



RAISING LAMBS

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*Care and
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The size and quality of the lamb crop you produce determine to a large extent the amount of income you get from your sheep flock.

A small lamb crop means less income for you—so, do all you can to raise and market all the strong lambs your ewes produce.

CARE AT LAMBING TIME

If your lambs are due to arrive early, give them a warm barn or shed that is free of drafts. Even your late lambs need some protection against sudden changes in weather.

Separate pens are desirable for early arriving lambs. Such pens can be made by using panels 4 feet long, hinged in pairs and set up in the barn or shed. You can make up the number of pens you need along the inside wall of the building by adding more of these hinged panels.

Separate lambing pens keep the ewe from being bothered by the rest of the sheep flock. Also, the lamb cannot wander off and become disowned by its mother. In pens you can give each ewe and lamb any special attention that may be needed. Put the ewe in an individual pen either before or soon after she lambs.

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Raising Lambs

CARE OF LAMB AT BIRTH

As soon as the lamb is breathing, dip the navel cord in tincture of iodine and glycerine. This prevents infection of the navel.

In case the lamb appears dead at birth, quick action may save its life. Remove the mucous from the lamb's mouth and nostrils. Then slap the lamb on each side back of the shoulders, or rub the lamb briskly with a handful of straw or burlap, to start the lamb's breathing.

A vigorous lamb usually has no trouble feeding itself soon after birth, especially when the ewe has been clipped and tags removed just before lambing. However, a weak lamb may die unless help as suggested here is given at birth. Hold the weak lamb up to the udder of the ewe and, if necessary, force a little milk into its mouth. In extreme cases it may be necessary to take some of the first milk from the ewe and feed it to the lamb, using an eye dropper or teaspoon.

CASTRATE AND DOCK YOUR LAMBS

Castrate the buck lambs that are to be marketed. Castrate when the lambs are about a week old. To castrate, cut off one-third of the bag (scrotum). With thumb and forefinger of the left hand, grasp the upper end of the scrotum firmly. Remove the testicles with the thumb and forefinger of the right hand. In removing the testicles, pull with the right hand and push against the abdomen with the left hand.

Dock the lamb by pulling the skin toward the body with the left hand, then remove the tail about 1/2 inch from the body. Fold the skin over the end of the stub for a few seconds before releasing the lamb.

Bed the sheep barn with clean straw before you castrate and dock your lambs. Handle the lambs as quietly as possible and leave them alone for several hours after the operation. Always castrate before docking lambs. Use a good disinfectant. Keep shears or knife in the disinfectant when not in use between operations.

IDENTIFY--AND KEEP RECORDS

Mark the lambs and ewes before you release them from the lambing pens. This can be done with an ear tag, a system of ear marks put in with a punch, or by using a special paint for this purpose.

If your ewes do not carry a permanent identification, it may be advisable to use the paint brand, branding the same number on the ewe and lambs in each pen. In this case the whole family will be marked alike.

FEED YOUNG LAMBS IN A CREEP

Lambs 2 to 3 weeks old will begin to nibble at grain and hay. You can encourage them to eat additional feed at this time by giving the lambs their own feed supply in an enclosure or creep.

Build a creep for your lambs with rollers or upright slats spaced 7 to 9 inches apart. Place a small amount of good quality, leafy hay, along with grain, in this enclosed area. For the first few days cracked corn and bran are suggested. After a few days provide a ration consisting of 2 pounds of coarse ground or cracked corn, 2 pounds of rolled, crushed or crimped oats, 1 pound of bran and 1 pound of protein supplement in pea size, cake or pellet form.

After your lambs are 6 weeks old, grinding the grain is not necessary. From this time until weaning, feed your lambs a mixture of 5 pounds of oats, 3 pounds of corn, 1 pound of bran and 1 pound of protein supplement. Lambs like a grain mixture of this kind which provides variety. However, good results can be obtained by feeding grain alone, without the protein supplement and bran.

When lambs are fed in creeps, give them fresh hay and grain every day. Clean out the feed bunks each day and give any leftover feed to the ewe flock.

Creep feeding may not be advisable for lambs on good green pasture. But creep feeding is very important when the lambs are young and before they are placed on pasture. Such feeding is needed again when pastures begin to dry up in summer.

WHEN TO WEAN LAMBS AND FEEDING AFTER WEANING

Where lambs have had good care, have been on good pasture and have been fed in creeps they will have reached the desired market weight of 85 to 100 pounds and can be marketed right from the pasture. Lambs not ready for market at about 4½ months should be weaned. Separate the ewes from the lambs and do not allow them to be together again.

After weaning, if your lambs are not of market weight and are not to be sold as feeder lambs, a feeding program for the remainder of the period should be developed. The kind of feeding program you follow will be determined to some extent by the weight of your lambs. The kind of fall pasture or roughages you have available will also be a determining factor.

HOW TO START LAMBS ON FEED

Lambs that have not been on creep feed and come off of a dry pasture have small capacity for feed, at the start. Developing the capacity of the lambs to take a maximum amount of feed is necessary.

Most experienced feeders start their lambs on plenty of high quality roughage, along with a very limited amount of grain. Give the lambs all the roughage they will eat. As the grain part of the ration is increased, the lambs eat less roughage.

Too much grain, or irregular feeding of grain, causes the lambs to lose their appetites, and brings on scours, stiffness and, possibly, death.

A little whole oats, or oats mixed with barley or shelled corn, make an ideal grain ration in starting lambs on feed. Do not feed lambs more than 1/5 to 1/4 pound of grain per head per day as their first feed. Increase this amount gradually over a period of three or four weeks, to the point where the lambs are getting all the grain they will clean up in two feedings a day. They are then ready for self feeding on grain.

If you use alfalfa hay as the roughage for fattening lambs, provide only one moderate feeding a day of alfalfa and one of some other roughage, such as prairie hay, for the first week.

When your lambs are well started on a full feeding of grain, fattening and finishing them for market is not too difficult. The best method is to feed your lambs all the grain they will clean up twice a day. When hay also is fed twice a day, you can avoid waste by giving the lambs only the amount they will clean up.

One of the most profitable rations to feed is ear corn and alfalfa hay. If the alfalfa is of high quality, it may be necessary to limit the amount to about 1 pound for each lamb per day, to make the lambs eat enough ear corn to fatten rapidly.

When on full feed, lambs weighing 60 to 85 pounds should eat 1½ to 2 pounds of grain and 1 to 1¼ pounds of hay per head daily. They should gain at least 1/3 pound per head per day, or 25 to 30 pounds in 75 to 100 days. Even though lambs are thin at the start, they should be fat enough to suit the meat packer after such a feeding period. A 90 to 92-pound farm weight is ideal, if the lamb is fat.



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