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Your Sheep Business

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Now is a critical time with market lambs. Top prices call for certain practices, otherwise the results may be unsatisfactory. The requirements are:

1. That lambs be free from parasites. Worm now to be sure of this.
2. Abundant feed. If pastures are short, and no meadow or supplementary pasture available, feed grain.
3. Finish all lambs. Do not sell thin lambs to be resold as feeders.

Thrift is necessary in lambs if they are to put on the finish necessary to bring top market price. In most flocks it is an excellent idea to worm at this time. That is, dose with a copper sulphate-nicotine sulphate mixture as described in our Extension Folder 42.

Unless a man has been foresighted and provided a supplementary pasture such as rape or Sudan grass, the chances are he is short of pasture for his lambs. If an abundant forage cannot be provided in some way, it means that grain should be fed. Lambs should be started gradually on grain. Increase it daily until better than a pound per head is consumed. If pasture conditions stay bad, the grain may be increased up to a consumption of a pound and a half to a pound and three-quarters per day. It is highly desirable to hold such gains that have been made and to continue growth and fattening so that these lambs may go to market before the usual heavy run of lambs in the fall. Lambs should be sorted and sold on the basis of the finish they carry. A lamb can be big and still too thin to bring top price. A grower needs to know what constitutes finish. Then he is in a position to sort his lambs intelligently, sending the fat lambs to market and holding back the thin ones for further conditioning. After weaning, the ewes should be used to clean up fence rows and may be put where there is not a liberal supply of feed. If given too much feed at this time of year, ewes may be overfat by breeding time and therefore difficult to get with lamb. It is much better during the summer to hold down the flesh of the breeding flock and to build this up as breeding time approaches.

On a visit to any livestock market, the grower will see many farm-raised or native lambs sorted out as feeders. Last fall the University purchased 130 head of such lambs at West Fargo and shipped them to the Experiment Station at Crookston to fatten. This was done to determine what the producer would have made if he had kept these lambs at home, fed them grain, fattened them, and then sold them as fat lambs instead of feeder lambs. The average weight of the lambs when purchased was 65.6 pounds. They were fed an average of 90 days and when sold, weighed an average of 95 pounds. This is an average gain of 30 pounds per hundred. This gave an increase in value per head of \$2.85 per lamb. Against this was charged a feed cost of 35¢ a bushel for barley, \$45 a ton for oil meal, and \$8 a ton for alfalfa hay. After deducting these feed costs, a profit of \$1.20 per head was made. These lambs, figuring other feeds at market prices, actually paid 80¢ a bushel for the barley they consumed.

This return the raiser of these lambs might just as well have had by feeding his own grain to them. With conditions as they were last fall, even though a man was short of grain, it would have paid him well to have bought the extra grain needed to put these lambs in proper market condition rather than to sell them as feeder lambs. The same situation appears to exist today.