

FLOCK CALENDAR OUTLINE

The following guidelines are neither inclusive nor intended to fit every sheep operation. Each operation is different, therefore, each "calendar of events" should be tailored to each flock's needs.

PRIOR TO BREEDING

1. Bag and mouth ewes and cull those that are not sound.
2. Replace culled ewes with top-end yearlings or ewe lambs.
3. Keep replacement ewe lambs on growing ration.
4. Evaluate sires:
 - a. Be sure they are vigorous, healthy and in good breeding condition.
 - b. Rams should be conditioned at least a month before the breeding season. Flush rams in poor condition.
 - c. Allow at least two mature rams (preferably three) or four buck lambs per 100 ewes.
 - d. Utilize production records to evaluate anticipated breeding ability.
5. Flush ewes:
 - a. One pound grain/day two to five weeks before breeding (usually 17 days).
 - b. If ewes are over-conditioned, the effect of flushing will be lessened.
6. Vaccinate ewes for vibriosis and enzootic abortion (EAE).
7. Identify all ewes and rams with ear tags, paint brands or tattoos.

BREEDING

1. The ovulation rate of a ewe tends to be lowered at the first part of the breeding season. Vasectomized or teaser rams run with the ewes through the first heat period tend to stimulate them and increase the ovulation rate at the second heat period.
2. Use a ram marking harness or painted brisket to monitor breeding. Soft gun grease with paint pigment mixed in works well for painting the brisket. A color sequence of orange, red and black is recommended with colors being changed every 17 days.
3. Leave rams in NO LONGER than 51 days (35 days is more desirable).
 - a. An exception may be with ewe lambs. Allowing them four heat cycles or 68 days may be beneficial.
4. Remove rams from ewes after the season (don't winter rams with ewes).

PRIOR TO LAMBING — EARLY PREGNANCY (First 15 Weeks)

1. Watch general health of ewes. If possible sort off thin ewes and give them extra feed so they can catch up.
2. Feed the poor quality roughage you have on hand during this period, saving the better for lambing.
3. An exception to the above is feeding pregnant ewe lambs. They should receive good quality roughage and grain (about 20 percent of the ration) during this period.

LAST SIX WEEKS BEFORE LAMBING

1. Trim hooves and treat for internal parasites.
2. Six to four weeks before lambing feed 1/4 to 1/3 pound grain/ewe/day.
3. Shear ewes before lambing (with highly prolific ewes at least a month before is preferred). Keep feeding schedule regular and watch weather conditions immediately after shearing (cold).
4. Vaccinate ewes for enterotoxemia.
5. Control ticks and lice immediately after shearing.
6. Four weeks before lambing increase grain to 1/2 to 3/4 pound/ewe/day (usually done immediately after shearing).
7. Give A-D-E preparations to ewes if pastures and/or roughage are or have been poor quality.
8. Feed selenium-vitamin E or use an injectable product if white muscle is a problem. **Caution** — Don't do both.
9. Check facilities and equipment to be sure everything is ready for lambing.
10. Two weeks before lambing increase grain to 1 pound per ewe per day.

LAMBING

1. Be prepared for the first lambs 142 days after turning the rams in with the ewes, even though the average pregnancy period is 148 days.
2. Watch ewes closely. Extra effort will be repaid with more lambs at weaning time. Saving lambs involves a 24-hour surveillance. Additional help at this time is money well spent.
3. Put ewe and lambs in lambing pen (jug) after lambing (not before).

4. Grain feeding the ewes during the first three days after lambing is **not** necessary.
5. Be available to provide assistance if ewe has troubles.
6. Disinfect lamb's navel with iodine as soon after birth as possible.
7. Be sure both teats are functioning and lambs nurse as soon as possible.
8. Use additional heat sources (heat lamps, etc.) in cold weather.
9. Brand ewe and lambs with identical number on same sides. Identify lambs with ear tags, tattoos or both.
10. Turn ewe and lambs out of jug as soon as all are doing well (one to three days).
11. Bunch up ewes and lambs in small groups of four to eight ewes and then combine groups until they are a workable size unit.
12. Castrate and dock lambs as soon as they are strong and have a good start (two days to two weeks of age). Use a tetanus toxoid if tetanus has been a problem on the farm (toxoids are not immediate protection. It takes at least ten days for immunity to build).
13. Vaccinate lambs for soremouth at one to two weeks of age if it has been a problem in the flock.
14. Provide a place for orphaned lambs. Make decision on what lambs to orphan as soon after birth as possible for the best success. Few ewes can successfully nurse more than two lambs.

