

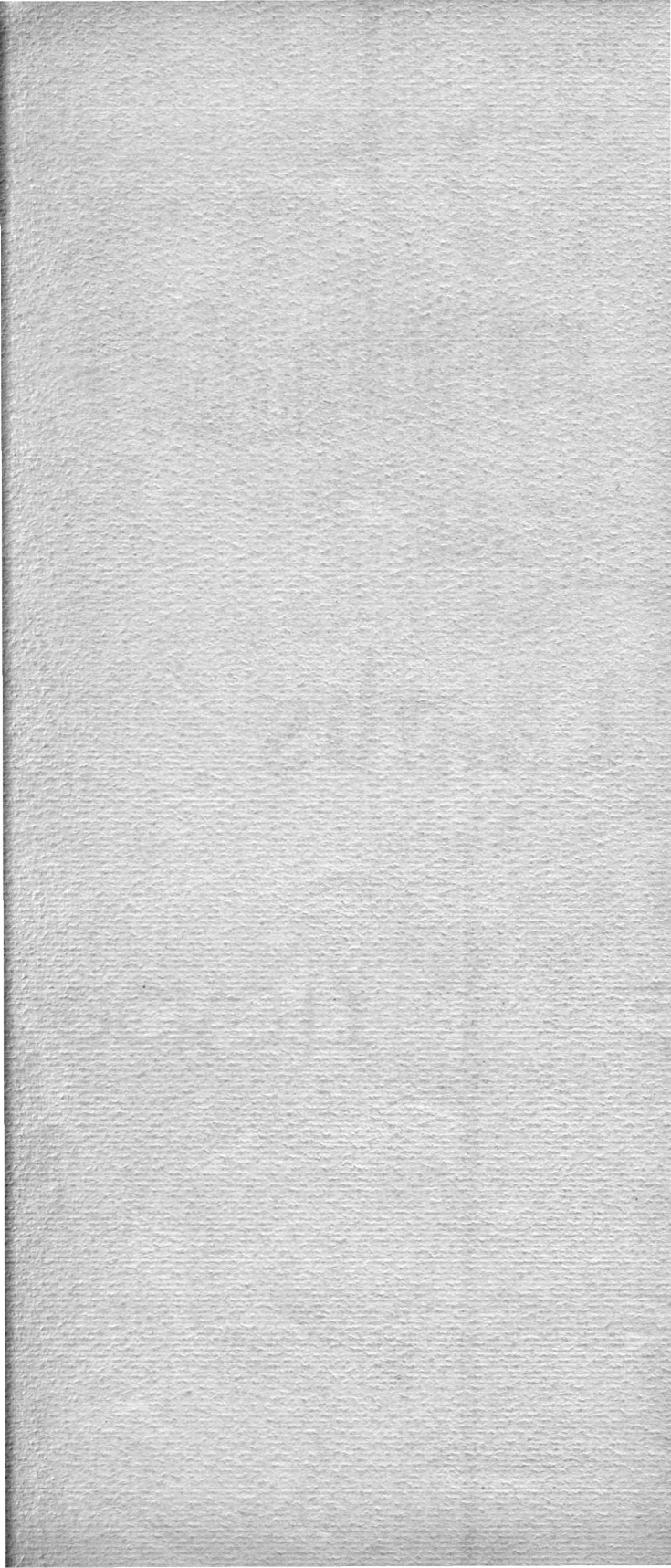
Creep Feeding

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Lambs

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CREEP FEEDING LAMBS

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Creep feeding lambs is the practice of supplying young lambs with concentrated feed while they are nursing. It is used to develop lambs as future breeding animals or to fatten them for market. It is often used when pasture conditions are poor and ewes are thin. The feed in the creep helps to lighten the load on the ewes, thereby enabling them to maintain or improve their condition, and the lambs fatten more rapidly.

Creep feeding is also useful when lambs are not fat enough to be sold off the ewes as fat lambs. Creep feeding usually means a difference of several cents a pound in favor of fat lambs over feeder lambs.

It is doubtful that creep feeding will pay when the ewes and lambs are on good lush pastures such as oats, wheat or grass and clover. Under these conditions the ewes are usually producing an ample supply of milk. The lambs supplement the milk with grazing and do not use the creep.

The economics of creep feeding will have to be figured to fit each individual situation. The prices of feed and feeder lambs compared to fat lambs must be considered.

The Creep

The creep is an enclosure with openings large enough to permit the lambs to enter but small enough to exclude the ewes. Feed troughs or self-feeders are placed inside this enclosure to hold the feed.

