

Your Sheep Business

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The period of poor pastures that we have talked about so much is with us. Pastures are becoming short in many parts of Minnesota, and unless extra feed is supplied, the lamb crop will definitely go backwards or at best stand still. Lambs will probably lose the milk fat and the good cover they have been carrying up to date unless extra feed is given them now. The result will be that they cannot go to market off grass but will have to be grain-fed later in the fall. Many farmers can prevent this situation by supplementing the regular pastures in one way or another. Some have planted a special field of Sudan or rape which is ready now to turn the lambs into or is already being used. Lambs having access to Sudan or rape will get to market earlier and at less cost than those which suffer setbacks because of short pastures. Farmers who haven't this feed available can turn these lambs out on meadows. Others may have enough second crop alfalfa that can be utilized.

If you cannot use one of the methods mentioned above, that is, some type of supplementary pasture, then grain feeding should be resorted to. If lambs are fed grain now, they can be kept gaining and the advantage of what they have gained from good pasture up to now will be maintained. Their baby fat or milk fat will be maintained, gains continued, and the lambs will be ready for market earlier. Any grain may be used, but oats are especially desirable as a starter and can be gradually replaced by barley, corn, or even rye - whichever is available and most economical.

Now is the time also to think about parasites. The program in this state for internal parasite control calls for winter treatment with phenothiazine and then putting the flock on a phenothiazine-salt mixture for the pasture season. A great many people have adopted this program. Others have adopted portions of it. Some producers have treated in the winter but have not followed up with a salt mixture. Others have started the sheep right on the salt mixture when the pasture season opened, without a previous treatment. The best results are obtained by using a drench before putting the sheep on a salt mixture. Previous treatments clean the sheep out so that the salt mixture becomes a preventative rather than a worm expeller.

Where nothing has been done up to the present time in the way of parasite control, the best procedure would be to treat the entire flock now, including the lambs, with the old standard copper-sulphate nicotine-sulphate drench, and then put the entire flock on phenothiazine-salt mixture. Use one pound of phenothiazine to nine pounds of salt. Phenothiazine may be used as the treatment in place of copper-sulphate and nicotine-sulphate drench. I suggest the copper-sulphate, nicotine-sulphate drench now because it is as effective as the phenothiazine in the control of the stomach worm, and the nodular worm damage may have already resulted. We do urge drenching with one or the other for the entire flock, followed by the use of salt mixture for the balance of the pasture season. Bear in mind that the salt mixture must not be exposed to weather. It must be protected not only from rain but from the sun which changes its chemical composition. For that reason, the mixture should be placed in a trough within a shed, if possible, where the sheep can go readily to obtain it. If that is not feasible, fix up a covered salt box that will protect the mixture from the rain and the sun.

Plenty of feed and the control of parasites are two essentials at this stage of lamb production. Both of these two important factors can still be taken care of.