran is not available cottonseed, linseed or soybean oil meal may be substituted for it at the rate of 1 lb. of meal for each 10 head of lambs. During this period the ewes should be fed liberally to provide an abundance of milk.

**Pasture Care of Ewe and Lamb**

Feeding experiments show that lambs on good pasture will make more growth and gain at less cost than when fed in dry lot. It is very urgent, therefore, that adequate pasture be provided throughout the spring and summer. If permanent pastures are inadequate, a temporary pasture should be planned to supplement the permanent pasture and provide continuous grazing throughout the year. Experienced sheepmen depend on rye, spring grain crops, sudan grass and stubble fields to supplement their permanent grass. Twenty percent of the cover in native pastures should be left each year.

Continue grain for awhile when first turning the sheep on pasture as the grass is washy and low in feeding value. As the weather becomes hot, provide plenty of fresh, clean water and shade. Have a mineral mixture and salt before the sheep constantly.

Trim the feet about twice yearly, generally after shearing in the spring, and just before going into the winter in the late fall. This is necessary to prevent footrot and crooked or broken down pasterns. A sharp jackknife is the best tool.

Call out about 20 percent of the ewes each year before selling the lambs and replace with an equal number of quality, heavily woolled ewe lambs of excellent type. Cull and sell "gummers" or "spreaders," those with infected or spoiled udders and low "shearers."

**Produce Quality Wool**

South Dakota statistics indicate that about ¾ of the sheepman's income is derived from the wool crop. Factors influencing the value of the clip may be summarized as follows:

1. Feed sheep according to recommendations herein described.
2. Proper feeding will increase the pounds of wool produced per sheep. Keep sheep healthy.
3. Improve market value of wool by:
   - a. Keeping sheep away from straw stacks.
   - b. Eradicating cockle burrs on pasture land.
   - c. Reducing the amount of dirt in the wool by grazing on areas not wind eroded.
   - d. Marking sheep with washable wool paint, avoid tar and barn paint.
4. Shear as the weather becomes warm. Suggested dates for shearing in the Eastern farm flock area are May 15 - June 15, and in the Range area June 1 to July 1.
5. Shear on a clean floor.
6. Remove tags and sack them with the sweepings.
7. Tie all fleeces with paper twine.
8. Sack yearling wool, ram wool and ewe wool separately.

**Flush Before Breeding**

About three weeks before breeding season, flush the ewes by turning on ungrazed pasture or grazing. The ewes will come in heat more readily and possibly result in more twin lambs with a more uniform lamb crop. The color of ocher can be changed by turning off the ewes during the night and pen during the day. Paint the ewes with washrable wool paint, avoid tar and barn paint.

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About three weeks before breeding season, flush the ewes by turning on ungrazed pasture or grazing. The ewes will come in heat more readily and possibly result in more twin lambs with a more uniform lamb crop. Grain the ram before and during the breeding season. Mature rams will serve about 50 ewes during the breeding season and ram lambs about 20. Don't use rams over six years of age. Turn the rams with the ewes during the night and pen during the day. Paint the ram's brisket with ocher and linseed oil in order to determine what ewes have been bred. The color of ocher can be changed each 16 to 18 days so that ewes coming back in heat can be discovered. Breeding dates should be kept and lambing dates determined (gestation period 146 days).
Range Feeding, Management

Approximately 46 percent of the lambs produced in the state are produced on the range area of western South Dakota. Range studies indicate that proper feeding and management will increase the returns from both lambs and wool. The major factors involved are:

