

Procedures that require the use of a building for sheep farming.

Spring

1. Treat ewes and all lambs over 6 weeks old for internal parasites the day before turning onto spring pasture. Thereafter, treat lambs and ewes once every 3 to 4 weeks throughout the grazing season.
2. Shear during March, April, or May if ewes were not shorn pre-lambing. Package and market their wool.
3. Store wool in a clean, dry place. not on the ground or on concrete.
4. Sell cull ewes in late February, March, or early April, they must be brought into the building for weighing/sorting/ loading into transport.
5. Trim and check feet, and put the flock through a foot bath prior to placing ewes on pasture.
6. Identify and retain ewe lambs from a winter lambing to be used as replacements. Breed so that they will lamb first as yearlings.
7. Manage winter-born lambs (December through March) so that they are marketed in the spring prior to the season price decline that occurs heading into the summer months.

Summer

1. Treat ewes and lambs for internal parasites at least once every 3 to 4 weeks. Failure to do so will result in poor lamb performance and unnecessary death loss.
2. Assess ram inventory to decide if additional or new rams need to be acquired, and investigate potential sources of new rams. Acquire replacement ewe lambs if open females are to be brought into the flock prior to the breeding season. Isolate sheep from outside sources a minimum of 4 weeks before placing with the existing flock.

Autumn

1. Trim and check feet.
2. Identify and retain ewe lambs from spring lambing to be used as replacements. Breed so that they will lamb first as yearlings.

Management Schedule for Breeding and Lambing

6 Weeks Before Breeding

1. Catch and check all ewes that are limping. Trim their feet and treat if necessary.

2. Acquire replacement ewes, if replacement ewes will be brought in prior to the breeding season. Keep them isolated from the regular flock for at least 4 weeks to reduce the risk of bringing in diseases such as sore mouth and foot rot.
3. Have a veterinarian perform a breeding soundness examination on all rams. The breeding soundness exam should include semen evaluation.
4. Condition score rams both visually and by handling them down their top
5. Shear the rams. Rams becoming overheated or running a fever as a result of sickness may be sub fertile for much of the breeding period.
6. For spring and summer breeding, keep rams out of sight and sound of the ewe flock until the first day of breeding. Avoid fence line contact, keep them in the building. Breeding performance will be improved as a result of the "ram effect."
7. Vaccinate ewes for abortion diseases.

2 Weeks Before Breeding

1. Treat ewes and rams for internal parasites.
2. Keep unfamiliar rams together in a small pen for 3 to 5 days so they will become accustomed to one another. This prevents death or injury that could occur from fighting.

At Breeding

1. Where practical, provide the breeding flock access to a cool barn, shed, or woods.
2. Use a marking harness on all rams. This helps to determine the percentage of ewes that are cycling and helps to evaluate the breeding performance of the rams. By recording breeding dates on the ewes after they're marked, they can be sorted and managed more appropriately for lambing.

4 Weeks Before Lambing

1. Shear the wool from around the head, udder and dock of pregnant ewes. If covered facilities are available, shear the ewes completely. Sheared ewes are more apt to lamb inside, the inside of the barn stays drier because less moisture is carried in by the ewes, more ewes can be kept inside, and it creates a cleaner environment for the lambs and the shepherd. Sheared ewes must have access to a barn during cold, freezing rains, and they must receive additional feed during periods of extremely cold temperatures.

2. Vaccinate ewes for overeating disease and tetanus. These vaccines provide passive immunity to baby lambs through the ewes' colostrum until they can be vaccinated at 4 to 6 weeks of age.
3. Check and separate all ewes that are developing udders or showing signs of lambing. Check and remove heavy ewes once a week during the lambing season.
4. Observe ewes closely. Ewes that are sluggish or hang back at feeding may be showing early signs of pregnancy disease. If so, these ewes should be drenched with 2 ounces of propylene glycol 3 to 4 times daily.
5. Shelter heavy ewes from bad weather.
6. Get lambing pens and lambing equipment ready in the building. There should be one lambing pen for every 10 ewes expected to lamb.
7. Stock lambing supplies such as iodine, antibiotics, frozen colostrum, stomach tube, injectable selenium and Vitamin E, OB lube, lamb puller, ear tags, etc.

At Lambing Time

1. Check ewes on a frequent basis (every 3 to 4 hours), as feasible. Do not check ewes in the middle of the night. Activity at that time may stimulate ewes to lamb two to three hours before they normally would.
2. Lambing cubicles placed around the walls in the lambing area of the barn measuring 4' X 6' have been used successfully as a place for ewes to lamb away from the other ewes in the barn. The cubicles have a 2' wide opening with a 10" board as a threshold to keep lambs inside.
3. After lambs are born, move the ewe and her lambs to a lambing pen with a minimum dimension of 5' X 5'. Check the ewe's udder to see that she has milk, strip each teat to remove the waxy plug that may be present at the end of the teat, and make sure lambs nurse within 30 minutes.
4. Colostrum is critical for baby lamb survival. For ewes without milk or for lambs that fail to nurse, lambs must be given colostrum via a stomach tube. Lambs should receive 20 ml (cc) of colostrum per pound of body weight. It works best if feedings can be 4 hours apart.
5. A general rule of thumb is for the ewe and her lambs to stay in the lambing pen one day for each lamb. Weak or small lambs may require a longer stay.
6. Ewes should receive fresh water and high-quality hay the day of lambing. Don't feed grain until the second day. One pound of grain plus 5 lbs of good quality hay will take care of their needs until moving to a mixing pen.

7. If ewes were not treated for internal parasites within 3 weeks of lambing, they should be treated prior to removal from the lambing pen.

Move ewes and their lambs from lambing pens to mixing pens. Make sure lambs are matched up well with their mothers before moving to larger groups.

All lambs should be docked and castrated by the time they are 2 weeks old.

Post-Lambing

1. Vaccinate lambs for overeating disease at 4 weeks of age. Booster the lambs for overeating disease one week before weaning.
2. For ewes weaned at 2 to 3 months of lactation, supplemental grain should be discontinued and forage quality decreased one week prior to weaning. Fasting ewes for 72 hours without feed and water at weaning has been used successfully to prevent mastitis. During periods of high temperatures, make sure ewes have access to shelter and shade.

Working Facilities - Key management practices such as vaccinations, foot trimming, and internal parasite control are more likely to occur inside a building with a simple set of working pens. The six major components of an effective working facility for sheep are: 1) large holding pen; 2) crowding pen; 3) crowding chute; 4) long narrow working chute with cutting gates; 5) foot bath; and 6) loading chute.

Foot-Rot Control - The only way to introduce foot rot into a flock of sheep is to purchase sheep that are already infected. Quarantine in a building all new purchases for a period of 4 weeks before mixing with other sheep on the farm.