

MN 2000  
VSL 35

# Your Sheep Business

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Letter No. 35  
July 23 1946

Producers of native lambs who are equipped to do so should raise early lambs. A study of the advantages of winter lambs will convince the grower that he can improve the quality of his lamb crop and increase the financial return from his flock.

One of the big advantages in lambing in the early part of February, or say from the middle of January to early March, is the higher vigor and thrift of the flock at that time. The flock has not been so long from pasture as they will have been six weeks to two months later. After a season on good pasture, the ewes are well stocked with substances which protect them from undernourishment, but which must last throughout the winter months. Dry roughages supply only a fraction as much of these nutrients, particularly carotene, the source of vitamin A, as - green pastures.

Lambs born early have the advantage of these stored up substances in the ewe. They have more pep than those born later. The ewe provides better nourishment for the lamb both before and after birth. This explains largely why there is, as a rule, greater success at lambing time with early born lambs than those born late.

In a southeastern Minnesota farm management association where records have been kept on flocks of sheep over a period of ten years the records show that those producers who lambed early made the most money. One reason for this was that they saved a higher percentage of lambs than those who lambed later. This can be traced to the better nourishment previously mentioned, and also to the fact that the owner was giving more attention to the flock than was possible after spring work had started.

Producers also made more money because they were able to market their lambs before the big run and while the price was higher.

The early born lambs can sometimes be put on the market in June and in July when very few spring lambs are coming in, and when in normal times the price is higher than at any other time of the year. There is the additional advantage that lambs are being grown and finished during the season when the pasture is at its best. Usually in Minnesota the pastures begin to go backward in July and August and unless supplementary pastures are provided, the feed supply may become very short. This may mean having to feed grain to these lambs in the fall to get them in proper condition to market. With early lambs the most important gains can be made during the season of flush pastures.

Another advantage of winter lambs is the reduction in the parasite problem. Early born lambs, by the time they go to pasture, are large and vigorous and are more resistant to any parasitic infestations they may pick up on the pasture at that time. Late born lambs may be born on pasture and pick up infestation of parasites as soon as they start to eat and are handicapped from the start by this.

These advantages that the early lamb has over the late lamb are all apparent. It is true that proper quarters are needed for early lambing. A little more attention needs to be given to the flock at that time, but as a rule, there is more time earlier in the season to give that attention. The problem of housing is not unsolvable; with a little labor and material suitable lambing quarters can be provided.