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# Your Sheep Business

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This letter will remind you of some familiar practices which should be carried out during this season.

Sheep are subject to goiter, as are all our animals in Minnesota. This is due to a deficiency of iodine in the ration. The big neck in the lamb at birth is one evidence of goiter, but I am confident that iodine deficiency may also cause very weak lambs. It is easy to guard against this difficulty by feeding iodine to the pregnant ewes. This applies to all pregnant animals as well as ewes. Buy the loose iodized salt if possible. If you can't obtain it in the loose form, you can get it in blocks, or you can mix it yourself. Mixing is not so easy because of the small amount of the drug used. One ounce of potassium iodide mixed with 100 pounds of salt will do the job. To mix the one ounce with 100 pounds is not easy. If the potassium iodide is first mixed with something with color, like oilmeal, you can more easily see when this mixture is thoroughly incorporated into the 100 pounds of salt.

## Exercise

Exercise is extremely important as a means of guarding against pregnancy disease. Pregnancy disease shows up shortly before lambing as a paralysis of the ewe. Once down, the ewe seldom recovers, unless birth is given to the lambs. Affected ewes always carry twin or triplet lambs. Exercise seems to guard against this disease as well as keeping the system in proper condition. Exercise can be induced by feeding the roughage at a distance from the sleeping quarters so the flock must walk to get it, and in keeping the lanes open so that sheep can range out over the fields. If these methods are not possible, then the flock should be driven around, forcing them to walk at least a mile per day.

## Winter Ration

Any legume roughage such as alfalfa is an important winter feed for sheep. It helps supply important protein and mineral needs. If the breeding flock starts the winter in good flesh, a legume hay is a good winter ration. Grain need not be fed until about one month before lambing. If, however, legume hays are not available and it becomes necessary to feed roughages such as prairie hay or other common roughages, the ration will be lacking in protein and the minerals phosphorus and calcium. These common roughages must be supplemented with protein and mineral supplements or a liberal amount of grain. The grain will not entirely supply the protein and minerals needed. Both of these needs must be met for the proper nutrition of a breeding flock, the growing of strong lambs during pregnancy. The proteins are particularly important in the growing of a good wool clip.

This means that while we can winter a flock nicely on legume hay, if common roughages are used the deficiencies must be met. Grain may be fed with common roughages at the rate of a pound to a pound and a half of oats per day. Instead of grain alone, a little oats and 1/5 pound of linseed oilmeal per day will be better. Linseed oilmeal is particularly important in that it will supply all phosphorus needs. Calcium or lime may still be lacking. These can be best supplied, when no legumes are fed, by mixing the salt half and half with ground limestone or ground oyster shells. The salt used should be iodized. Supply drinking water at a temperature well above freezing if possible. Pregnant ewes need it. They will drink better than a gallon per day if given the opportunity.