



## Drying Ewes off at Weaning Time

J.D. Bobb

Every year at lambing time we hear of ewes that had good udder and milk last year, but have had a hard firm udder now. Many or most producers in this area will wean their lambs at about 60-70 days of age. In order to have a successful weaning, the ewe needs to be drying up on her lactation and the lambs need to be adjusted to eating creep and finding water.

In order to get the ewes lactation reduced, you, as their caretaker need to stop feeding any grain at least one week prior to weaning and feed only grass hay. The ewe's body, will in response to the change in energy intake start to dry up her udder and wean her lambs. This is critical for heavy milking ewes, as genetics have changed over the years, the average ewe is producing more and more milk. Their body needs a signal to start reducing milk production prior to being weaned. I recommend that all the way through the drying off period you keep good access to water for the ewes.

Following weaning you can tell the next day which ewes were producing a lot of milk yet, because their udders will be tight and sore. Just keep a close eye on these ewes and treat them only if necessary for mastitis. The internal pressure in their udders will signal the ewe to quit producing milk and she will go through a natural drying up. Keep this group of ewes on grass hay for several weeks, with good dry bedding for their udders and always watch for any signs of mastitis.

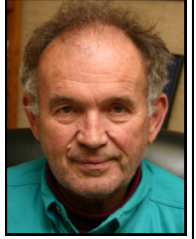
The lambs and ewes will cry for each other for several days, but quickly learn to adjust to their new feeding regime. Lambs that are used to being on creep feed and fresh water make the adjustment the easiest and seldom do you ever need to treat any lambs. I like using a water tank that I can add some water soluble Vitamin E and electrolytes too for the first several days to a week. If you are dealing with large groups of lambs and self feeders you will need to carefully walk the pens and watch for lambs that are not getting started on feed. If you have a smaller number of sheep it is best to pail feed an amount they will clean up in about 20 minutes twice a day and offer some good quality hay.

This is always a good time to spend some extra time observing both the lambs and ewes. Be sure to watch ewes that are slow, stiff, or have sore udders and treat immediately. Nuflor or penicillin work well on many of these ewes. Taking time now to reduce the energy level on the ewes prior to weaning will prevent many udder problems next year.

# Straight Talk

Dr. G.F. Kennedy

Again, as usual, as the snow melts and the crops are being planted it is urinary calculi time. In almost every incidence, phosphorus is involved. My first question always is, "Is there added phosphorus in the ration, are you feeding mineral. The answer is almost always, yes."



There is no room for added phosphorus in any sheep ration so if there are any nutritionists or feed salesmen out there that disagree, bring it on. For the record we still sell phosphorus containing complete mineral that can be safely used for ewes. We don't recommend it and we only sell it to people that demand it and the same for lick tubs and salt blocks.

We were analyzing a "quote" mineral the other day promoted and sold by a highly visible company. It contained 15% salt, 5% phosphorus, some trace elements and vitamins. Recommended feeding levels of  $1 \frac{1}{4}$  ounce per day. By the way the main ingredient was distillers feed coupled with whatever else was palatable to encourage consumption.

But, gee Doc, they wouldn't eat your iodized salt, selenium, vitamin E. Our product is geared to be fed at  $\frac{1}{4}$  ounce per day and won't compete in a palatability test with other products that are geared for consumption as a priority. If you run a test, the palatable product contains salt which is now force fed they will not consume our product that is based on salt intake.

I am not trying to sell product but it is necessary to understand we put products together that are cost effective and effective in producing the necessary ingredients for your operation. We have also created products that are easily shipped because with the majority of the sheep flocks being less than 100 ewes that ability of these operations to economically justify veterinary and nutritional services is limited.

Now, let's talk about urinary calculi. Usual symptoms would occur something like this. Sheep goes off feed, looks okay, may strain or show colicky symptoms. Later straining may become more severe. They may drip urine or no urine passage is observed. As the condition progresses, may become swollen under the belly or may have a large abdomen indicating leakage of urine from bladder or sheath. Eventually the sheep becomes lethargic and without intervention up to a week in time. This will be a male sheep.

What would be the intervention? Upon first symptoms, place the animal on its posterior and attempt to work out the penis. For lack of terminology, there will be a feeler on the end of the penis that may have sand in it. It can simply be cut off with a scissors. It is about the size in diameter as a pencil lead. Immediately drench the lamb with one ounce of Ammonium Chloride. Continue daily. Ammonium Chloride can be mixed with water, sometimes we give it dry.

