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LAMBS SAVING A LARGER HARVEST



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SUMMARY

Proper attention to the details of feeding and management, both before and after lambing, results in small losses of ewes and lambs.

Lambing sheds should be light, ventilated, and well bedded. Each ewe should have from 12 to 15 square feet of floor space.

Thoroughly cleanse lambing sheds each spring as the best means of preventing serious lamb disorders of a contagious nature.

Always keep ewes, heavy with lamb, separate from other livestock.

Have on hand lambing pens and certain simple medicinal supplies before the lambs begin to arrive.

Give the ewe a reasonable opportunity to give normal birth to her lamb before offering assistance to her. The caretaker should thoroughly cleanse his hands before he attempts to assist a ewe.

Give close attention to the water supply of ewes nursing lambs, because 81 per cent of the composition of milk is water.

Ewes lambing on dry feed should be fed a simple grain ration, preferably consisting of oats and bran (millrun).

Sunshine "energizes" young lambs, allowing them to make fuller use of their milk.

Use of the lamb creep produces a greater daily gain. It is recommended for all purebred flocks and for early lambing farm flocks.

All progressive sheep men dock and castrate their lambs at from 7 to 15 days of age.

Examine daily the udders of ewes which have recently lambed.

If the lamb stretches when it rises to its feet, then "all is well"; if it does not stretch, look out for small lamb troubles.

LAMBS

SAVING A LARGER HARVEST

by C. M. Hubbard,

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The profit obtained from the range band or farm flock depends primarily upon saving as many as possible of the total number of lambs dropped. Those sheep men who have given their ewes an abundance of exercise daily, have fed a sufficient amount of clean bright roughage of a balanced nature and have provided proper shelter during the lambing season should have very light losses, providing they attend to the little details immediately prior to, at, and after the time of lambing.

This work, which results in a considerably larger profit, is largely a labor of love to the experienced flock master. If a man is not willing to lend assistance to the ewe or lamb in trouble and if he has not that kindly liking for animals which makes it second nature for him to do his best to relieve their suffering, then he is out of place as a farm flock owner or caretaker at lambing time.

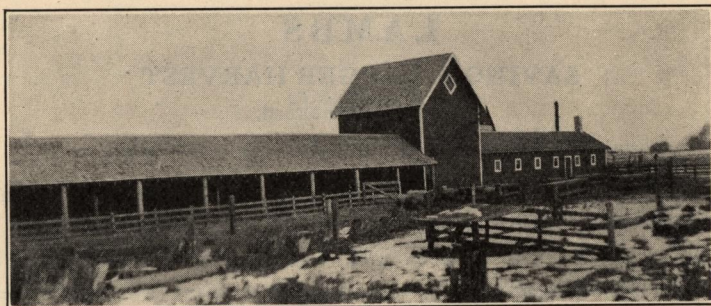
LAMBING PREPARATION

Location of Lambing Shed

Select a sheltered location for the lambing shed, either in a ravine, behind a row of trees or in the protection of other farm buildings. If possible, the ground should be of a sandy or gravelly nature and slope away from the shed. Late winter and early spring sun should shine directly into the yards. Such a location naturally allows for sufficient shed ventilation, as it is possible to leave at least one side open until lambing time and later if the flock master thinks it advisable. These yards will dry out rapidly after rains or following the melting of snow.

Light Airy Sheds Best

Give early-lambing ewes the run of light, airy, well-bedded sheds, free from drafts. If they lamb in January or February, arrange the shed so that the front may be closed up in stormy weather and on cold nights. Allow about 12 to 15 square feet of bed space for each ewe.



Good lambing sheds reduce losses of lambs and ewes.

Have the doorways wide and the approaches gradual so that there is no crowding through narrow doors nor any possibility of the ewes slipping and straining themselves, thus tending to bring about premature birth (slinking) of lambs.

Thoroughly Cleanse Lambing Quarters

Failure to clean out thoroughly and disinfect the lambing shed each year may result in heavy lamb losses. Such troubles as naval infection, white scours, and ulcerated mouth, which are of a contagious nature, may become common and create havoc with the lamb crop.

