



Diseases of **Feed Lot Lambs**

By D. F. Eveleth

THERE is a saying that a sheep's greatest ambition is to die. Unfortunately this appears to be true in certain feedlots.

In order to adequately discuss some of the problems of the feeder, we must characterize our lambs. The heredity and environment of the western lamb is entirely different from that of the "native" lambs. The western lamb is usually born either on the range or goes onto the range at an early age. Its diet contains of milk, grass and possibly salt.

Let us follow through on this lamb. It is removed from the ewe in the fall and driven or hauled to a railroad terminal and shipped, often great distances. At intervals it is offered hay and water. The lamb may never have eaten hay before this experience. The surroundings are strange and the lamb is often fatigued. During the course of this trip, under great stress the lamb is exposed to various disease entities. Frequently, when the lamb arrives at the market it is showing symptoms of shipping fever. If the lamb comes from a scabies area, it is dipped before it is put into the feedlot. During inclement weather there is usually a high incidence of pneumonia which may result from inhalation of the dip.

Two to three weeks after the lambs are put into the feedlot, they show symptoms of coccidiosis. During this period the lambs have been exposed to nematode larvae. It requires only a

short time for stomach worms to develop. The lambs are then drenched with a toxic material to kill the worms.

Soon after the lambs are placed in the feedlot, they are vaccinated against enterotoxemia. Don't use the term "overeating disease" because it gives the wrong impression. Some feeders have a tendency to try to push the lambs onto full feed at too rapid a rate. There are dangers of digestive upsets and we have seen cases of founder. If the lamb is still surviving some tend to bloat.

Now, consider some of the things that can be done to decrease these losses.

First, give the range lamb an opportunity to learn to eat hay before being shipped.

In cold weather it is well to give anti-hemorrhagic septicemia serum. We have found this more effective than the bacterin. Penicillin is useful but expensive.

Rest the lambs as often as possible while in transit. If shipping fever develops, the sulfa drugs are superior to the antibiotics for individual or flock treatment.

Sulfaquinoxaline in the drinking water is effective in control of both shipping fever and coccidiosis. This drug protects the lamb while it is developing natural immunity to coccidiosis.

Low level feeding of phenothiazine prevents the development of many types of nematode ova, but will not remove the worms that are present.

When the lambs arrive at their destination, vaccinate them against enterotoxemia and place them on a stubble field, or cut over hay field, and feed prairie hay for 10 days.

We have found that readily available ground salt aids in preventing bloat.

The rations now compounded contain arsenic, antibiotics, diethylstilbestrol, sometimes testosterone, salt, other minerals, protein supplements, vitamins, molasses, and the grain and hay components.

Sometimes this type of ration is expensive and some of the ingredients can be omitted. There is little danger of any of the nutritional deficiency diseases.

Many feeders are sticking to a much more simple ration and while the feeding period is a little longer, the profit is higher.

The story with the native lamb is considerably different. These lambs are born earlier in the spring, nearly always in sheds that have been used for years for sheep. The lambs have an opportunity to eat hay as soon as they are able to take solid food. They are exposed to coccidia at birth and probably pick up nematode larvae from

the bedding and the wool of their dams. By the time the lamb is two months old it is immune to the type of coccidiosis present on the particular farm. It is also full of nematode parasites.

These lambs are usually marketed in small groups, being hauled to the sales barn where feeders purchase them and transport them to their feedlots. This process may require several weeks and as the groups are put together, they tend to expose each other with diseases not common to all groups.

There may be outbreaks of shipping fever and coccidiosis.

The ration we have previously discussed.

Disease conditions that may be common to both types of lambs include enterotoxemia, contagious ecthyma, urinary calculi, bloat, pink eye, listeriosis, shipping fever and various types of parasitism.

Enterotoxemia, contagious ecthyma, and listeriosis can be

fairly well controlled by prophylactic vaccinations. Pink eye and shipping fever have, in most cases, not been controlled effectively by vaccination.

Bloat will always occur in some individuals. It may be treated with anti-bloat drugs. Salt also aids in preventing bloat.

Urinary calculi may develop at any time. However, sheep from certain areas are much more likely to develop calculi than sheep from other areas, although all of the same are in the same feedlot.

Once "water belly" has developed the lamb is a total loss. A high calcium ration seems to be of value in preventing the formation of calculi. In some parts of the country, delayed castration is practiced. This allows for the wethers to become larger and the stones pass out without lodging. Where the elastrator is used, incidence of tetanus among the lambs is high.



Cover Story

No one likes to build a fence. Digging post holes and tamping posts have always been a tiresome job to be avoided if possible.

Bill Promersberger and E. W. French of the Agricultural Engineering Department at NDAC have some real time-saving ideas on building a fence in their article on page 15.

On the cover Promersberger and French (on the tractor) are demonstrating the power post driver. With this machine they say two men can set 25 to 30 posts an hour. That beats the 4 posts an hour that one man can set with hand tools.