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**THESIS**

## S P R I N G      L A M B S .

The young of many of our domestic animals are extensively used as an article of food. Veal, Roast Pig, Spring Chickens and Spring Lambs form each in themselves a special business and the producer who can place them on the market, in prime condition, and the earliest in the season, is usually the most successful. A lamb that would weigh sixty pounds at the age of two months would command the highest market price, while one that only weighed sixty pounds at six months of age, would be of little value, even though it cost more to produce it.

The natural season for sheep to produce their young in this climate is in the spring; hence to produce marketable lambs in winter, and early spring conditions must be established, under which lambs will be produced, and thrive, in winter. The essential points in these conditions are the right sort of sheep, suitable feed, and, above all, proper care.

The selection of suitable ewes is of first importance as the lamb needs all the vigor that



it can inherit, besides plenty of substantial nourishment after it is dropped. Sheep that are large and reach maturity at an early age, are the most desirable, therefore the ewes should be selected from the coarse or medium woolled breeds. Ewes having a strain of merino blood, are preferable to full blood coarse wools, as they are less liable to bear twins, and twin lambs are not desirable where rapid growth is important.

The Ram should invariably be selected from the medium or coarse woolled breeds, and should be of good vigor, and fully matured. The character of the lamb is determined largely by the ram used. Of the various breeds, the Hampshire, Dorsetshires, Shropshire are probably the best, and in the order named; and as the Hampshire has coal black head and legs, they are especially desirable when well marked lambs are demanded. The market should be studied and a ram selected accordingly.

Having selected suitable sheep the next consideration is to so mate them that the lambs will be dropped at the proper season.

The period of gestation is about twenty weeks; hence if we wish December lambs the sheep must be mated in July. To do this the lambs must be



weaned early in the preceding spring, and the ewes made to gain in flesh. By so doing the ewes will mate earlier than on the previous year. By repeating this process, weaning the lambs earlier each year the mating season can be changed to suit, in most cases. Stinting the ewes, and following with high feeding is also an aid in this direction. Sheep seem to mate best when the weather is cool, and advantage can often be taken of this fact to produce the desired result. Turning the rams in for short periods only, either at night or in the morning, is good practice.

During summer and autumn the ewes should be kept in good pasture, and as the <sup>cool</sup> weather approaches they will gain in flesh if in normal health and vigor, and by the time winter feeding begins, they should be in suitable flesh to go into winter quarters.

Sheep in pasture should have a shed under which they can go at will. It serves as a protection from storms, flies, and the scorching rays of the summer sun. If it is made quite dark it is an additional protection from flies, and if the walls are thick it is cooler. A straw shed, all points considered, is probably the best, when the pasture is not adjacent to the sheep barn.

A winter sheep barn, in which to raise lambs, must be light, well ventilated, and have some means of controlling the temperature within certain limits. Sheep enjoy an abundance of fresh air, and they seem to thrive best in a cool place, if the temperature is kept constant.

The walls of the sheep barn should be reasonably tight, with a goodly number of windows and doors that can be opened and closed readily. The temperature of the barn should be kept as near that of the open air as possible, as long as it is above twenty degrees Fahrenheit; when it goes below this point, the openings should be closed and the barns kept as near this temperature as possible. The sheep and lambs thrive well when it is much colder than this if the temperature can be reduced gradually, and then kept constant; but in this climate the low temperatures often come suddenly and last but a short time; so it is best not to try to accustom the sheep to them. Sudden changes effect sheep very quickly. A change of thirty degrees, either up or down, will often throw them "off their feed" for several days; hence the necessity of keeping the sheep barns of as nearly even temperature as possible.

The internal arrangement of the sheep barn

can be varied somewhat, to suit the taste. The things to be considered are convenience in feeding, comfort for the sheep and a system that will cause as little waste of feed as possible. Convenient to each pen there should be a space set apart, into which the ewes cannot go, but to which the lambs can have free access. In this space should be arranged feed troughs, for feeding the lambs separately.

The sheep barns should be put in good condition, before severe weather sets in in the autumn, so that with the first appearance of cold storms, the sheep may be properly housed.

When winter sets in the sheep should be sorted, putting sheep of equal size and condition together. They should then be put into the pens, allowing about twenty to each pen. They should then be examined for ticks and disease, and if either is found, the proper remedy should be applied.

Each pen in the sheep barn should be connected with a yard, into which the sheep should have free access in the daytime, when the weather is not stormy or too cold.

When the lambs are a few days old, they with their dams should be allowed the same privilege. The fresh air and exercise seem to be better for

them than close confinement.