1. Cull ewes closely each year and use only superior rams.
2. "Flush" ewes before breeding season, using unpastured grazing land or grain.
3. Condition rams before breeding season. Use three mature rams per 100 ewes. Don't use rams over five years of age and avoid undersized ram lambs. Regulate ram services.
4. Provide winter protection by utilizing breaks or open sheds.
5. Winter grain, if possible, and supplement with ½ pound shelled corn per day or 1 pound of cottonseed cake for 10 head of ewes per day. Sooner milo or barley would replace corn.
6. Provide prairie hay, cane, grain-hay or other roughage, if grass is not available.
7. A mineral and salt, as previously described, should be provided at all times.
8. Provide individual lambing pens, if shed lambing. Leave ewe and lamb in pen for two to three days. Brand ewe and lamb or lambs. Turn out with about a dozen ewes and lambs 1½ pounds per day or 1 pound of cottonseed cake for 10 head of ewes per day, Sooner milo or barley would replace corn.
9. In range lambing, run the ewes on unpastured land with natural shelter, if possible. Use lambing tents, if necessary. Bed down on clean ground each night and have a night man present.
10. Castrate and dock lambs at about 10 days of age. Differentiate wether and ewe lambs by paint branding or ear notching.
11. Practice deferred and rotational grazing. Have an adequate water supply.

Fattening Lambs

Start lambs on feed gradually. Begin by feeding 1-10 pound of oats per lamb and increase 1-10 pound daily. Increase as the feed is cleaned up. After a week, substitute corn, barley or grain sorghum for a portion of the oats. Increase feed gradually until light lambs are getting one to one and one-half pounds daily. Feed all grain whole. Numerous experiments indicate that it is uneconomical to grind grain for lambs. Feed hay liberally at first and decrease as feeding period advances.

Rations

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<tr>
<th>Without Silage or Alfalfa</th>
<th>With Wet Beet Pulp</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1½ lbs. grain</td>
<td>1 lb. grain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ lbs. linseed meal</td>
<td>1 lb. wet beet pulp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1½ lbs. prairie hay</td>
<td>1½ lbs. alfalfa hay</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

WITH SILAGE AND ALFALFA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1½ lbs. grain</th>
<th>1½ to 2 lbs. grain</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>½ lbs. cottonseed meal</td>
<td>½ lbs. alfalfa</td>
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The following grain mixtures have proven successful with alfalfa hay:

1. 100 lbs. sh. corn or Sooner
2. ½ Barley
3. ½ Oats
4. 100 lbs. oats
5. ½ Rye

Provide dry quarters and protection from severe weather. Allow sufficient feed bunk space for every lamb and clean feed bunks each time before feeding.

Permite access to clean water at all times.

Have a mineral mixture and salt available.

Provide a growing ration for light lambs for 30 to 60 days before fattening them.

Sort out any sick or scours lambs and feed them by themselves.

Sort out the "fats" toward the end of the feeding period. This will reduce losses from overeating. Reduce the ration on "off-feed" lambs.

Watch out for wool blindness, handle lambs quietly.

Common Ailments of Sheep

WORMS. Worms are indicated by a diarrhea, harsh wool, bottle jaws, emaciation, and unthrifty lambs. Treat entire flock three times about a month apart when on pasture. Worm the entire flock before going into the winter. Use the following worming solution:

- 1 gal. water
- 1½ oz. blue vitriol
- 1 oz. Black Leaf 40

Separate the ewes and lambs, take off feed for 12 hours before worming, administer the worming solution with a four-ounce syringe, giving ewes and rams three ounces, yearlings two ounces and lambs 1 ounce.

LICE AND TICKS. Dip all sheep (including the lambs) after shearing, using an arsenical or a good coal tar dip, mixed according to directions. The practice of dipping regularly each year will increase the wool clip and improve the general health of the flock.

MAGGOTS. Kill maggot infestations by clipping the wool close and put equal parts of sweet oil and sulphuric ether in the wound.

SORE EYES. Lambs with red, inflamed eyes and watery discharge from the eyes should be placed in a dark place away from the flock and treated with a saturated boric acid solution twice daily. Close examination will often reveal that the eyelid is turned under. It will be necessary to frequently turn back the eyelid until it stays.

MAMMITS. Milk out the udder of the ewe frequently and massage with camphorated oil.

SCOURS. Caused by anything interfering with digestion. The lamb may get too much milk or become chilled. A teaspoonful of castor oil will give good results.

EXTENSION SERVICE, SOUTH DAKOTA STATE COLLEGE

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Your Contribution to Victory

This book does not circulate

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