Years ago, I performed this procedure on the champion Corridale ram at the South Dakota State Fair and was successful. This doesn't impair rams fertility and this is a win, win situation.

Unfortunately, this procedure doesn't always work. If there is complete blockage a urethotomy, amputation of the penis and pulling to the back. Unfortunately this isn't a good solution for a ram.

Now let's visit about mineral requirements. Limestone, calcium carbonate, thirty pounds plus twenty pounds of salt should be added to all concentrated feedlot rations. Five to ten pounds of ammonium chloride can be added to provide further protection against calculi. Grain and grain by-products are all high in phosphorus. The feeding of free choice, high quality alfalfa hay which is high in calcium, increases water consumption and adds fiber to the diet as well. I find hay very practical and a buffer for other problems such as founder, acidosis and polio. Distiller grains are notorious for creating polio conditions due to high sulfur content.

Vitamin E is not a mineral but adequate amounts need to be fed. There is very little carry over after January 1<sup>st</sup>. Iodine is always essential and along with selenium can be delivered in the salt. The other trace elements may be important but sheep and goats seem to find them without our help. And remember no added copper for sheep.

# Questions & Answers with Dr. Kennedy

**Question:** I have twin Katahdin lambs (both female if it matters), born on April 13th, the first one was born without problems and weighed 9lbs. 13oz. As of April 22nd, she now weighs 16lbs. 0oz. The second lamb weighed 6lbs. 14oz. But mom didn't seem too interested in cleaning her up after birth. After several hours of waiting, I finally put the three of them in a lambing jug and by the next a.m. the lamb was somewhat clean. (I don't know if the mom cleaned her, or if it dried up) as of April 22nd, this lamb weighed 9lbs. 15oz. My concern is that the small lamb appears weak and chilled. I have not seen her nurse at all (but she has gained some weight). I have a heat lamp on and a lamb jacket and that seems to help, but the lack of a desire to nurse concerns me. Her temperature is 102.7 degrees. She will suck on my finger, but not on mom's teats. I even tried to bottle feed without any luck. Her sister appears healthy and normal, but I don't see her nursing much at either. I offered her a bottle also, and got a similar rejection. Apparently they aren't hungry when I'm around. Should I be concerned about the smaller lamb? It has gained weight, although not as much as her sister. It appears to be cold, but the body temperature tells me otherwise. Should I try something else, or should I just go feed the chickens and find something else to do?

**Answer:** I would immediately start tubing the lamb with about 5 ounces of milk replacer twice daily until it gets going. A cc of penicillin may help also.

**Question:** We have a 3,000 head commercial sheep ranch in California. We lamb in the fall and winter. We are going to worm our oldest lambs. They are infested with tapeworms. We cut one open after a coyote kill. We usually worm the ewes and lambs with Valbazen. We don't want to build up a resistance to this wormer. What do you suggest?

**Answer:** You need to use Valbazen. That is the most effective and really the only choice for tapeworms. It is not approved for pregnant ewes but I haven't seen problems in the last trimester of pregnancy. The high incidence of tapeworms would suggest stomach worms as well. I would use Ivomec or Cydectin to control them as well.

**Question:** I have a three year old Suffolk hamp market lamb type ewe that is approximately 130 days pregnant. Two weeks ago the ewe started having body shaking after eating. She puts her head down, narrows her feet, humps her back and starts shaking. She then tries to lay down with difficulty and discomfort. This occurs after eating a couple ounces of 18% complete ration. It happens almost immediately. Since this started two weeks ago, it appears she has lost some weight. Do you have any thoughts on what could be the cause or any recommendations on treatment? Any help you can provide would be greatly appreciated.

**Answer:** She is probably choking. Try feeding her whole corn mixed in some long stem hay so she can't eat so fast.

**Question:** I have an older ewe that lambed about five days ago. I noticed the lambs crying yesterday...so I checked them and the ewe. The lambs were crying because they were hungry. The ewes udder is huge and hard. Both sides are hard. I tried to milk her out after giving her 2cc of oxytocin, however I couldn't get much out of either side. She is not running a fever and has not gone off feed. She still gets around fine and is letting the lambs try to nurse her. What are your suggestions? This will be the last year I breed her. I plan on supplementing the twins she had with milk replacer, but should I keep them on her? Should I allow them to still try to nurse her? Should the ewe get any antibiotics?

