

Your Sheep Business

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Letter No. 25
October 25, 1943

The breeding season for sheep this year is late for some and a little ahead for others. Success for next year's lamb crop starts with the breeding season, with fertile ewes and rams. Success of a ewe is determined by her fertility. A rising condition of thrift makes her more fertile and results in more twins being born. A little extra feed for the last two or three weeks before breeding creates a rise in the thrift of that ewe. This is particularly true where we breed late and where the feed condition is not as flush as it was around the first of September, when some people started to breed. Little grain--a pound a day--for a short period before breeding will change that condition of thrift.

We can safely say that the number of twins born in the spring is the result of the thriftiness of the ewes at the time they were bred and not the fault of the ram. Naturally, we want as many twins as possible. While a single lamb will weigh more as a rule than either of a pair of twins, the twins combined will weigh more, and it is pounds we want. The answer is to feed ewes extra for a while before the breeding season starts.

Now as to the ram. Remember, he has a half interest in every lamb born in that flock. Improvement resulting from a good ram can be expected both in body conformation and in quality of wool. Any sheep raiser is justified in investing in a high quality ram.

The care of that ram is also important. If young rams are being used, it is an excellent practice to conserve their vitality and fertility by shutting them up during the day for rest and feed and allowing them to run with the flock at night. If more than one ram is being used, the rams might be alternated for rest and feed, one being with the flock in the daytime and the other at night. This will help maintain the vigor of the ram where heavy service is demanded, such as 15 ewes per ram or more. It is an excellent practice to mark the ram when he is turned with the flock. This can be done in order to check on his fertility, to determine whether or not he is settling the ewes and whether or not they are coming back 18 to 21 days to be rebred. This marking is done by mixing lamp black with oil or cup grease to a consistency of a heavy paste and smearing the breast of the ram between the front legs with this paste. Fifteen days after this first application, which may have to be renewed from time to time during that period to insure proper marking, the color is changed to red sienna. The change of color will indicate whether or not the ram is serving again the ewes which had previously been bred. This practice is worth following as it indicates clearly to a breeder whether or not his ram is proving satisfactory. It gives him the opportunity to replace an unsatisfactory ram before it is too late in the season.

It is time now to begin to think also about parasite control for the winter. Phenothiazine is the winter treatment for the control of parasites. It will clean out the nodular worm during the winter if properly applied and rid the farm of this particular pest. This means cleaner intestines in the lambs next summer and more catgut for surgical sutures to supply the big war demands.