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THE FEEDING OF LAMBS

How to Raise Sheep From Day of Birth.

Mother's Milk the Best Food—When and How to Feed Grain—Causes for Failure With Lambs—Reasons for Success.

(Contributed by Ontario Department of Agriculture, Toronto.)

Mother's milk is the first and best food for lambs. If this is not available, then the milk of goats or cows may be used. If the ewe or mother sheep has been well fed on oats, bran clover and few roots for at least a month before the birth of the lamb there is little likelihood of a milk shortage for one lamb. Lambs that have unkind mothers usually need some assistance to obtain nourishment. The mother sheep can be held by hand or tied with a halter while the lamb nurses. This is usually not necessary for more than two or three days. The transfer of lambs from one ewe to another can be made at birth or while the lamb is still very young by fooling the ewe, who by the way depends largely on the sense of smell to identify her offspring. Should a ewe have but one lamb, a day old, and it is desired to have her feed a second one, rub the two lambs together until they have the same smell and then test the ewe's ability to identify. If a ewe loses her lamb and it is desired to have her adopt and feed another one, such can be done by removing the skin from the dead lamb and placing such on the back of the lamb that it is desired she should adopt. This must, of course, be done in a comparatively short time; but cutting a slit in each corner of the pelt through which the legs of the living lamb may be passed, it is easy to keep the skin in place for a few days. Twin lambs frequently do not get sufficient milk for best development, and again the strong lamb will get more than its share. Close attention is necessary to make such adjustment as will insure the lambs getting a fair share. When lambs are not getting all the milk that they need from their mothers, provision should be made to supplement such by teaching the lambs to drink cows' milk from bottle or pan.

Grain Feeding.

When the lambs are two or three weeks old they will start nibbling at grain, hay or grass. At this time, they should be encouraged to feed by way of placing choice bits of fodder and grain in a small feed trough where they can reach it without being disturbed by the older sheep. Bran, ground oats, cracked corn and oil cake meal are very desirable concentrates for lambs. Fresh water and salt should always be available in the pens, yards or pasture. The amount of grain to feed will depend largely upon the use that it is desired to make of the lambs. Lambs for the "hot house lamb" trade require liberal grain feeding, while those for breeding, or ordinary markets should be limited within the bounds of profitable feeding. With lambs for exhibition, costs are sometimes of secondary importance, and the grain feeding is more liberal than it is with the lambs of the breeding or market type. Lambs that are grain fed from the beginning will reach market weight six or eight weeks earlier than those not receiving grain until the commencement of the fattening period. When grain feeding is too liberal either before or after weaning, the lambs will depend upon the grain feeds, and not eat as much grass or other roughage as is in keeping with profitable feeding. The amount of grain to feed must be determined by the age of the lamb, the purpose for which it is being reared, and the coarse feeds available. Grain feeding from the time that the lambs begin to feed is a profitable practice if the amount of grain fed per day does not reduce the lamb's appetite for grass and other coarse feeds. During the fattening period, the quantity of grain fed per lamb should generally not exceed one and a half pounds per day if the feeding is to be profitable. Good pasture grass, clovers, or rape should be supplied liberally to all lambs intended for the ordinary market or breeding. With hot house lambs, the coarse food is limited, grains and milk are largely depended on for rapid gains.

Causes of Failure in Lamb Feeding.

1. Ewes not properly fed during pregnancy or after.
2. No supplementary feeds for the lambs.
3. Failure to properly dock and alter lambs.
4. No provisions against failure of pastures.
5. No protection from other stock.
6. Pastures infested with eggs or larvae of stomach worm.
7. Failure to dip and destroy ticks and lice.
8. Failure to clip wool from inner thighs and udder.
9. Using poor scrub stock.

Reasons for Success.

1. Proper care and liberal feeding to ewe and lamb.
2. Supplementary feeding ample.
3. Wool removed from vicinity of udder.

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