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# Your Sheep Business

W. E. MORRIS

EXTENSION ANIMAL HUSBANDMAN

University Farm, St. Paul, Minnesota

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A report by Dr. W. A. Billings after investigating reports of losses in lambs this spring.

In spite of rumors to the contrary, an investigation of conditions in northern Minnesota convinces me that the administration of phenothiazine to sheep was in no way connected with reported births of dead lambs at or near lambing time. As a matter of fact, there were as many or more losses of lambs among the flocks that were not treated at all. It appeared that most of the stillbirth trouble was to be found in the north half of the state. Briefly, the reason for these losses appeared to be largely nutritional in character and due to a combination of circumstances, such as general use of VERY POOR quality hay, as well as deficiency of iodine in some cases, as shown by presence of goiters and hairless pigs among the swine kept on the same place. Much of the trouble was found in the phosphate deficient areas. This, combined with a lack of both Vitamin A and D and the longest and most sunless winter we have had in a long time, all combined to add up to a general lowering of vitality in many flocks. There was also widespread evidence of common ordinary rickets and general failure to dip navels of newborn lambs in such antiseptics as iodine or Lugol's solution. There was also a marked lack of adequate lambing quarters and a tendency toward much earlier lambing than in former years. This last has been a gradual practice. I feel that those growers who cannot provide adequate quarters for February, March and April lambing would be better off to have the lambs come in early May. As a result of my observations I would suggest the following routine for use the next winter and spring season:

1. If possible, feed the ewes good quality hay, and some grain as well. While they are pregnant the ewes should be made to walk some distance for their feed.
2. During the late fall and winter months the breeding stock should have free access to a simple mineral mixture such as the old 40-40-20 mixture. This consists of 40 parts of limestone, 40 of bone meal and 20 of salt. The salt might be iodized. A simple reasonably priced commercial mixture containing these elements might be used.
3. Keep LOOSE iodized salt before the flock at all times. This may be mixed at home, one ounce of potassium iodide to each 300 pounds of loose salt.
4. The last few weeks, say about six weeks before lambing time, it would be well to add 400 "D" cod liver oil or "feeding oil" to the grain fed to the ewes, about one-half cupful of this oil to each 100 pounds of oats: Enough of the oats could be mixed up at one time to last a week.
5. The first drenching with phenothiazine could be given about the first of the year...say from December to February.

(Over)

6. Provide dry and reasonably comfortable lambing quarters and be sure to dip the navels of all newborn lambs in Lugol's solution. This is an iodine solution and relatively inexpensive.
7. If lambs come early and develop any signs of rickets such as general weakness enlarged joints, if any walk with evidence of soreness and lay down a good deal of the time, try giving such lambs a tablespoonful of the same 400 "D" oil daily. Do this before they become "down."
8. Drench the ewes the second time about 2 weeks AFTER lambing time and before they go on pasture. If the owner drenches but ONCE this is better than the mid-winter drench, but drenching twice is most desirable. Drenching AFTER lambing will do away with any possible feeling that the drenching had affected the birth of normal lambs.
9. When the lambs are about 30 pounds in weight they may get their first regular summer drench with phenothiazine or copper sulphate for the prevention of stomach worms. Either will do a good job.
10. If desired, the flock may be given the CONTINUOUS treatment during the summer by feeding the phenothiazine and salt mixture which consists of 10 pounds of powdered phenothiazine and 90 pounds of LOOSE salt. This should be put out in covered boxes to protect from rain. Several boxes should be used to be sure the animals have it before them at ALL times. This method has given good results in other states and might be tried if pressure of work prevents routine monthly summer drenches.