



FALL EWE NUTRITION

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Fall is an excellent time of year to save money on your feed bill. There are many byproduct feedstuffs that can be utilized that will improve the bottom line. The most common and cheapest that many people use is corn stalks. Either fed in the field, baled or stacked corn stalks are palatable and can meet a mature ewes maintenance energy requirement in the first 15 weeks of pregnancy. Unfortunately, corn stalks by themselves may not meet the protein requirement of the lambs growing in the uterus. This can easily be corrected by supplementing one half to one pound of medium quality alfalfa hay per day. Save your good hay for the lactating diets and use your poorer hay for this time of the year. The alfalfa hay will also provide vitamins, which are virtually non-existent in corn stalks. You do have to keep in mind that if you are grazing corn stalks with a lot of dropped corn you need to acclimate the sheep so they don't overload on the grain. This can be done by restricting grazing time for the first weeks and also by filling the sheep with hay prior to turnout. Generally the only cost involved is the fencing making grazing corn stalks the cheapest energy feed available this time of year.

Another option for economical fall forages is vegetable canning company waste such as sweet corn silage. These have a moderate energy value and are very palatable. The difficulty is that this byproduct is generally handled in the wet form as silage and thus it gets very expensive to transport long distances, as most of what you are hauling is water. Also, because it is silage you need to feed a fair amount each day to prevent spoilage. Therefore, this is generally a feed that is only useful if you have a lot of sheep or are close to a canning plant.

Another very available forage is grass hay. This will also meet the energy and protein requirements and provide vitamins and minerals. This will not have as much protein and energy density as alfalfa hay, however at this stage of pregnancy, it will fulfill the nutrient requirements. Grazing standing grass, frozen alfalfa or wheat is also very cost effective. With legumes you still want to take bloat precautions such as limiting the grazing time for the first week. Once a killing frost occurs, the nutrients move from the leaves and stems to the roots thus decreasing the feed value of the forage. Therefore it is best to graze these earlier in the season as opposed to in the winter.

In the fall there are also byproducts such as corn screenings that become available and very economical. Many of these can be purchased from grain farmers for little cost and can be used for supplemental feed in the fall and winter. Often these will vary in nutrient content depending on the condition of the grain that was screened. These can be very useful as a supplemental grain feed in late fall and winter.

It is very important to keep the sheep on a free choice mineral when feeding fall forages. Mature forages have lower levels of vitamins and minerals. Without free choice minerals sheep can become deficient especially in calcium. With growing lambs in her uterus the ewe will move calcium from bone stores. This will become a problem as pregnancy progresses, resulting in down ewes, lambing difficulty and poor general condition. Whenever the forage is not green it is important to remember to supplement minerals and vitamins.