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EC215 The Lamb in the Farm Flock

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THE LAMB IN THE FARM FLOCK

His First Day on Earth

The first day of a lamb's life is really the key note to his whole existence. If he is healthy and strong at the age of 24 hours, he will live and do well under most any fair system of management. Most lambs that die from exposure or due to carelessness on the part of the shepherd, do so within a day of birth. During this period the shepherd should watch especially for chilled lambs and lambs that are not getting milk. A lamb usually becomes chilled soon after being born and before he is thoroughly dry. Chilling may be avoided in many cases by drying the lamb with a warm cloth as soon as possible after he is born. A severely chilled lamb can often be revived by immersing him all except his nose in a bucket of warm water, gradually increasing the temperature by adding hot water until it becomes as warm as the hand can comfortably stand. Remove him in about ten minutes and rub vigorously with a warm cloth until thoroughly dry. The rubbing stimulates circulation. A lamb that is chilled only slightly may be revived by wrapping him in a warm blanket or by placing him in a basket or box close to the stove. In any case get him to take ewes milk as soon as possible as strength coming from the milk will do much to fully revive him. The best medicine for a young lamb is the ewe's first milk. Healthy lambs are born hungry but many irregularities may make it impossible for them to get milk direct from the mother. Some young ewes refuse to own their lambs. Some very old ewes have bad udders and due to a feverish and caked condition come in dry. Wool balls on the udder of a ewe may prevent a lamb from reaching the nipples. A good shepherd is always particular in regard to these and other difficulties which are apt to prevent the lamb from getting the first milk of the ewe, soon after he is born.

Docking

The tail is an unnecessary as well as an expensive appendage on the modern lamb. Many men invite a low price by sending undocked lambs to market. Commission men at the market are forced to sell undocked lambs at a decided discount because of their being dirty behind and hard to handle as killers and because they are undesirable as feeders. No good feeder will tolerate long tailed lambs in his feed yard. Their tails collect manure, ice and dirt in winter, and in summer are an excellent harbor for maggots and other unsanitary detriments. Any of these conditions become a serious drag on the vitality of the lamb.

An old fashioned idea still exists in certain localities that docking is a serious operation and one only to be performed by a veterinarian. Docking is not a serious operation and anyone can do it with no bad results. The tail should be nipped off about one inch or at the second joint from the body. This operation should be performed when the lamb is from 7 to 15 days of age. The older the lamb, the more serious the operation. A sharp knife is the best cutting instrument to use, cutting from the under side out. By this method there is some loss of blood. If a lamb bleeds to excess tie a string around the stub-tail for a short time and the bleeding will cease. Hot docking pincers are to be highly recommended. In using this method of docking, the lamb's tail should be extended through a hole in a thin board and nipped off close to the board. The board prevents scorching the lamb's body and insures a nice even job of docking. The hot-pincer method makes a seared sore and causes very little or no loss of blood.

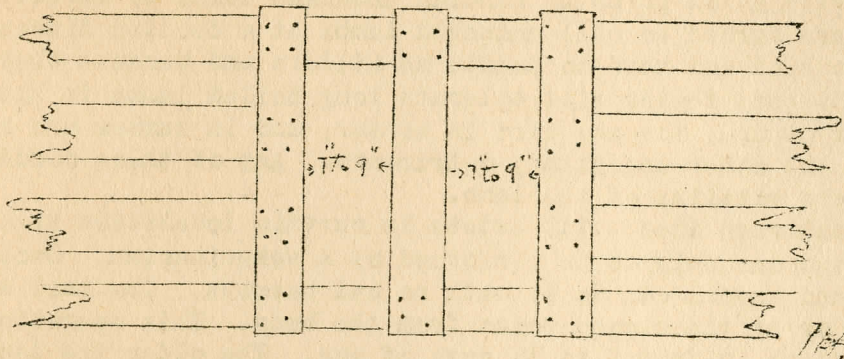
Castrating

All male grade lambs should be castrated. Buck lambs are discriminated against on the market.