In the spring, after lambing, haul out all sheep manure, sprinkle the ground floor with slaked lime and thoroughly disinfect the lower side walls with a coal tar derivative sheep dip. Allow the spring, summer and fall air to have free access to the shed. Many successful range sheep men plow up their lambing corrals yearly or move to clean ground.

Keep Flock Separate

Allowing ewes heavy with lamb to mingle with other farm stock subjects them to injuries which may cause premature birth of lambs, dead lambs at birth, and a loss of breeding ewes. Young lambs are greedily devoured by hogs.

Lambing Pens Advisable

Have lambing pens ready a week or so before lambing. These pens are about four feet square, the dimensions varying with the size of the ewes. Have the panels about three feet high, hinged

together in sets of two and attached to the back wall of the shed in a series, by means of hooks and eyes. With sufficient shed space, lambing pens may be set up permanently.

Medicinal Supplies

Have on hand certain simple remedies, medicines and equipment. These should include several swan-bill nipples and long-necked bottles; carbolated vaseline for difficult lambing; a coal tar derivative dip and lysol for disinfecting purposes; castor oil for a physic; Epsom salts for a physic and also for external use as a caked udder remedy; turpentine and lard for udder trouble; pure soap for enemas for constipation in small lambs; a syringe; milk of magnesia for scours in lambs; a package or two of cotton gauze; boracic acid for an eye wash and tincture of iodine for use externally as a caked udder remedy.

Caretaker

Give the caretaker sufficient time to care for all emergencies in connection with the annual harvest. Preventing a few losses will often pay for hiring special help.

Heavy Winter Ewe Losses

The inexperienced flock master often makes several mistakes in the winter feeding and management of his flock, thus causing serious losses. Such losses may be due to any of the following causes: sudden and radical changes in the ration; feeding moldy hay or moldy silage; the presence of ergot on feeds; bad affliction with foot rot or scab; violent chasing by dogs, livestock, or varmints; crowding through narrow doorways; lack of exercise together with heavy feeding; or feeding a ration consisting of only legume hay.

Always change gradually from range or pasture to dry-lot feeding. Changing from pasture to such roughages as grain-hays, straws, timothy, and corn stalks causes heavier losses than if legume hay and silage formed a part of the ration. A combination of a good legume hay, grain hay and silage would give still more satisfactory results.

Moldy feeds or feeds affected with ergot usually cause heavy abortion (premature birth) and ewe losses. Never allow wet roughage to collect and mold in sheep racks. Provide ample hay rack space so that ewes heavy with lamb will not have to crowd in to get their share of feed.

LAMBING

Indications of Lambing

Symptoms easily discerned by the experienced flock owner are: the ewe is uneasy and restless, getting up and laying down often; a gaunt hollow look is noticeable just below the loin; many ewes endeavor to mother the lambs of other sheep; the parts are enlarged; and during the last few hours the teats usually fill with milk.

When Lambing Is Normal

In normal birth, the head and front legs of the lamb are first presented with both feet forward under the lamb's chin. Leave the ewe entirely alone if reasonable progress is being made. After lambing, place the ewe and her progeny in a lambing pen, so that the lamb or lambs cannot wander away and so that she will take care of both if there are twins.



Clipping udder wool prevents lambs from sucking on locks of dirty wool.

Clipping the udder wool away with sheep shears aids the lambs in locating their milk and prevents them from sucking on locks of dirty wool. If the lamb has not nursed after a reasonable length of time back the ewe into a corner and, with knee in front of the ewe's chest, hold the lamb up to nurse.

Milk out one stream to remove the "wax" in the

end of the teat. A normal, vigorous lamb should be on his feet in 15 or 20 minutes trying to find nourishment.

