



Fall Lambing Ewes

J.D. Bobb

Ewes that naturally lamb in the fall are limited to the Dorset, Rambouillet, Dorper, Katadin, Romanov and some crossbred ewes. Given all the options and possible lambing periods, I prefer the lambs born in late September and early October over any other time of the year. You will have a reduced lambing percentage when compared to the same group of ewes lambing in late winter or early spring. One of the main obstacles to plan around is the problem with ram fertility in April-May. We have used several different programs to help synchronize and bring the ewes into a predictable heat over the past ten years. If the ewes are properly handled the results have become fairly predictable.

Lambs born in the fall face a different set of challenges than a spring born lamb. Generally the lambing period is warmer in our area the daily temperatures are from 40 to 70 degrees verses a cold January or February morning when the thermometer can be 20 degrees below zero plus a howling cold wind. One of the down sides to fall lambing is that you will need to have a fly control plan until the first hard frost. The flies can cause not only irritation to a newborn lamb but can actually cause damage. You will also need to have the ewes shorn prior to lambing. One of the more frustrating problems that we diagnosis in fall ram lambs is related to structure. Large frame fast growing ram lambs tend to have problems with their front legs. I believe some of this is due to lack of sunlight during the winter months, which is a frequent problem with lambs in Scotland. Also some of it is due to raising these lambs on a soft pack of manure during their rapid growth phase. You will need to be very accurate on your calcium to phosphorus ratio if you plan on growing out ram lambs that are born in the fall. Recently I have started to recommend that owners inject their fall and early winter born lambs with a series of Vitamin D injections. Vitamin D is a fat soluble vitamin and the lambs will store vitamin D in their fat tissue for about 28 days. I currently would recommend that you give an injection while in the lambing jug and subsequent injections when you vaccinate for clostridium C and D overeating.

Generally speaking you will need the same set of vaccination as a spring lambing program. Many of the commercial sheep producers will lamb the set of ewes in the fall and re-expose them in the winter months for May born lambs. Not all of the ewes will respond, but some of them will and this is an excellent tool for selecting ewe lambs from ewes that have the ability to breed back. The ability to lamb out of season, and more importantly on an accelerated rate is something that you can select for over time. Be sure to identify the ewe lambs that are born and keep them for replacement females to build your flock. Fall born lambs in a purebred program can bring premium prices. Fall born lambs in a commercial program can often top the early lamb market before the Easter trade.

continued →

Fall Lambing Ewes Continued...

If you would like to start a fall lambing project to help spread the labor load during lambing season, it will take many years of breeding and selection to get an entire flock that will lamb out of season. Many producers have started to use the hair breeds of sheep such as the Romanov and Katadhin which have the natural ability to lamb out of season. Most producers opt to expose the entire flock and realize that only 20 to 50 % will probably lamb, but these percentages can improve by using genetic selection over the years or increasing the percentage of the breeds listed above. It looks like some of the new breeds being introduced into the United States such as the Romanov will help make fall lambing more successful. Hopefully these breeders will select with this trait in mind and keep the breed base, unlike what has happened with some of the Dorset and Rambouillet bloodlines. It would have a definite impact on the sheep industry to be able to breed ewes on a year around basis.

Question & Answer with Dr. Kennedy

Question: I received my shipment of CIDRS this morning and we inserted the first group of ewes to be bred. I noticed that the precaution was given about not inserting into ewes that have never lambed. This was not a problem with this group but I was wondering the reasons for this warning.

Answer: I use them in virgin ewes approximately a year of age routinely.

Question: Is it safe to inject lambs later this fall with PG600? I am aware of cattlemen using a similar product on 1st calf heifers and I am wanting to know about ewe lambs selected for late spring lambing.

Answer: PG600 is safe.

Question: what is the shelf life of the CIDRS?

Answer: If the package has been opened it is a good idea to seal it back up and keep it in the refrigerator.

Question: What would you give for a runny nose and a cough? It started at the county fair a few days ago and we are supposed to be going to the state fair in a week.

Answer: You might consider Naxcel. You need to worry about withdrawal time. If it's breeding sheep not going to slaughter use Nuflor.

Question: I have Icelandic sheep and they seem rather susceptible to barber pole worms. What would you recommend as the wormer rotation for this?