END OF LAMBING TO WEANING

1. Feed ewes according to number of lambs suckling. Ewes with twins and triplets should receive a higher plane of nutrition.
2. Provide creep feed for lambs (especially those born during the winter and early spring).
3. Vaccinate lambs for overeating at five weeks and seven weeks of age.

WEANING

1. Wean ewes from lambs, not lambs from the ewes. If possible, remove ewes from pen out of sight and sound of lambs. If lambs have to be moved to new quarters, leave a couple of ewes with them for a few days to lead the lambs to feed and water locations.
2. Lambs should be weaned between 50 and 60 days of age or when they weigh at least 40 pounds and are eating creep and drinking water. The advantage of early weaning is that the ewe's milk production drops off to almost nothing after eight weeks of lactation.

3. Grain should be removed from the ewe's diet at least one week prior to weaning and low quality roughage should be fed. Restriction of hay and water to the ewe following weaning lessens the chance of mastitis to occur. Poorer quality roughage should be fed to the ewes for at least 10 to 14 days following weaning.
4. Handle the ewes as little as possible for about 10 days following weaning. Tight udders bruise easily. If possible, bed the area where the ewes will rest heavily with straw to form a soft bed for the ewes to lay on.

WEANING TO PRE-BREEDING

1. If ewes go to pasture, treat for internal parasites.
2. Feed a maintenance ration to the ewes. Put ewe lambs that lambed back on a growing ration once they have quit milking.
3. Adjust ewe's conditions so they can be effectively flushed for next breeding season. Don't get ewes too fat prior to breeding.

REARING LAMBS ARTIFICIALLY (ORPHANS) — MANAGEMENT TIPS

Within 2 to 4 hours after birth, decide which lambs among those from multiple births you should remove. Look for the weaker, or smaller ones to choose for artificial rearing. It is important to make this decision early. Relatively weak lambs remaining with the ewes can experience more stress than those reared artificially. Consider the following tips:

- It is essential that newborn lambs receive colostrum milk. Cow's colostrum will work if ewe's milk is not available. Do not dilute with water or warm too quickly if colostrum is frozen.
- Lambs should be removed from sight and hearing distance of ewe.
- Provide a warm, dry, draft-free area to start lambs.
- Use a good milk replacer that is 30% fat and at least 24% protein. Each lamb will require from 15 to 20 pounds of replacer to weaning.
- Use good equipment. Self priming nipple and tube assemblies have been found to be excellent for starting lambs.
- Lambs may require some assistance the first day or two to teach them to nurse on whatever feeding device is used.
- Start on nurser quickly. Young lambs start easier.
- Self feed cold milk replacer after lambs are started. Milk replacers should be mixed with warm water for best results and then cooled down. Lambs fed cold milk grow well with less problems from scours and other digestive disturbance. Cold milk keeps better too.
- There is a Formaldehyde solution commercially available that retards bacterial growth in milk (1 cc/gallon milk).
- Hang a light over the milk replacer feeding device and dry ration feeder.
- Avoid placing young lambs with older lambs, as they may be pushed aside and not be able to obtain milk replacer. Remember that lambs nursing ewes drink 25 to 40 times per 24 hours. Best results have been obtained when lambs are fed in groups of 3 to 4 initially. After lambs are successfully trained, they can be handled in groups of 25.
- Inject lambs in the first few days with Iron Dextran, Vitamin A-D-E, and Selenium-Vitamin E. At 15 days of age, vaccinate for overeating (*Colostridium perfringens* type C & D).
- Provide lambs a high-quality creep feed as soon as possible. Provide ample fresh water in front of lambs at all times. Do not feed hay or oats the first three weeks of age as it encourages bloat. Caution! Do not feed leafy alfalfa until two weeks after weaning, as it may encourage bloat.
- Wean lambs abruptly at 21-30 days of age. When to wean depends upon whether lambs are eating creep feed and drinking water. Newly weaned lambs will go backwards for several days. Don't be alarmed, they will make compensating gains later on.