Delayed Birth

Ewes which have shown the usual lambing symptoms for a reasonable time and are having difficulty may require assistance. Examine the ewe carefully to determine whether the lamb's head, with both feet under the chin, is presented. If so, gradually draw the lamb's legs in the direction of the udder, thus allowing an easier birth. Yearling ewes often require assistance in giving birth to large headed lambs.

If either or both feet are not forward, carefully insert the hand, push back the lamb and gently bring forward the head and forelegs. Birth should then occur easily. When the lamb's rear quarters are presented birth must occur quickly or the lamb will smother. In wrong presentation the caretaker must properly cleanse and disinfect his hands before rendering assistance to the ewe. Carelessness here is quite likely to result in loss of the ewe from blood poison.

FEEDING AND MANAGEMENT AFTER LAMBING

Pasturing

Put ewes and lambs on pasture as soon as weather conditions permit.



Pasture is good for both lambs and ewes.

Water Requirements

Shortly after lambing offer water, which has been warmed, to the ewe. Never use ice water. The ewe's milk is 81 per cent water and ewes nursing lambs should be given free access to it for rapid growth of lambs.

Feed Requirements

If grain has been fed, practically eliminate it at lambing time and gradually resume and increase it after the ewe has recovered. If lambing is early in the season on dry feed, a splendid mixture for increasing the milk flow consists of oats, bran (or millrun) and linseed oil meal, 60-30-10 pounds each by weight. Oats and millrun two and one parts each by weight, make another good grain ration. Bran and millrun are especially strong milk producers. Feed legume



Sunshine allows lambs to make fullest use of feed, water and care in attaining rapid growth.

hay. If available, three or four pounds of silage (entirely free from mold), or about the same weight of roots adds succulence and promotes a heavy milk flow. Ewes nursing lambs and especially those suckling twins, should be fed liberally until grass is available.

Sunshine Important

Sunshine invigorates young lambs. Take full advantage of it. Feed, water and good care are necessary, but nature's free gift of sunshine allows the lambs to take the fullest advantage of them.

"Twinners" Separate

When taking ewes with twins or triplets from the special lambing pen, group them separate from the ewes with single lambs. These lambs may require more attention. If lambing occurs before grass is available, these ewes require somewhat more grain than those with single lambs. Twin lambs, which do not receive sufficient milk, may be fed several times daily on cow's milk or helped to suckle the heavier milking ewes. Do not dilute cow's milk. Warm the whole milk, preferably from the Jersey or Guernsey, to about 92 degrees Fahrenheit. Throw away milk which has accidentally boiled. Wash bottles thoroughly after each feeding.

Bunching Ewes and Lambs

As lambing progresses, gradually assemble into larger groups the ewes with older lambs. Be sure that ewes with twins have accepted both lambs and really "know" them. Examine daily ewes with which the caretaker has had any trouble.

Making Ewe Own Lamb

There are several methods of inducing a ewe to own her own or another's lamb. Drive two stakes into the ground just close enough so the ewe's head will slip between them. Then drive down stakes at each flank and help the lamb to suck. If the ewe is especially stubborn, she may remain stanchioned for two or three days. The approach of a barking dog may arouse her mother instinct. Stripping a little of the ewe's milk on the lamb's rump often is effective. Shutting the ewe up in a pen alone with the lamb, and assisting it to suck every few hours, will usually give results. An easy method of inducing a ewe to own another's lamb is to skin her own dead lamb and tie the skin over this other one. In hot weather this may be dangerous, as the lamb may become fly blown.

Ewes with a heavy flow seldom disown their own lambs and are easily made to own other ewes' lambs if their own die. A close relationship usually exists between the development of the mother instinct and the flow of milk produced.

Raising Orphan Lambs

Many orphan lambs, or lambs from ewes unable to care for twins, are too valuable to dispose of. Many club boys are starting small flocks through raising these "bummer" lambs.

A satisfactory way to develop purebred orphan lambs is to have them nurse a short teated Jersey cow. Tie the cow's legs. Furnish at least two supplemental feeds between meals until the lambs are utilizing grain in the lamb creep. Growth will be rapid.

