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animal sciences

sheep

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE, PURDUE UNIVERSITY, WEST LAFAYETTE, INDIANA 47907

Sheep Production Calendar for Winter Lambs

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The purpose of this calendar is to outline management practices for each month based on a winter lambing program. The information provided should serve as a guide to help the sheep producer stay abreast of the changing management decisions that must be made on a daily basis. Important dates to remember are outlined below. These dates are the bases for determining when other management practices will take place. **Actual dates for accomplishing each management practice may be moved forward or backward a few days to meet a specific situation or location.**

Breeding Dates—August 1 to September 4
Lambing Dates—December 24 to January 27
Early Wean Lambs by March 15
Wean All Lambs by May 1
Market All Lambs by July 1

CALENDAR

JULY

Week One

- Shear ewes and rams. This will help keep them cool.
- Deworm ewes and rams then place animals on a pasture or paddock preferably where sheep have not been for at least 30 days. This should reduce reinfestation of internal parasites.
- Give rams a breeding soundness evaluation. This includes an evaluation of body soundness, reproductive tract soundness and semen quality.
- Clip pastures and rotationally graze.
- Remove ewes from pastures with a high content of legumes (greater than 30 percent). Live legume plants can contain estrogenic compounds that will adversely influence the reproductive performance of ewes.
- Trim and check all hooves of ewes and rams for signs of foot rot. This may be done in conjunction with shearing.

Week Two

- Increase daily nutrient intake of each ewe (nutritional flushing) and ram. This can be accomplished by supplementing their diet with 1/2 lb./day shelled corn.
- Provide fresh water and a salt-mineral mixture to all sheep at all times.

Week Three

- Cut hay for fall and winter feeding when growth warrants harvest.

Week Four

- Weigh replacement ewes and rams between 180 and 240 days of age.
- Complete the 210-day record portion of form ISPTP-2, "Indiana Sheep Performance Testing Program," and forward for summarization.
- Paint brand a large identification number on each side of all ewes. This will aid in the identification of ewes at mating. The paint used should be specifically manufactured for branding sheep.

AUGUST

Week One

- Turn rams with ewes at night on August 1 but pen the rams in a cool area (less than 75°F) separate from the ewes during the day.
- Use a ewe marking harness or marking paint on the breast of the rams. When the ram mounts the ewe during mating a mark will be placed on the ewe's rump. An accurate breeding date can be recorded for the ewe.

Week Two

- Record the breeding date for each ewe and approximate lambing dates can be calculated from these breeding dates.

- Adjust soil pH to recommended level on pastures where legumes will be seeded in February or March.
- New pastures or hay land can be sown to recommended forages.
- Change color of marking paint or ewe marking harness crayon on August 15. If the ewe has not conceived at the first mating then when she comes back into heat she will be marked with a different color.
- Stop supplementing ewes and rams with shelled corn.

Week Three

- Observe ewes for repeat breeders.
- Provide fresh water and a salt-mineral mixture to all sheep at all times.

Week Four

- Weigh replacement ewes and rams between 180 and 240 days of age.
- Complete form ISPTP-2, 210-day records and forward for summarization.

SEPTEMBER

Week One

- Fill silo with corn silage (if used) when physiologically mature.
- Remove rams from ewes on September 4.
- Rams can be placed together in a pasture or paddock.
- Apply one-third of the annual nitrogen fertilizer on grass pastures; graze grass-legume pastures lightly for the remainder of the season or rest them so the carbohydrate reserve in the legume crown can be replenished.
- Final hay harvest should be made in northern Indiana.
- After hay harvest, the forage should be fertilized to encourage fall regrowth and promote winter-hardiness.

Week Two

- Check ewes regularly to make certain they maintain their body condition.
- Feed ewes 4-5 lb./day medium quality hay (9-13% crude protein) if pasture is not available.
- Final hay harvest should be made in central Indiana.
- After hay harvest, the forage should be fertilized to encourage fall regrowth and promote winter-hardiness.

Week Three

- Provide fresh water and a salt-mineral mixture to all sheep at all times.
- Deworm ewes and rams as needed.
- Final hay harvest should be made in southern Indiana.

