

SHEEP FLOCK - GENERAL MANAGEMENT CALENDAR



Prepared by:
Dr. Lyle G. McNeal, Sheep & Wool Specialist
Founder, The Navajo Sheep Project, est. 1977
Carnegie Professor, Animal, Dairy & Veterinary Science Dept.
Utah State University
Logan, Utah

Sound health, nutrition and management programs are the keys to a successful sheep enterprise. This calendar does not contain all the answers to a sound sheep management program for all enterprises, but can serve as a guide for developing individual programs. Management programs will differ with the type of enterprise (range or intensive), the geographic area and the goals of the manager. In a commercial flock the management program should be based strictly on economics and therefore tailored towards net worth. In a registered or "pet" flock, breeding and sentimental values will allow more elaborate programs.

Vaccination programs and schedules will vary greatly and those suggested in this calendar should only be used as a guide in establishing your own flock health program. Depending on the type of sheep operation, disease or vaccination background of the ewes and/or location, you may be able to eliminate some of the health practices suggested in this calendar. By the same token, some preventative health practices or vaccinations may need to be added. Also, the proper schedule for giving the different vaccinations may vary slightly from those listed in this calendar with the type or brand of product used. Always read and follow the label directions when using any drug product. A qualified veterinarian has the necessary training and should be able to help you develop a sound and economical flock health program for your operation.

ROUTINE MANAGEMENT (Completed as Needed)

Trim Feet

Treat for Internal Parasites

Identify Cull Ewes

-- Mark ewes when something is noticed that would result in that ewe being culled so they can be easily sorted out.

Watch Ewes Closely

-- Sort off thin ewes and give extra feed
-- Treat sick ewes

If Sheep Dies, Find Out Why

-- Often the most important sheep in your flock is the first one to die. If you do not know why it died, you can not correct the problem.

PRE-BREEDING (Fall)

Sort, Bag and Cull Ewes

Breeding Soundness on Rams

Cull Rams

Buy Rams (& Ewes)

Keep Rams Out of Ewes

PRIOR TO BREEDING (14 days prior turning out rams)

Begin Flushing Ewes

-- Flushing affect can be achieved by turning ewes on high quality pasture or by supplementing diet with 1/4 lb of grain per head per day.

Increase Rams Plane of Nutrition

Vaccinate new ewes for Clostridial diseases for in flock health program.

BREEDING SEASON

Have Rams in Good Shape

- They should do their year's work in about 30 or 40 days.
- Use more than one ram per breeding group. You are taking a chance if you use only one ram.
- Use 1 mature ram or 2 ram lambs per 35 ewes. Can use fewer rams if rams are highly fertile.

Breed Ewe Lambs Separate From Older Ewes

Continue Flushing

- Flushing should continue until ewe is bred.

Do Not Winter Rams With Ewes

- Leave rams in no longer than 60 days - 40 days would be more desirable. During a 40-day breeding every ewe should have had the opportunity to cycle and be bred twice.

EARLY PREGNANCY (One Month After Breeding)

Stop Flushing -- Prevent Weight Loss

- Precautions should be taken to prevent a sharp weight loss during the first two to three weeks after breeding. This is the time period when the fertilized egg attaches to the walls of the uterus and this process could be adversely affected by improper nutrition.

Watch Ewes Closely

- Watch to see if ewes are still cycling.

MID-PREGNANCY (1 to 4 Months Post-Breeding)

Maintain Ewes in Thrifty Condition

- Nutrition should be adequate to support placental development. Feed poorer quality roughage during this period saving better quality forage for lactation.

Condition Score Ewes

- Thin ewes should be sorted off and fed extra so they can catch up.

LATE PREGNANCY (Last Month)

Supplement Ewes

- High Producing Ewes - Starting about 6 weeks prior to lambing, feed about 1 lb of grain/hd/day and be at 1 pound/hd/day at lambing. Low Producing Ewes - Starting about 3 weeks prior to lambing, feed about 1 lb of grain/hd/day through lambing.

First Enterotoxemia Injection in New Ewes

Injection should be 4 to 6 weeks prior to lambing.

Shear Ewes

About 1 month to 2 weeks prior to start of lambing.

Treat Ewes for External Parasites

Make sure product can safely be used on pregnant ewes.

PRIOR TO LAMBING (2 weeks Prior to Lambing)

Give All Ewes Enterotoxemia Injection

- Second booster injection on new ewes (2 weeks after first and 2 to 4 weeks prior to lambing).

Treat for Internal Parasites

- Make sure product is safe for pregnant ewes.
- May want to treat when moving ewes out of jugs.

Bring First Lambing Ewes to Shed - Expect First Lamb Early

- Normal length of pregnancy is 147 days, however, should expect first lamb one week early.

LAMBING TIME (About 140 Days After Rams Are Turned Out)

Be There/Keep Records

Brand Ewes and Lambs With Lambing Number

Clip, Dip & Strip

-- Clip umbilical cord about 1 1/2 to 2 inches from lambs body and dip the remaining stump in strong (7%) tincture of iodine. Check ewe to make sure both teats are fully open and functioning.

Make Sure Lamb Nurses

Lamb should receive colostrum within 1 to 2 hours after birth.

Warm Up Chilled Lambs**AFTER LAMBING - IN JUGS
(Birth to 3 days of age)****Number of Jugs**

-- Need one jug for every 10 ewes.

Length of Stay

-- Remove lambs from jugs as soon as all are doing well. The normal recommendation is to move ewes and lambs to mixing pens on the 3rd day after lambing. Many producers, however, feel that it is more desirable to move ewes and lambs to small mixing pens (3 or 4 ewes and their lambs) as soon as possible (24 hours).

Check Every Lamb Twice Each Day

Watch for signs of pneumonia, scours and starvation.

Provide Place for Bum Lambs**AFTER LAMBING - IN MIXING PENS
(3 days to 1 month of age)****Group Sizes - Keep Small**

-- Four to 10 ewes and their lambs (no more than about 10 lambs per pen).

Keep Ewes With Singles and Twins Separate

-- Ewes with twins will need more attention and feed.

Check Every Lamb At Least Once Daily

-- Watch closely for signs of pneumonia and starvation.

Provide Shelter for Lambs in Extremely Cold Weather

-- One of the main causes of death is pneumonia. Some producers have the first set of gathering pens under shed.

**LATE LACTATION
(1 Month After Lambing)****Vaccinate Lambs for Enterotoxemia****Watch ewes and Lambs For Signs of Internal Parasites And/Or Coccidiosis****Date to Weaning Lambs Depends on Management Objectives**

-- Thirty days to 6 months of age (As a general rule lambs can be weaned at 60 days of age or 45-50 lbs. With minimal problems.

-- Wean ewes from lambs (If lambs are allowed to stay in familiar surroundings where they are accustomed to the feeders, etc. there will be less weaning stress on the lambs).

AFTER WEANING**Time of Rest for Ewes**

Time to Adjust Ewes Condition So They Can effectively be Flushed Prior to the Next Breeding Season

