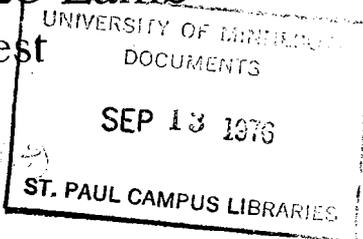


Report of Minnesota 1928 Lamb Production Contest

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Extension Pamphlet No. 7
December, 1928



CONCLUSIONS

1. A high percentage of twins born and a high percentage of lambs saved are essentials for profitable market lamb production in Minnesota.
2. Pounds of lamb produced per ewe is the best test of the ability of a market lamb producer. Large gains per lamb are needed for most efficient production.
3. Healthy lambs make rapid gains on good pasture. Parasites, if not under control, will prevent such gains.
4. Legume hay is a cheap and most desirable feed for wintering breeding ewes, and should constitute at least 50 per cent of the roughage fed.
5. Desirable market lambs can be produced on abundant palatable pasture without grain feeding. If pasture gets short, grain feeding is profitable.

The first Minnesota Lamb Production Contest was made possible through the financial support of the Minnesota Livestock Breeders' Association. The purpose was to locate the most efficient sheep raisers in the state and to demonstrate the most effective methods of breeding, feeding, and management.

Thirty-five contestants enrolled from nineteen counties. Thirteen, from eleven counties, finished. The contest was open to any sheep raiser in Minnesota having 25 or more ewes lambing between March 1 and May 31, 1928. No restriction was placed on breeding except that the sires must be purebred.

The contest closed for each lot of lambs when they averaged 135 days of age, at which time official weights were secured. Awards were made on the basis of the average number of pounds of lamb produced per ewe. This gave credit for a high percentage of lambs saved and rapid gains made on each lamb.

To equalize management problems, the contest was divided into three classes: Class 1, 25 to 50 ewes; Class 2, 51 to 100 ewes; Class 3, 101 or more ewes.

None finished in Class 3.

The championship was awarded on efficiency of management, gains made, and financial success of the enterprise.

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA (1)
AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION DIVISION (2)

Published by the University of Minnesota, College of Agriculture, Extension Division, F. W. Peck, Director, and distributed in furtherance of the purposes of the co-operative agricultural extension work provided for in the Act of Congress of May 8, 1914.

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THE WINNER

K. O. Johnson, Frontier, Koochiching County

Ewes—grade Shropshire Ram—3-year-old purebred Shropshire

Average birth date of lambs—April 4, 1928. Finishing date—August 17, 1928.

The entry of Mr. Johnson won in Class 1. This flock of 35 ewes raised 50 lambs or 142.8 per cent. These 50 lambs averaged 82.2 pounds, or market weight, when they reached the average age of 135 days. The large lamb crop with the fast gains made by the lambs resulted in an average production for each of the 35 ewes of 117.4 pounds.

The Breeding Season

Management.—In the fall of 1927 liberal clover pasture brought this flock of ewes to the breeding season in thrifty condition. No grain was fed during this time.

Feeding started on November 15 and was continued until May 10, 1928, when the flock went to pasture. The winter ration consisted, until April 1, of clover hay. Then grain feeding was started to stimulate milk flow for the suckling lambs. Corn, oats, barley, and bran constituted the grain ration, which was fed at the rate of one pound per ewe per day.

Feeding the lambs.—After going on pasture, no grain was fed to the lambs during the time of the contest. Clover pasture in abundance and the mothers' milk supplied their feed.

Goiter.—No iodine was fed as a preventive for goiter. No loss occurred from this disease.

Parasites.—Pastures were changed each year. Drenching was not necessary, as there was no indication of worm infestation. The flock was dipped once to control ticks.

Wool.—The ewes produced 9.6 pounds of wool per head.

SECOND PRIZE

Frank Passi, Pitt, Lake of the Woods County

Mr. Passi, with his flock of 38 grade Shropshire ewes, placed second in Class 1. The average weight of his lambs at 135 days was higher than that of the first prize winner, being 87.5 pounds. He raised, however, a 118 per cent lamb crop, or 103.6 pounds for each of the 38 ewes.

Management was similar to that of the first prize winner.

FIRST PRIZE—SECOND CLASS

Sever Trehus, Caledonia, Houston County

In Class 2 Mr. Trehus won with his flock of 82 grade Shropshire ewes, because of having raised a high percentage lamb crop. The 82 ewes raised 117 lambs, or 142.6 per cent. The average weight per lamb was 65.5 pounds. The big lamb crop increased production per ewe to 93.4 pounds, the highest in the class.

SECOND PRIZE

C. E. Tatge, Luverne, Rock County

Mr. Tatge was a close second in Class 2. The average weight of his lambs was 73.1 pounds, 7.6 pounds heavier than those of the winner. He produced a 123.5 per cent lamb crop, a production per ewe of 91.4 pounds. The fewer lambs raised pulled down his high average weight per lamb, and gave him second place.

Management of Ewes

All but one contestant reported an abundance of pasture in the fall. This is significant, in that it indicates liberal feeding at that time and should mean good gains by the ewes. In other words, a system of flushing the ewes was being followed. This should result in a larger number of twins being born.

Flushing is highly important. All sheepmen have noticed that generally the twins are from the ewes that lamb early. There is a good reason for this. These were the most vigorous, thrifty ewes when the breeding season started. Because of this vigor, these ewes were bred first. Similarly, the ram was most vigorous at this time. In flushing, the aim is to bring all the breeding ewes to this high vigor when breeding starts.