Feed new born orphan lambs about two tablespoonsful of milk every two hours for the first day or so. In the next few days decrease the number of daily feeds and gradually increase the amount of milk for each feeding until they are receiving at least four feeds daily of about one-half pint each of whole cow's milk. This is ample milk for the first three weeks. They should then be eating oats and bran (millrun) in the lamb creep. From three weeks up to two months increase the whole cow's milk up to one pint, fed three times daily. After two months, increase the milk up toward one quart, fed morning and evening.

To avoid losses in hand feeding lambs, remember that whole cow's milk, warmed to the blood heat or about 100 degrees Fahren-

heit, is essential; that lambs must be fed individually at regular intervals; and that bottles and nipples must be kept clean and sterilized daily with hot water. Unsanitary bottles and nipples cause diarrhea and other bowel disturbances, usually terminating with death. Milk which accidentally boils must not be fed to lambs because of its constipating effect.

Docking and Castrating

Perform this work when lambs are from a week to ten days old. Dock strong, vigorous lambs a day or so after birth. Delaying this work until the lambs are four to six weeks old may result in serious losses. See State College of Washington Bulletin No. 51, "Docking and Castrating Lambs".



Dock strong, vigorous lambs a day or two after birth.

The Lamb Creep

A creep in a corner where the lambs can eat grain by themselves is desirable in raising purebreds or in pushing lambs through for an early market. Arrange it early so that they may become acquainted with it before they are old enough to munch on grain. At two weeks of age they will commence eating. The grain may consist of equal parts of coarsely ground wheat and whole oats, by weight, or two parts oats and one part bran or millrun, by weight. Whole oats, millrun and linseed oil meal, 60-30-10 parts each by weight,

make another splendid ration. Lambs readily consume alfalfa or clover leaves in a separate trough. Clean out daily any surplus feeds in the creep and give them to the ewe flock.

Ear Tagging Lambs

Ear tag purebred lambs at an early age so that their identity will not be lost. Do this before the ewe and her lamb are turned in with the main flock. It may be done any time after the lambs are a day or so old.

LAMBING TIME TROUBLES

Chilled Lambs

Chilled lambs are often brought to and saved by immersion in a pail of water as hot as the arm will easily bear, followed by brisk rubbing and drying with a gunny sack. Leave the lamb by the fire until it becomes lively, allow it to nurse and leave it with its dam. Constipation is likely to occur in chilled lambs saved by the above method. (See Constipation).

"Casting the Withers"

In eversion of the uterus place a canvas under the ewe, wash the part carefully, and disinfect it with lysol diluted to one teaspoonful to a pint of water. The assistant should stand astride the ewe, grasp each rear leg and raise the entire rear quarters. The caretaker, with clean, disinfected hands, should gently manipulate the uterus until it returns to the normal position. Insert a sterilized cotton baton plug into the vagina and take two loose cross stitches across the vulva. Remove the cotton roll and stitches after a day or so.

If there is violent straining, arrange a "harness" around the sheep's neck and about the rear parts. Run two strands of sash cord along the ewe's back to the base of the tail, tie together, pass them below the tail, tie again and then retie just below the vulva. Then run the doubled cord between the rear legs and forward under the belly, between the front legs and tie to the loop around the neck.

Udder Troubles

Many English shepherds use a small file to take the sharp edge off small lamb's teeth as these often injure the ewe's teats so that

she refuses to let her young nurse. Unless closely watched, the udder then fills up with milk and "cakes", with the milk becoming "stringy" or ropey. For such ewes reduce the ration, milk out often and bathe the udder with a hot solution of Epsom salts—one pound dissolved in a gallon of water. Apply carbolated vaseline to the sore teats.

Heavy milking ewes with only one lamb should be closely watched for udder troubles. Ewes with teats placed well up on the sides of the udder may need assistance until the lamb becomes vigorous enough to handle the situation. Strip out the surplus milk or allow another lamb to nurse.

