



From a mutton and wool standpoint many of our producers have failed to follow market requirements and to attend to the so-called "little things" so essential in successful sheep husbandry. More attention must be paid to producing vigorous lambs, vigorous ewes and a satisfactory growth of wool.

1. Castrating and docking lambs.

a. Why castrate ram lambs? Big, coarse ram lambs not only lack the quality and condition of wether lambs, but produce inferior meat and hence do not command top prices. Feeders will not buy undersized lambs for feeding purposes unless they have been castrated. The best time is when lambs are one to two weeks old.

b. Reasons for docking. The lamb's tail is of no especial value to the animal. Docking is recommended as it adds to the appearance of the lamb and prevents the collection of filth in the region of the tail. Undocked ewes often fail to breed. All lambs should be docked at one to two weeks of age. Lambs may be docked either with a sharp knife or hot iron. In the case of young lambs, the sharp knife method is most commonly used, as there is but little danger of excessive loss of blood and the wound will heal more quickly than if removed with the hot iron. The hot iron has been successfully used and results in searing the stub of the tail, thus preventing loss of blood. More time is required to heal the wound than if docked with a sharp knife. Remove the tail one to one and a half inches from the body. The skin surrounding the base of the tail should first be pressed back, so that when the tail is removed there will be plenty of skin to partially cover the wound and hasten healing.

c. Docking and castrating may be done at the same time. Some prefer to dock first, then castrate 4 to 7 days later. Select a warm, sunny forenoon so the lambs can be watched during the day. The sheep shed should be thoroughly cleaned and well bedded.

2. Feeding the young lambs.

Young lambs will begin to eat grain and hay at about 10 to 14 days of age. It will pay to provide a "creep" in one end of the building where the lambs can have access to some suitable feed. Alfalfa hay, clover hay and soybean hay are the outstanding roughages for this purpose. Another fair hay is mixed clover and timothy - the less timothy the better. Ground oats, ground corn, ground barley, bran and linseed oilmeal should make up the bulk of the grain ration.

Suggested rations for lambs up to 8 weeks old -

(1) Alfalfa, clover, soybean hay
or mixed hay
Ground oats 50%
Ground corn 50%
Wheat bran 20%

(2) Alfalfa, clover, soybean
hay or mixed hay
Ground oats 50%
Ground barley 30%
Wheat bran 20%

Five to ten percent linseed oilmeal could be used to advantage particularly if the bran is not available. Whole grain may be used after the lambs are two months old. The young lambs should receive grain at least until pasture is available.

3. Feeding the ewes after lambing.

If the ewes are in good condition at the time of lambing and have access to alfalfa, clover, or soybean hay, it may not be necessary to feed them grain before the pasture season. In many cases, however, whole oats or other suitable grain will be

necessary to insure a good milk flow and maintain the weight of the ewes. Ordinarily no grain will be required after they have been turned onto pasture. Avoid turning to pasture too soon, as the soft washy grass frequently causes scouring.

4. Shearing the flock.

a. Time. Depends upon season - usually April 15th to May 1st. Shear when the sheep begin to show signs of suffering from heat. A few warm days help to bring out the oil or yolk, which aids in the shearing operation. If possible, avoid shearing the breeding ewes from 3 to 4 weeks prior to lambing and from 7 to 10 days after lambing. The fleeces will be cleaner, particularly around the tail if the shearing is done before turning on pasture.

Do not allow sheep to burrow into haystacks, but feed all roughage in racks so arranged that all seed, leaves, and dirt are kept out of the fleece.

b. Suggestions on shearing.

- (1) Shut the flock in over night to protect from rain or dew. This insures dry fleeces and prevents moulding after tying and sacking.
- (2) Shear on a clean platform.
- (3) Shear carefully - avoiding all second cuts, as this lowers the grade of the wool.
- (4) Keep all dirt and trash out of the fleece.
- (5) Do not include dung locks or filth in the fleece. Sack this separately.
- (6) Fold the fleece with the flesh or skin side out.
- (7) Use only paper or jute twine and tie securely. Never use sisal or r twine, as it lowers the grade of the wool.
- (8) Place in wool sacks and keep in cool, dry place.
- (9) A wool tying box, will assist in tying the fleeces properly. If interested, see your county agent for plans.

5. Dipping.

The flock should be dipped with some standard sheep dip at least twice each year - before going on pasture in the spring and before cold weather in the fall. The lambs should be dipped also as the ticks will leave the older sheep as soon as they are shorn and go to the lambs. Use a standard sheep dipping tank, water tank or barrel. Select a warm, sunny day, warm the water slightly and hold the sheep in dip for one to two minutes. If badly infested with ticks, repeat in ten days.

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