- After hay harvest, the forage should be fertilized to encourage fall regrowth and promote winter-hardiness.

Week Four

- Collect soil samples from all pastures and hay fields and forward for analysis.

OCTOBER

Week One

- Check pasture growth; if short, supplement each ewe with 1-2 lb./day medium quality hay (9-13% crude protein).

Week Two

- Crop residues such as corn stover can be grazed. Before placing sheep on corn stover vaccinate them against enterotoxemia.
- Provide fresh water and a salt-mineral mixture to all sheep at all times.

Week Three

- Collect soil samples from all pasture and hay fields and forward for analysis if not already done.

Week Four

- An ultrasonic pregnancy detector can be used to test all ewes and cull or separate non-pregnant ewes from ones that are bred.
- Overgraze pastures that are to be oversown with legumes.

NOVEMBER

Week One

- If pasture is not available, feed each ewe 4-5 lb./day medium quality hay (9-13% crude protein) or an equivalent feed.
- Start supplementing the diet of each ewe with 3/4 lb./day shelled corn.
- Continue to overgraze pastures that are to be renovated with legumes.

Week Two

- Continue grazing crop residue, if available.
- Provide fresh water and a salt-mineral mixture to all sheep at all times.
- Order lambing supplies.

Week Three

- Make ready lambing barn and facilities.

Week Four

- Shear all ewes.
- Trim and check their hooves for signs of foot rot. This may be done just before or after the ewe is shorn.
- Vaccinate ewes against enterotoxemia and white muscle disease 4-6 weeks before lambing. These vaccinations should give the developing lambs some immunity to these diseases. This may be done in conjunction with shearing and trimming feet.

DECEMBER

Week One

- Feed each ewe 4-5 lb./day good quality hay (13-17% crude protein) or an equivalent feed.
- Increase the amount of shelled corn fed to each ewe to approximately 1 lb./day. The actual amount fed should depend on the body condition of the ewe. Ewes should be separated into groups based on their body condition and fed accordingly.
- Deworm all ewes.

Week Two

- Provide fresh, ice-free water and a salt-mineral mixture to all sheep at all times.
- Check breeding dates to determine lambing dates.

Week Three

- Sort off early-bred ewes and pen separately from later lambing ewes.

Week Four

- Provide dry, draft-free and well-bedded lambing pens.

JANUARY

Week One

- Observe ewes at lambing, give assistance as needed.
- Soon after lambing (30 min.-3 hr.) place each ewe and her offspring in a lambing "jug" or pen (a small 4 ft. x 4 ft. pen). They should stay in the jug for at least 2 days.
- Shortly after lambing (2-6 hr.) check to make certain each ewe has milk and, if needed, help the newborn lamb get its first meal.
- Dip or spray the navel of each newborn lamb with fresh 7% tincture iodine and weigh the lamb. This should be done soon after birth (30 min.-6 hr.).
- Ear tag all newborn lambs and paint brand each ewe and her offspring with identical numbers on each of their sides. These numbers will aid in pairing the ewe with her lambs. Ear tagging and paint branding can be done concurrently with weighing and dipping their navels in iodine.

Week Two

- Just before moving the ewe and her offspring from the lambing jug, trim and check all hooves of the ewe for signs of foot rot. Then move the ewe and her offspring into larger pens with other ewes and lambs.
- Group ewes and lambs by lambing date, or by single and multiple births.
- Dock all lambs at 3-14 days of age.
- Vaccinate lambs against enterotoxemia at the time of docking with a second follow up injection 14-21 days later.

Week Three

- Start lambs on creep feeders.
- Feed each ewe with a single lamb 4-5 lb./day good quality hay (13-17% crude protein) or an equivalent feed and 1-1 1/2 lb./day shelled corn.
- Feed each ewe with twin lambs 5-6 lb./day good quality hay (13-17% crude protein) or an equivalent feed and 2-2 1/2 lb./day shelled corn.

Week Four

- Provide fresh, ice-free water and a salt-mineral mixture to all sheep at all times.
- Complete birth data on form ISPTP-2.
- Frost seed recommended legumes in pastures and hay fields that contain less than 30 percent legume.

