

Retarded Growth in Lambs

By

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IN every sheep flock certain lambs grow at such a slow rate that they are usually economic liabilities. Since many of these stunted lambs result from errors in management it may aid sheepmen in decreasing some of these losses to point out some of the causes.

Malnutrition: The nutrition of the ewe does not appear to have much influence on the size of the lamb at birth but it does have considerable effect upon the milk flow of the ewe. If a ewe does not produce enough milk to satisfy the normal growth requirement of the lamb, the lamb will be stunted. If the lamb survives the suckling period and adequate quantities of feed are available the lamb will eventually grow and may attain a marketable weight. Several additional months of feed and care are necessary however for the lamb to grow to sufficient size to be marketed. The most common deficiencies in the rations fed ewes are proteins, phosphorus and vitamin A. These deficiencies can be overcome by including an oil meal and a good grade of hay in the winter rations for ewes. Early spring and late fall supplemental pastures are very important in maintaining the proper nutrition of ewes.

Creep feeding of lambs offers an additional means of increasing the growth rate of normal lambs and at the same time makes extra feed available for orphan lambs and for lambs of ewes that for some reason have ceased to produce milk.

Many orphan lambs will eat enough grain and grass to subsist but may become stunted, have enlarged joints and brittle bones because of deficiency in calcium, and possibly other minerals. Mature sheep will eat mineral mixtures much more readily than will lambs. The grain ration fed to lambs in a creep feeder should contain one half of one percent limestone in order to insure adequate calcium intake. Always see that the lambs have ample forage either as pasture or good quality hay.

Diseases of the Newborn Lamb Navel Infections

Navel infections are common causes of deaths, enlarged joints, and stunting of lambs. When lambs are born under insanitary conditions the umbilical cord becomes contaminated and bacteria grow in the stump of the cord. Some bacteria may cause death of the lamb while others only retard growth. Pasture lambing is desirable from a standpoint of sanitation but other factors make early lambing more desirable and shed and barn lambing is necessary. Lambing pens should be clean and dry with a deep bedding of clean straw. As soon as the lamb is dropped the stump of the umbilical cord should be dipped in tincture of iodine.

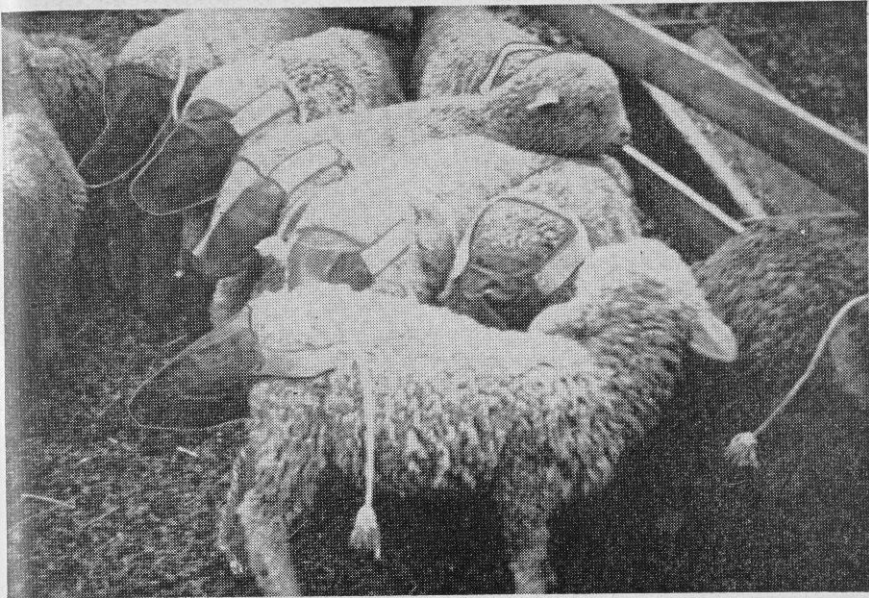
Pneumonias

Lambs do not require warm sheds but they do require protection from winds and moisture. Pneumonia is very common in lambs and may be the cause of lack of thrift or even death. There are at least four types of diseases of lambs characterized by pneumonia; one a virus disease, one from the various bacteria, one from lung worms, and one from forcing medicine into the lungs.

fed rations deficient in Vitamin A may develop pneumonia, but this type is also associated in all cases with certain micro-organisms. Nearly all lambs recovering from pneumonia are stunted and grow very slowly during a long convalescent period.

Diarrheas

Outbreaks of diarrhea are not uncommon in lambs. One type is highly infectious and is due



Collecting samples for examination to determine if parasite eggs are present in the feces of badly stunted lambs.

There is no satisfactory treatment for the virus pneumonia and vaccines are only in the experimental stage. The bacterial type of pneumonia can be treated with an antiserum and with some of the sulfa drugs. With the exception of the virus and mechanical pneumonias good housing and sanitation will largely prevent losses due to pneumonia. Sheep and lambs

to a micro-organism. This disease is characterized by high death losses. Another type of diarrhea is associated with a vitamin A deficiency and responds to treatment with vitamin A. A very common type of diarrhea is associated with coccidiosis outbreaks. In lambing shed outbreaks, coccidiosis usually causes relatively low death losses but may cause

stunting. Sanitation appears to be the only way of preventing the appearance of symptoms of coccidiosis in suckling lambs. The pens must be kept dry and the ewes should be trimmed before lambing so that the lambs will not get tags of soiled wool in their mouths when they are attempting to suck the ewes. In any outbreak of diarrhœa the first thing to do is to separate the sick from the well lambs and clean the sheds.

Diseases of Range Lambs

Gastrointestinal parasites are one of the most serious causes of stunting lambs. Continued infestation of lambs with the various round worms and tapeworms produce such weakening effect on the lambs that they may cause death or merely stunting depending on the number of parasites and the quantity and quality of the feed. It is generally agreed that large doses of worm medicine also cause stunting of lambs. Prevention of infestation is much more desirable than attempting to remove the parasites after the harm has been done.

To prevent heavy infestation of lambs with parasites treat the ewes individually with a standard worm medicine soon after the lambs are born. Keep a deep dry bedding in the sheds. Feed the ewes a mineral mixture containing phenothiazine in the ratio of about one part phenothiazine to ten parts salt, bonemeal,

and limestone. Feed the lambs a grain-mineral mixture containing one part phenothiazine to 400 parts of a mixture containing grain, oil meal, salt, and limestone. Practice pasture rotation.

In most flocks where large numbers of stunted, "peewee", lambs are found anyone or several of the factors discussed are in operation. Each flock presents its own particular problems. This brief discussion points out some of the causes and offers suggestions on the prevention of stunting in lambs.



An infected joint in a badly stunted lamb. The germ of swine erysipelas was cause of this enlarged joint.