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G79-432 Creep Feeding Lambs

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Creep Feeding Lambs

This NebGuide discusses creep feeding for lambs, making supplemental feed available only to nursing lambs.

Ted H. Doane, Extension Sheep Specialist

Creep feeding is a management practice of making supplemental feed available only to nursing lambs. Creep feeding is desirable because: (1) lambs gain as much as a third to half a pound per day more when their milk diet is supplemented with grain, (2) the lambs are ready for market 1 to 2 months earlier, thus earlier marketing is adapted to a higher market for spring lambs, and (3) the lambs are not allowed to go to spring pasture, thus permitting more ewes on the same pasture and reducing internal parasites in the lambs.

A creep should be placed in a convenient location and designed so that ewes cannot enter. For early lambs, the creep should be in a sunny, warm, dry location. A cool shady location is best for late lambs.

Lambs should have creep feed available when they are a week old, although they will not consume much until they are 2 to 3 weeks of age. Whether lambs are hand-fed or self-fed is the decision of the producer. Most lambs are hand-fed, however self-feeding requires better management but is more economical.

Creep rations do not need to be complex. Palatability as well as the protein level are keys to success of intake. The intake level is the key to rapid growth.

- Creep rations should be at least 15 percent protein. Some are as high as 21 percent and are very successful. The older the lambs, the less protein they need.
- Antibiotics should be added to the ration at 40 mg/ton of feed.
- Creep fed lambs should be vaccinated for enterotoxemia (over-eating disease) at 4 to 6 weeks of age. For best prevention, the pregnant ewe should be vaccinated 2 to 4 weeks before lambing (all vaccines are *Clostridium perfringens* Type D).
- Alfalfa hay either long, chopped or pelleted should be available either free choice or in the mixture. A complete mixture could vary from 20 to 40 percent alfalfa hay.

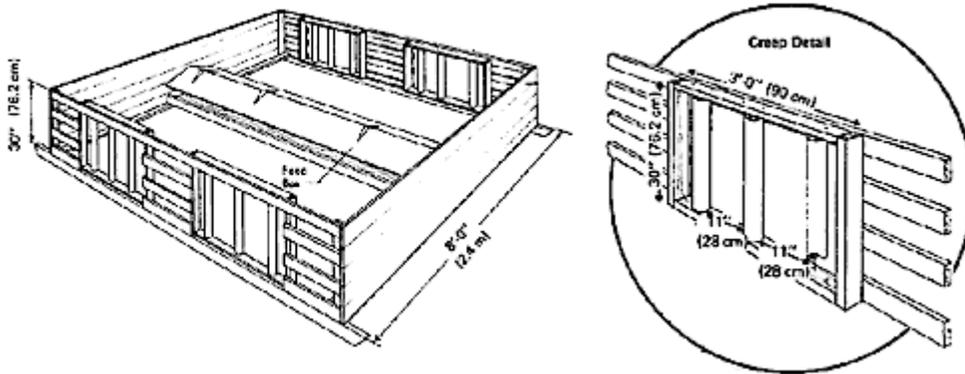
Any of the rations in the table below are acceptable, or you may make your own which meets the requirements. Milo may be substituted for corn. Wheat or barley could replace up to 1/2 of the corn ration. Lambs will normally eat an average of 1 1/2 to 2 lbs. of creep rations per day from 10 to 120 days

of age.

The "old stand by" ration for creep feeding lambs is cracked corn and third cutting alfalfa hay. This is very good for 2 to 5 month old lambs, but for optimum gains use one of the suggested rations.

	Ration	Ration	Ration	Ration
	1	2	3	4
	-----Percent-----			
Shelled corn	80	75	55	55
Oats	10	10	5	25
Oil meal	10	10		15
Molasses		5		5
Alfalfa pellets			40	
Alfalfa hay	Free Choice	Free Choice		
Antibiotic	+	+	+	+

Self-feeding Movable Lamb Creep



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