Rubbing the udder with a mixture of eight ounces of lard and one ounce of turpentine tends to reduce the milk flow and relieve caked udder trouble. As the milk may contain harmful bacteria, do not allow the lambs to nurse until the udder is normal. Give the ewe an internal dose of Epsom salts. If the swollen part of the udder is not feverish, treat it by rubbing twice daily with tincture of iodine until the swelling begins to subside.

"Blue Bag" is an infection sometimes affecting the best milkers. It is probably aggravated by contact with the cold damp ground. Unless the caretaker is watching his flock closely, the first symptom noticed is the limping of the ewe. The udder has turned blue and probably has begun to slough off. Isolate such ewes from the flock because of the infectious nature of the disease. Remove the dead parts of the udder and disinfect the wound. Providing dry bedding, watching the udders of the heaviest milkers and regulating feed to the milk flow and requirements of the lambs may assist in combating this trouble. Usually, only the strongest ewes survive an attack.

Navel III

This contagious disease often affects lambs using old sheep sheds or yards. The germ enters the lamb's body through the navel cord at birth or shortly thereafter. Symptoms include stiffness of the leg joints, with the lamb appearing "dumpy" and having no appetite. The joints may become enlarged. A copious diarrhea sets in a little later, followed by death.

Prevention requires a thorough cleaning of the lambing shed the previous spring. If Navel III appears in purebred flocks, apply

the following treatment to the string of the navel cord of each lamb at birth: glycerine 18 ounces, tincture of iodine 1 ounce and carbolic acid 1 ounce, all thoroughly mixed.

Constipation

Relieve constipation in the ewe by a dose of Epsom salts, giving four or five ounces in about a pint of water. Use great care to prevent the dose from entering the lungs, thus inducing mechanical pneumonia. Back the ewe into a corner and with one hand under the chin, insert the neck of the bottle between the ewe's lips at the side. After allowing a little of the contents to run into the mouth, remove the bottle. Repeat the operation until the entire dose is swallowed. The neck of the bottle should be small. Follow the salts by succulent feed. Bran or millrun should form a part of the ration because of its laxative nature. Two to three pounds of roots daily have a splendid regulatory effect. Alfalfa hay is slightly laxative.

Treat constipation in the lamb by caring for the ewe as noted above; and by giving a tablespoonful of castor oil to the lamb together with an injection of warm, soapy water.

Diarrhea in Lambs

This is often caused by the young lamb receiving too much milk. Reduce the ewe's ration, especially the succulent feed, and either milk her out by hand or allow another lamb to nurse her. Give the lamb a tablespoonful of milk of magnesia. A tablespoonful of parched flour made into a gruel, to which three drops of carbolic acid have been added, may also help in bad cases.

White Scours

This disease is of an infectious nature, usually attacking newborn lambs. Dispose of those badly affected, and separate the healthy lambs. To prevent this disease thoroughly clean out the lambing shed in the spring, use slaked lime on the floors, and allow the summer and fall air and sunshine to circulate freely in the shed.

Sore Eyes

If this trouble is not cared for, blindness may result. Beneficial treatments include finely powdered burnt alum dropped in the eye,

or a few drops of a saturated solution of boric acid (two heaping teaspoonsful to a pint of hot water) inserted with a medicine dropper. In chronic cases a solution of Argyrol (16 per cent) dropped into the eye once daily gives good results.

Sometimes the eyelid rolls into the eye so that the hair rests on and irritates the eyeball. Hold the lamb still on its side, and use a pair of sharp sheep shears, which have been disinfected, to clip out a small strip of the out skin of the eyelid. Cut this about the middle of the eyelid and parallel with the eyes. The resulting scab draws the eyelid back to its normal position. In some instances, daily manipulation of the offending eyelid, to bring it back to normal position, is all that is necessary. Trouble from too much eyelid is especially common with Rambouillet lambs.

"All Is Well"

Careful shepherds watch lambs, of which they are suspicious, when they rise to their feet. If they "stretch" heartily then they have no trouble and are doing well; if they do not stretch, then look for constipation, diarrhea or other lamb troubles.

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