



TATTOOING

J. L. Bobb, D.V.M.

International SheepLetter

Vol. 15, No. 5; May 1995

A permanent form of identification in the ewe flock is a basic necessity for any producer keeping records.

The use of a 3/8-inch tattoo in the ear of the ewe makes a lifelong permanent identification in addition to an ear tag. A combination of letters and numbers can give a producer a limitless amount of choices. Many producers will use a system such as starting every lamb born in 1995 with the number 5. Fall born lambs could be identified with an F in the serial identification, etc.

The best tattoos that will last a lifetime are done in market weight lambs or heavier. Tattoos done in newborn lambs often are difficult to read due to insufficient ear thickness to make a good tattoo.

Two important things that insure a good tattoo are using green paste ink and a small brush such as a toothbrush to apply the ink. Roll on ink does not penetrate the tattoo and many of the numbers and letters will be hard to read. Use the center area of the ear avoiding the "ribs" in the ear.

If the ear has a lot of dirt and grease clean the ear prior to tattooing with a cloth and rubbing alcohol.

In black face ewes the use of green ink is a must in making a readable tattoo. If you have a hard time reading a tattoo in a black face ewe, hold a 100-watt light behind the ear and this will help make the job easier.

Be sure to record the tattoo and ear tag number in the ewe's permanent records. If you do a quality job of tattooing, the tattoo will be legible for the ewe's lifetime. I have ten-year-old ewes that have lost several ear tags over the years but their tattoo is clear as the day it was made.