Sheep, as a rule, are good feeders, and will eat most kinds of food, if fed properly; but for ewes with lambs there is probably no dry fodder equal to clover hay. They eat it readily and it appears to keep them in the best condition of any one kind of feed. This with a small grain ration is all that is usually required to keep them in prime condition, until the lambs are dropped. More succulent food, as ensilage or roots, should then be fed, to increase the flow of milk. Corn stover may be fed to the ewes as part of their ration with good results, or a ration of bean straw occasionally will not injure them; but timothy hay should be avoided if possible. It produces indigestion from the effect of which the ewes sometimes die.

Grain for the ewes should consist of oats and corn, fed separately, and whole, and in sufficient quantities to keep them in good flesh. An occasional feed of oil meal with the other grain is of value in keeping them in a thriving condition.

Sheep do best when fed often. Coarse feed should be given at least three times daily, and



grain twice. Little and often should be the rule.

A supply of pure water should be kept where the sheep can get it at pleasure, and the water troughs should be so arranged that a lamb would not be liable to fall in and be drowned.

Salt should be fed to the sheep often. A good arrangement is to have a chunk of rock salt fastened in each pen, allowing the sheep free access to it. A mixture consisting of three pounds of salt and two of sulphur, fed each fortnight to every fifty sheep tends to keep them healthy, and drives away ticks also.

The season at which the lambs are dropped is always a busy one for the shepherd. The period of gestation in the sheep is somewhat variable, ranging from eighteen weeks to twenty-one or more. As the season approaches for the lambs to be dropped, the attendant should be on the alert to care for the first that make their appearance.

If the ewes have been properly selected and cared for and suitable rams used, little trouble will be experienced but the ewes should be watched closely and as the lambs are dropped, they with their dams should be separated from the flock and pains taken to know that the lamb nurses. If the

lamb is strong and the ewe furnishes sufficient milk no further special care is needed; but occasionally a lamb is found that appears weak; in this case the ewe should be caught and the lamb held in such a position that it can nurse. It is good practice to examine the ewe's nipples and remove the obstruction which is often found at the end so that the milk may flow freely, else a weak lamb might not be able to start it. If a young lamb becomes chilled, a little milk with a few drops of spirits added and fed to it will usually have the desired effect. Occasionally a ewe is found that cannot deliver the lamb; in this case the attendant can usually deliver it by the use of his hands, and a stout wire loop. It sometimes occurs that a ewe refuses to own her lamb, but if she is confined in a small close pen with it, for a day or two, she will usually come to own it. In this way a ewe that has lost her lamb may often be made to own another if desirable. When a ewe is found that is not a good milker, or that from any cause is found to be undesirable, she should be marked, and put to some other use the next season.

The raising of lambs on cow's milk is not usually attended with ~~any~~ very satisfactory results.





The cow's milk is not so rich as that of the ewe, and it is difficult to produce sufficient growth with it; besides it is apt to impair the lambs' digestion and often causes them to die.

Lambs are subject to several ailments, among which are paralysis, from crowding too fast, and indigestion from eating too much timothy hay, or similar feed, but treatment is difficult and unsatisfactory. The best way<sup>is</sup> to prevent it as much as possible by suitable feed and care.

When the lambs are a week old, they will begin to eat both hay, and grain, and they should be allowed to eat with the ewes at pleasure. In addition they should be fed separately, lightly at first, but with a constantly increasing ration, until they may be allowed all they will eat. Then they should be fed and as often as the ewes are. The feed should consist of corn, oats and oil meal ground coarse or, simply cracked. The lambs eat it readily and thrive well on it. The amount of each can be varied as circumstances seem to dictate.

When the conditions are favorable the lambs will gain very rapidly, often weighing fifty pounds when they are two months old.



The lambs are affected by the same influences as the sheep, and if the changes of temperature are rapid, or the air damp, these rapid gains cannot be attained; but a gain of five pounds a week can reasonably be expected, with good management.

There is a period in the growth of lambs, when they begin to change to sheep, when this change begins they will gain in stature, but will lose in flesh. This change begins usually when the lambs weigh between fifty and seventy pounds, and they should be sent to market, before they arrive at this stage of their growth. Should any of the lambs fail to attain suitable size for the spring market, the extra feed and care given them, does not appear to react on them later, for when turned on the pasture, and the grain taken from them, they will continue to grow, and will develop into as good sheep as they would had they not been fed so much grain.

Sheep are timid animals, and while they are docile under careful management, they are easily excited by rough usage, or by persons to whom they are not accustomed. Care should be exercised, therefore to have them cared for by the same person as much as possible, as the more quiet they are

kept the better will be the results.

The raising of spring lambs requires an aptitude for the business, on the part of the flockmaster; it also requires experience, and good judgment; but when the art is fully acquired, it becomes a pleasant and profitable occupation.

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