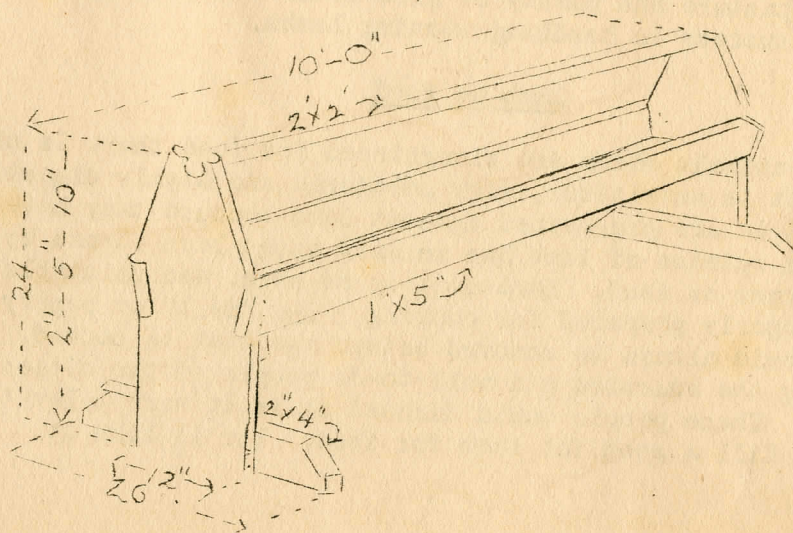
Castration is a simple and safe operation which should be performed when the lamb is from 7 to 15 days of age. Always castrate lambs on a nice, dry, warm day. A sharp knife is essential. Two men can perform the operation with ease and with less danger than may one man as the lamb can be held more securely. One man should gather the lamb's four legs together and place him on his back on a box or table pressing down on his legs. This causes the scrotum to be easily accessible from behind. The second man performs the operation. Taking hold of the scrotum and pulling the skin free from the testicles he cuts the scrotum straight across about an inch from the body. The testicles then protrude. A constriction will be found near the end of the testicle. Slit this constriction and the testicle springs free from the covering. The testicle should then be pulled straight out. A part of the cord will come with the testicle and the more the better. A mild disinfectant may be applied to the scrotum. For this purpose no disinfectant excels a mixture of one part creosole and 40 parts water. Tincture of iodine or a paste made of lard and turpentine may be used with good results.

Creep Feeding

Lambs become very fond of grain when only 10 or 15 days of age. They should receive plenty of grain as soon as they will take it. The best method of feeding this grain is by the creep method. The creep is a pen with suitably prepared openings accessible to the lambs but not to the ewes that nurse them. The most desirable location for the creep is in a dry place preferable in the lot or near where the ewes are coralled. It should be open to the lambs at all times.



Creep Entrance Through Which Only the Lambs
Can Pass.



Feed to be Fed in Creep

The grain fed to the lambs in the creep depends upon how the lambs are to be disposed of. All lambs learn to eat grain more quickly if started on a ration of oats and bran. They prefer this feed to most any other grain feed. A gradual change to any desired ration may be easily made with good results. Lambs that are to be shipped to market should be receiving a ration made up mostly altogether of corn by the time they are two months of age. Corn along with the milk of the ewe and with pasture produces a fat lamb and a very desirable killing carcass. Lambs that are to be kept as breeders should receive oats, bran and a very small amount of corn. Oats and bran, ewe's milk and pasture produce a rugged, growthy lamb with good substance and bone.

Pasture

Stomach worm infection is picked up by the lambs on grazing land which has been grazed for a considerable time by infected sheep. As most farm flocks are more or less infected with worms, it is dangerous to graze one area too long. Many men lose their entire lamb crop by failing to change pastures. About the only known method of combating the stomach worms is to practice a systematic change of pastures, not allowing the run of one pasture for more than 4 to 6 weeks at a time. Rape and rye pasture is excellent feed for lambs. A small pasture accessible to the lambs only is a big paying proposition.

Dipping

Ticks and other skin parasites are very detrimental to the growth and health of lambs. Under Nebraska conditions the tick is more detrimental than probably any other parasite. At shearing time a general migration of ticks from the ewes to the lambs takes place. Due to this circumstance, all lambs should be dipped along with the ewes. The proper time to dip is on the morning of a warm clear day. The standard creosole dips are most highly recommended by experienced sheep men.

(Over)

Weaning

The feed available for the lambs largely determines the age at which they should be weaned. The most common age of weaning is about four months. Creep fed lambs wean easily and with much less loss of weight than do those not used to eating grain. A good pasture and plenty of good clean water along with the grain ration will insure success in handling weaning lambs.

Lamb as Food

Among all animals which are slaughtered for food there is none cleaner than the lamb. Lamb meat is nutritious, very palatable and highly digestible if properly prepared. Many people are prejudiced against lamb because they have been told it tastes wooly. This opinion of lamb has in many cases been formed by people who have used old ewes and rams as food. Lamb meat is as sweet and palatable as any meat cooked if it is properly prepared for cooking. The "fell" or papery membrane surrounding the carcass should always be removed before the meat is cooked. Lamb meat is very commonly used among the educated and well-to-do people of the cities. It is preferred to any other meat. These people would discard it if it were below the more common meats in quality. Kill a good fat lamb for food. You'll like it.