**Answer:** Best solution is to put lambs on continuous cold milk replacer. I would give the ewe antibiotics LA200 or Nuflor. Observe slaughter withdrawal and sell to slaughter. Other option is to supplement lambs and wait to see if the ewe will provide enough milk. Doubtful.

**Question:** If I leave the lambs on the ewe...don't give her any antibiotics right? Is the ewe contagious? Should she stay in the jug instead of being put in with the rest of the ewes?

**Answer:** If you leave lambs on the ewe still give her antibiotics. She isn't contagious but may be infectious. I would prefer that the lambs didn't try to suck other ewes.

**Question:** Every February before lambing we clean the sheep corrals. We get enough manure to put on 7 1/2 acres of pasture. I would like to know if I am benefiting myself or causing myself more of a parasite problem.

**Answer:** You are OK. Accumulated manure shouldn't be a problem.

**Question:** Can ewes of a seasonal breeding breed be adapted to breed out of season?

**Answer:** It depends on breed and distance from the Equator. The best approach is the new CIDR's that are available along with PG600.

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Veterinary services, procedures, biologicals, and drugs mentioned in this publication represent the personal opinions and clinical observations of the contributing author. They are in no way intended to be interpreted as recommendations without the consent of the producers own practicing Veterinarian. We strongly urge that producers establish a patient-client-veterinarian relationship that allows extra-label use when there are no drugs approved for treatment or if approved drugs are not effective. This procedure allows veterinarians to go beyond label directions when "prudent use" is necessary. The limited availability of drugs and biologics in this country is a major factor in restricting the growth of the sheep industry and allowing producers to compete in the world Market place.

## A list of shepherd tips I find useful.

1. Lambs that need help starting use the lamb tube and provide ample amounts of milk. Only use a bottle if converting to lamb bar. Remember lamb bar – milk free choice, cold.
2. Respiratory tip, simultaneous use of Draxxin and Nuflor gives immediate relief and prolonged treatment. In many cases retreatment won't be necessary.
3. Retained placenta, don't mechanically remove, use 1 cc of aqueous penicillin per ten pounds body weight daily until placenta drops.
4. Dystocia, difficult births, always check for another lamb. Lubricate well. Place a terramycin bolus in the uterus last trip in.
5. Uterine prolapse, three cc of Oxytocin will shrink the uterus. A uterine prolapse always occurs after lambing. Lubricate well, stand the animal on its head. Place terramycin boluses in the uterus once returned. Suture with 3/8 inch umbilical tape. Give Dexamethasone, 5 cc once, penicillin 1cc per ten pounds daily until improvement is noted. The ewe may be okay to keep the next time.
6. Vaginal Prolapse, paddles are out, 3/8 inch umbilical is in. It is simpler and more effective. In ewe lambs I quote prognosis at 75% to save the ewe, 50% to save the lamb. Don't keep the ewes, send them to slaughter. The success rate in ewes that have lambed once is much higher.
7. Castration and tail docking, use bands. There is not another choice. Tetanus protection, antitoxin is out, toxoid plus aqueous penicillin is in.
8. Enterotoxemia, 1/2 dose of CDT, 1 cc, with 1 cc of aqueous penicillin at processing zero to four days. Mix in a syringe and give sub q. Type D vaccination at wean and three weeks later.
9. Abortion, vaccinate for Vibrio, feed Rumensin or Deccox the last six weeks of pregnancy. Use AS 700 if you experience problems. LA 200 may be injected as well in an outbreak.
10. Coccidia, Corid is out, no value doesn't fit. Bovatec as well. Use Deccox in sheep, Rumensin as well in goats. Feeding six weeks prior to birthing lowers exposure. Increase levels of Deccox first in creep, label it as a supplement to get adequate intake. It is a supplement because it completes with hay, grain and ewes milk. Lamb bar lambs, use milk with Deccox, don't need anything in first creep. Treatment should always revolve around sulfa drugs: sulfaquinoxiline, sulfadimethoxine and sulfamethazine. You can use them for individual treatment or water treatment or both. Water treatment, three days on, two days off, then two days on again.

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