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### Wheat as a Feed for Sheep

Cooperative Extension South Dakota State University

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# WHEAT

## as a feed for sheep



Cooperative Extension Service: South Dakota State University and U. S. Department of Agriculture with Cooperation of the South Dakota Wheat Commission.

# Wheat as a feed for Sheep

Leon F. Bush, Associate Professor of Animal Science

Wheat is a satisfactory grain for feeding lambs or breeding stock. The nutritive composition compares favorably with corn. Wheat is higher in protein than other grains; however, this varies greatly with climatic conditions. It is low in calcium but one of the highest in phosphorous content.

Lambs find wheat less palatable than corn. When it is fed as the only grain, lambs have a tendency to go "off feed." Shriveled wheat is more palatable to lambs than well matured wheat. They like wheat better whole; however, if mixed with other grain, it is necessary to grind wheat; otherwise lambs will sort and refuse to eat it.

Although some wheat may pass through the digestive system whole, it generally does not pay to grind it when fed as the only grain. Lambs fed ground or crushed wheat as the only grain will usually produce less rapid and less economical gains than when fed the whole grain.

Wheat fed as the only grain to lambs is worth more than barley. When compared to corn, wheat has about 90% the gain producing value. This is due not to its composition but to the fact that sheep do not relish it so they consume less feed. When ground and mixed with more palatable grains, the value of wheat may be equal to corn. Wheat may be substituted for 50 to 75% of the corn in a ration for lambs.

Acceptance of wheat can be increased by pelleting with hay in a complete ration. Experiments show that lambs fed a pelleted ration of 35% wheat

and 65% alfalfa hay make equal gains and more efficient gains than lambs fed a similar ration with corn as the grain. Consumption of the wheat ration equaled that containing corn.

Since ewes are usually fed less than full feed, palatability isn't as important as in feeding lambs. Wheat may be fed as the only grain to ewes during late gestation and lactation; however, mixing it with other grains would improve its acceptance. Grinding or rolling the mixture would prevent sorting.

Table 1. Comparative feed value per pound of grain for feeding lambs

Feed	Bushel weight	Value compared to corn (%)
Shelled corn	56	100
Wheat	60	90-100
Barley	48	85-90
Oats	32	80-85
Sorghum grain	50-60	95-97

Table 2. Average feed composition for some grains used in feeding sheep

Feed	Dry matter	Crude protein	TDN	Ca	P
Shelled corn	89	8.9	80	.02	.31
Barley	89	11.7	78	.08	.42
Oats	89	11.8	65	.10	.35
Sorghum, milo	89	11.0	84	---	---
Wheat, hard red spring	90	14.7	81	.05	.47
Wheat, hard red winter	89	13.0	80	.05	.40

Table 3. Rations for Sheep

Ingredients*	Creep		Ground mix	Feeder lambs		Gestation-lactation Grain mix †
	Whole mix	Pellet		Ground mix	Pellet	
Wheat	370	600	250	500	600	400
Corn	420	---	400	400	---	---
Barley	---	---	250	---	---	---
Oats	---	---	---	---	---	500
Soybean oil meal	200	100	100	100	---	100
Alfalfa hay	Free choice	300	‡	‡	400	---
Ground limestone	---	5	---	---	5	---
Trace mineralized salt	---	10	---	---	10	---
Aureomycin (grams)	---	5	---	---	5	---

\*Pounds in mixture of 1000 pounds total.

†Concentrate mix. Feed with adequate amount of roughage.

‡Feed at the rate of 1-1½ pounds per head daily.



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