



Your Sheep Business

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In Letter No. 13 we wrote about rams for this breeding season. Sheep men are supplied by now and are getting ready for breeding. We are all hoping for a large lamb crop. We are not satisfied with one lamb per ewe, but aim for a $1\frac{1}{2}$ average. The breeds of sheep raised in this state carry the twin habit. It is natural for them to produce a high percentage of twins if we take advantage of that habit. That means having the ewes in the right condition of thrift when they are bred. Flushing is described as feeding the ewes in such a way that they are gaining rapidly in thrift at the time they are bred. This is accomplished by giving them extra feed for ten days to two weeks before the breeding season begins. It can be done with excellent pasture supplied just for that purpose, or it can be done by feeding grain. If the pasture is not abundant enough to supply this extra feed, then oats fed for that period at the rate of a pound per ewe per day will accomplish the same thing.

Experimental evidence shows that we can increase materially the number of twins born by handling the ewes in this manner just before the breeding season. Two weeks ago I talked to Bill Webster in Kittson county. Bill runs 250 ewes, and this year he raised $1\frac{1}{2}$ lambs per ewe for a 150 per cent lamb crop. He attributed it all to having flushed his ewes carefully before breeding. I have a letter also from Gayton Armstrong of Mahnomon, the Schermorn Farm. Gayton handles from two to three thousand ewes a year. In this letter Gayton said: "I flushed my ewes last fall. This year we have raised the highest percentage lamb crop since we entered the sheep business. It sure pays to flush the ewes....I now have 1,000 ewes cut out for flushing. They are on good pasture and getting one pound of oats per head per day."

He is also feeding his bucks $1\frac{1}{2}$ pounds of oats per head per day, starting 30 days before service in order to get them in condition. Armstrong started to market his lambs in August, and his report shows their sales up to October 5. They have marketed 1,143 lambs at an average weight of 95 pounds, at an average price of \$8.80. These lambs were marketed off grass without grain feeding. That's good weight and they topped the market. This all shows good husbandry.

These larger operators have found flushing pays, and it will surely pay those who are in the sheep business on a smaller scale. It's simple. Give extra feed, such as a pound of oats per day, to the ewes for a period of two weeks before the ram is turned with them.

HANDLING THE RAM--Good flesh on the ram is desirable at beginning of breeding season. He should not be overfat. He should be in good, strong condition, vigorous, and accustomed to exercise. He should have grain for a couple of weeks before breeding at rate of one pound a day--three parts of oats and one part of bran make an excellent feed for the ram. It is not the best practice to let a ram run all the time with the ewes. It is better to keep him confined in the daytime for rest and feed and allow him to run at night. It is also an excellent practice to trim away the wool around the tail of the ewes so that there will be nothing to hinder the breeding operation.