Answer: I prefer Cydectin and Prohibit, in that order. Expect the Valbazen to be effective against tapes but just marginal on other worms.

Question: I have a ewe that was bred June 7th, removed from the ram July 4th and due November 4th. Yesterday we noticed feces that had tapeworm segment in the pasture. I know that Valbazen is used to get rid of tapeworms but I am hesitant to use it on the ewe that is pregnant. Should I just use the Valbazen or do you suggest something safer?

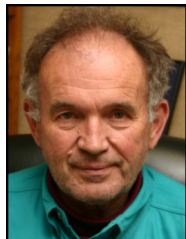
Answer: You could use Ivomec or Prohibit. They get stomach worms that you cannot see but the presence of tapes may indicate they are there. Tapes aren't a big deal. Use Valbazen to get rid of them after the ewe has lambed.

Straight Talk

Dr. G.F. Kennedy

Welcome to Alaska, this fella is on his way to Antone Larsen Bay from Kodiak has evaded the bears for at least four years now.

Let's talk abortion: Now is the time prior to breeding that we should review abortion in sheep and goats. With sheep, I think about Vibrio, toxoplasmosis and enzootic abortion in that order. There are some others but happen less often and usually don't result in an high incidence.



With goats vibrio is less important.

I will start with toxoplasmosis, caused by coccidiosis of cats, primarily kittens. It takes very little contaminated feed to cause abortions. If animals are exposed when not pregnant, immunity develops without consequence. Maintaining a stable cat population instead of no cats is probably the best idea, because it is almost impossible to always prevent contamination of feed supplies. Prevention can be accomplished by feeding Rumensin or Deccox during pregnancy, particularly the last half of pregnancy. When fed to sheep, the feed source needs to be free of copper. The rumensin dosage is 15 mg of rumensin per day.

Vibrio comes in a strong second in importance with sheep, much lesser extent with goats. Sheep vaccinated the first time need an injection 30 days prior to breeding and a second one mid pregnancy. Bacterin should contain both campylobacter fetus and c jejuni. Animals vaccinated previously need an injection at mid gestation only. In outbreaks tetracycline crumbles generally work but some strains are immune and sulfa drugs work. That fact generally makes AS700 product of choice.

Enzootic abortion, caused by Chlamydia runs a distant third in our area. It really only concerns me when ewes are imported from the far west, Idaho and Utah. I have never thought the vaccine works very well, part of the problem is we have not generally made the right recommendations and effectiveness of product has been questioned. The vaccine should be given 30 and sixty days prior to breeding. Ewes that are infected and abort seldom abort again but are a renewed source of infection when they cycle the next year. Aureo or Terramycin crumbles maybe fed as prevention. This might be a good idea prior and during breeding season and again in late gestation. In confirmed outbreaks flock injections of LA200 or its generic counterpart seem quite effective. Goats fit the chlamydia scene as well.

Couple things to think about: There are control and prevention procedures to be used. In an abortion outbreak with three percent or more it is important to get a lab diagnosis. Send fetus and placenta.

The sulfa drugs, rumensin and Deccox all reduce coccidiosis exposure to lambs.

Pregnant women should not work in lambing barn as human infection is not only possible but probable.

First time lambing ewes are more prone to problems. Purchasing ewes and adding to flock prior to lambing also increases incidence of abortion.



Happy Harvest!!

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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.

McDonald's Shareholders Vote Down Cage Free Proposal

Shareholders for McDonald's voted against a proposal to buy at least 5 percent of the restaurant chain's eggs from cage-free facilities.

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), which owns 101 shares in the company and sponsored the resolution, similarly proposed at the 2009 annual shareholders meeting that McDonald's start transitioning to purchasing eggs produced in cage-free facilities.

In the recent proposal, the HSUS argued that cages provide for inadequate animal welfare and that McDonald's U.S. operations had fallen behind competitors and the company's own European operations in transitioning toward purchases of eggs from cage-free hens.

The McDonald's board of directors recommended that shareholders vote against the proposal. The board argued that there is no agreement in the scientific community on how to balance advantages and disadvantages of hen housing systems and noted that the company is part of a coalition involved in an ongoing study of hen housing.

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