FEBRUARY

Week One

- Give all lambs a follow-up injection to prevent enterotoxemia.
- Continue creep feeding lambs.
- Consider culling all non-lactating ewes.
- If non-lactating ewes are kept, feed each ewe 3-4 lb./day medium quality hay (9-13% crude protein) or an equivalent feed.

Week Two

- Provide fresh, ice-free water and a salt-mineral mixture to all sheep at all times.

Weeks Three and Four

- Frost seed legumes in pastures and hay fields, if not previously done.

MARCH

Week One

- Continue creep feeding lambs.
- Provide fresh water and a salt-mineral mixture to all sheep at all times.

Week Two

- Early wean all lambs and begin feeding lambs to market weight in a drylot.
- If lambs are weaned, reduce feed intake of each ewe to 3-4 lb./day medium quality hay (9-13% crude protein) or an equivalent feed.
- Continue to feed each lactating ewe 4-6 lb./day good quality hay (13-17% crude protein) or an equivalent feed but reduce the amount of shelled corn to 1 lb. or less/day.
- Deworm all ewes and lambs at the time of weaning.

Week Three

- Seed new pastures or hay land to recommended forages when soil conditions permit.

Week Four

- Apply spring fertilizer to pastures and hay fields as recommended by soil tests.

- Weigh all lambs between 70 and 110 days of age.
- Complete form ISPTP-2, 90-day record and forward for summarization.

APRIL

Week One

- Continue creep feeding the lambs.
- Remove the corn from the ewe ration.

Week Two

- Wean lambs weighing over 60 lb. They should not go to pasture with the ewes. Either feed them to market weight in a drylot or put them on pasture separate from the mature ewes.
- Provide fresh water and a salt-mineral mixture to all sheep at all times.

Week Three

- Identify replacement ewes and rams, on the basis of 90-day weight records.
- Mark low producing ewes for culling based on 90-day weight records of their offspring.
- When pasture has adequate growth (8 in.), turn ewes on the pasture. Pastures newly seeded with legumes should be grazed intensively to reduce competition from grasses.

Week Four

- Give spring fertilizer application to pastures and hay fields if not already applied in March as recommended by soil test.
- Weigh all lambs between 70 and 110 days of age.
- Complete form ISPTP-2 90-day record and forward for summarization.

MAY

Week One

- Wean all lambs.
- Check ewes for unsoundness and cull as needed.

Week Two

- Market all lambs weighing over 100 lb.
- Treat all sheep for internal and external parasites as needed.

Week Three

- Select replacement/breeding rams and ewes. Select on the basis of measurable traits such as 90-day, 210-day and grease fleece weight records.
- Provide fresh water and a salt-mineral mixture to all sheep at all times.

Week Four

- Cut hay for fall and winter sheep feed.
- Fertilize the forages with phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) to maintain a high soil test level of P and K.

JUNE

Week One

- Place all lambs on a self-fed ration.
- Market all lambs weighing over 100 lb.

Week Two

- Cull and sell all unsound and unproductive ewes.

Week Three

- Cut hay for fall and winter sheep feed.
- Apply a light application of fertilizer following cutting.

Week Four

- Market all lambs.

Summary

If used properly, this calendar should serve as a guide to help sheep producers meet management deadlines. The month-by-month account of activities is not intended to describe management practices in detail. For more information about specific practices the reader should refer to Extension publications:

- AS-269 Indiana Sheep Performance Testing Program
- AS-400 Systems of Management for Ewes and Lambs
- AS-402 Sheep Production Calendar for Spring Lambs
- AS-403 Sheep Production Calendar for Fall Lambs
- AY-251 Improve Pastures by Renovation
- AY-253 Forage Selection and Seeding Guide for Indiana
- E-16 Sheep Keds and Biting Lice
- ID-128 Nitrate Toxicity-Problem and Prevention
- ID-153 Managing and Utilizing Pasture and Harvested Forages for Sheep
- MWPS-3 Sheep Housing and Equipment Handbook
- VY-27 Internal Parasites of Sheep
- VY-28 Foot Rot Control in Sheep

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