Winter Feeding

All but one contestant fed legume hay, clover, alsike clover, or alfalfa. In addition, four used corn fodder, four corn silage, one clover straw, one flax straw, and all some grain straw. It appears from this that each flock was well fed with a desirable ration for the winter.

As lambing time approached, seven of those who finished fed grain in addition to the roughage. Home-grown grains were used, four feeding bran or screenings in addition. The grain ration ranged from about half a pound to a pound per ewe per day.

Goiter.—Only one contestant fed potassium iodide as a preventive for goiter. This man fed iodized salt, which now is available at a cost little above that of ordinary salt.

Exercise for ewes.—Six producers report having forced the ewes to exercise during the winter months. These men believe exercise highly important, in order to avoid difficult lambing and to produce vigorous lambs. Exercise was forced by feeding the roughage at a distance from the shed, by spreading feed sparsely over a large area, or by allowing the ewes to run in the corn fields.

Raising the lambs.—No grain was fed to any of the lots of lambs, except one, after the pasture season opened. This lot was fed grain because of poor gains due to parasites. Three lots received grain with the ewes before going on pasture.

The pasture for all lots appears to have been abundant. Various pastures were used—clover, alsike in brush, alfalfa, native and sweet clover, with legume pastures predominating. More used sweet clover than any other pasture crop.

Docking and castrating.—All lambs in the contest were docked and all grade ram lambs were castrated, as required by the rules.

These operations are simple with the risk negligible when performed on lambs at 10 days to two weeks of age. On the market long-tailed lambs sell for 25 cents to \$3.00 per hundred less than docked lambs. Thin long-tailed lambs are classified as cull feeder lambs and suffer the largest cut in price.

Ram lambs sell for \$1.00 to \$3.00 per hundred less than wether lambs of the same quality. Fat ram lambs sell on the market at only one cent per pound below fat wether lambs. Thin ram lambs are classified as culls and sold to the packers as such, at about \$3.00 per hundred less than they would bring as feeders if they had been castrated.

Parasite Control

Rotation of pastures.—Eight of the thirteen contestants changed their pasture this year. Three used new land, with old pasture part of the time. Two used the same bluegrass pasture this year as before. One of these had severe losses this year from stomach worms which resulted in his raising only a 73 per

cent lamb crop with the lambs much under weight. This man sent in his report, knowing that his record would be low, but he believed that his experience would be of value to others and might save them similar losses.

Experience has shown that rotation of pastures aids materially in the control of stomach worms. A different pasture each year and an occasional change during the season is the best practice.

Drenching.—Three of the flocks were drenched with copper sulphate to control stomach worms. It was not necessary with the other flocks and with proper rotations of pasture the necessity of such treatment may be avoided.

Dipping for ticks.—Seven of the thirteen men dipped their flocks to control ticks.

Breeding.—All the flocks finishing the contest are grade or purebred Shropshires except one, which is Westerns. Considerable care appears to be exercised by all owners in the selection of rams.

Follow These Commandments of Sheep Husbandry

- Flush-feed the ewes before the breeding season.
- Provide winter shelter that is dry and free from drafts.
- Legume hay should constitute at least 50 per cent of the roughages.
- Feed potassium iodide to all pregnant ewes to avoid losses from goiter.
- Supply water to the flock during the winter at a drinkable temperature.
- Force pregnant ewes to exercise during the winter months.
- Feed grain from 6 weeks before lambing until the flock goes to pasture.
- Feed ½ pound of grain per head daily if the ewes are thin.
- Dock all lambs and castrate all grade ram lambs.
- Control the parasites. Rotate the pastures each year or drench with copper sulphate. Dip the flock each spring to control ticks.
- Use only purebred rams of desirable conformation.

RESULTS OF THE MINNESOTA LAMB PRODUCTION CONTEST, 1928

Rank	Name	County	No. of ewes	No. of lambs	Total weight	Average weight of lambs	Average weight of lambs per ewe
Class 1—25 to 50 Ewes							
1	K. O. Johnson, Frontier...	Koochiching	35	50	4110	82.2	117.4
2	Frank Passi, Pitt.....	Lake of the Woods	38	45	3939	87.5	103.6
3	George W. Benjamin, Hutchinson	McLeod	23	32	2195.2	68.6	95.4
4	Henry Woolson, Thief River Falls	Pennington	28	31	2340.5	70.9	83.6
5	Martin Bergen, Williams	Lake of the Woods	30	31	2329	75.1	77.6
6	F. A. Booker, Dover....	Olmsted	40	42	2965	70.6	74.0
7	F. A. Kruse, Tyler.....	Lincoln	40	44	2754.5	62.6	68.8
Class 1—50 to 100 Ewes							
1	Sever Trehus, Caledonia	Houston	82	117	7663	65.5	93.4
2	C. E. Tatge, Luverne....	Rock	68	84	6216	73.1	91.4
3	Henry Steinhoff, West- brook	Murray	81	93	7150	77.0	88.3
4	E. H. King, Spring Valley	Fillmore	68	85	5815	68.4	85.5
5	C. A. Johnson, Lancaster	Kittson	62			72.5	
6	Al Leibold, Srping Valley	Fillmore	57	42	2036.5	48.5	

Champion Flock Master—K. O. Johnson, Frontier, Koochiching County
 Percentage of lambs born, 151 Percentage of lambs saved, 142.8

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