Your Sheep Business

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One more reminder on this stomach worm business for this year. Have you drenched your sheep this fall or early winter? Our last letter mentioned it, this one mentions it,--it can't be overemphasized. Get this job done before winter really sets in and you will have a more thrifty flock. If you haven't the directions, write for Extension Pamphlet 42.

WINTER FEEDING. That is the most important thing to talk about now. If you have plenty of legume hay, you are in wonderful shape for wintering your flock satisfactorily. If the breeding flock is in good condition, you can carry them thru on legume hay without any grain feeding, altho a half pound of grain per ewe per day wouldn't be a bad thing. For the lambs you are carrying over, either ewe lambs or ram lambs, they should get a liberal amount of grain throughout the winter, in order to grow them out properly. A pound and a half a day for them would not be out of line. With common hay, you have a bigger problem. If you have prairie hay, wild hay of any kind, Sudan grass or millet, or hays of that quality, by all means feed a pound to a pound and a half of grain throughout the winter feeding period. This extra grain will supply the protein that would otherwise be lacking in your ration.

About a month before lambing, the ewes should have extra grain, even tho they have come thru the winter in good flesh. If you have been feeding no grain up to that time, by all means start in about a month before lambing with a little grain, say a pound of oats per day. For those that have been getting some grain, increase the amount at that time. There is a good reason for this. A ewe carries her lamb approximately five months, but a third of the growth is made the last month of pregnancy, putting a tremendous strain on the ewe so that she needs this extra feed. It pays big dividends to supply this extra feed. A stronger lamb will be born. A better milking ewe will result. If you have to skimp on grain during the winter, save some anyway for that last month before lambing.

Alfalfa hay is valuable because of the proteins supplied. If you are obliged to feed common hay and are buying grain, I would spend a little of that grain money for some oil meal and give about a quarter of a pound per day to the pregnant ewes and to the ewe lambs that are being grown out. This is particularly important during that last month of pregnancy. A little silage in the ration is a good thing, but not over two pounds per head per day.

EXERCISE. Exercise is a thing we need to watch with these pregnant ewes. Feed this winter so that the ewes are obliged to take some exercise. If we get heavy snow, plan to feed some distance away from the sheep shed so that the ewes will have to walk for their feed.

GOITER IN SHEEP. Another advisable precaution is the feeding of iodine to the pregnant ewes to prevent goiter in lambs. This may be fed as iodized salt which can be purchased on the market. Iodized block salt is satisfactory, altho if the iodized flake salt can be obtained, it is preferred because the animals will eat more of it. You can, of course, mix the product yourself, but the trouble is that it is too easy to run out of it. This material needs to be fed throughout the period of pregnancy to accomplish any good. If mixing your own use one ounce of potassium iodide to 100 pounds of salt. Mix the potassium iodide first with a little oil meal or something showing a little color and then remix that with the salt, the color indicating when a thorough mix has been made. Goiter is prevalent in Minnesota. It doesn't always show up as a lamb with a big neck born dead. Frequently lambs are born alive with a big neck. Many weak lambs are born and die soon after birth. This may be due to iodine deficiency, even tho the goiter is not visible. Feeding iodine is an inexpensive insurance against losses from this cause.