Lamb creeps usually are constructed with panels so they can be easily moved. Openings should be 8 to 10 inches wide. If it is necessary to limit the height of the creep openings, they should be

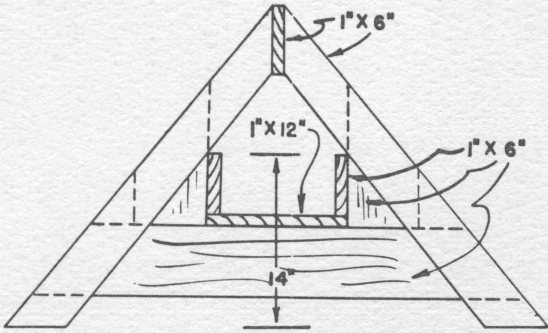
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15 to 18 inches high. These openings should be adjustable so that they can be enlarged as the lambs grow.

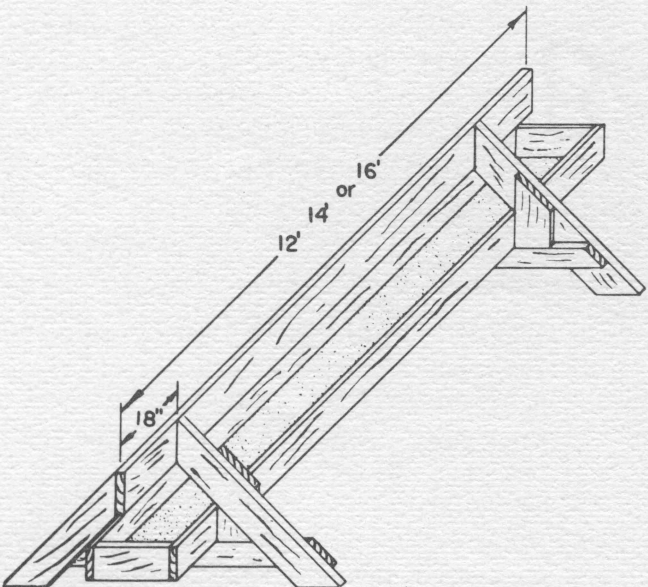
It is desirable to have openings on all four sides of the creep so the lambs may easily enter and leave the creep.

Feed Troughs

Open troughs are more popular for use in creeps because they are light in weight and easily cleaned and moved. Feed should be put out often



Handy trough for lamb creep.



in the open troughs. This is a good practice because it keeps the feed fresh and clean.

Some prefer to use self-feeders so that they do not have to put out feed as often. Self-feeders are expensive to build and feed may become stale and unpalatable in them. It usually is more difficult to move self-feeders from one location to another.

Location of Creep

Creeps should be located where the ewes group together each day. Locations near shade, water and salt are excellent. While the ewes are drinking and licking salt it gives the lambs time to visit the creep.

Some producers like to have a self-feeder with a cheap ration for the ewes located near the creep. This helps to hold the ewes in the area, gives the ewes a little boost and helps teach the lambs to eat.

Suggested Feeds

Oats are an excellent feed if the creep is used to develop lambs for breeding purposes. Oats are palatable to lambs and excellent for growth. If the lambs are not receiving much milk, it may be necessary to supplement the oats with about 10 percent by weight of cottonseed meal or cake.

If the creep is used to fatten lambs for market, good quality sorghum grain is an excellent feed. Lambs like sorghum grains, especially the soft varieties. Corn and barley are other excellent creep feeds for fattening lambs. Lambs chew their feed and grinding is not necessary when grains are fed alone.

Alfalfa pellets have proven to be a good creep feed. They are palatable and help in getting lambs on feed. In some cases alfalfa pellets are the only creep feed used. Price will determine whether or not this feed is practical.

When mixtures are used, usually it is necessary to grind the feeds although it adds to the expense.

A good mixture for creep feeding is:

- 2 parts sorghum grain or cracked corn
- 2 parts coarsely ground or crushed oats
- 1 part cottonseed meal

Research indicates there is little or no advantage in favor of complex rations over simple rations for creep feeding.

Lambs will consume more of a pelleted ration and make faster gains on slightly less feed per pound of gain. Research indicates that pelleting does not increase the efficiency of gains sufficiently to offset the cost of pelleting.

Deficiency syndromes, attributed to a lack of vitamin A, may arise during prolonged dry periods. Since the addition of vitamin A to lamb rations is relatively inexpensive, it should be included in the creep ration. A daily intake of 1,000 international units of vitamin A per lamb is adequate. Some producers may prefer to administer vitamin A as an injection. When administered in this way, the dosage should be 250,000 international units.

Broad-spectrum antibiotics, such as aureomycin or terramycin, are most useful in preventing low-level infectious diseases and lowering the incidence of enterotoxemia. A desirable level is 8 to 10 mg. of antibiotic per pound of ration.

Stilbestrol is the most economical of the hormonal substances used to promote lamb growth. Nearly identical responses have been reported from implants or oral feeding. When fed in the ration it usually is best to use a protein supplement containing the hormones. A three milligram implant is usually placed at the base of the ear or in the cheek. When ewe lambs are to be retained for replacements, the hormone should not be fed and only the wether lambs implanted.

The amount of feed depends on the size and age of the lambs. Lambs begin eating when they are a few days old. By the time they are 4 months old they may be eating as much as 3 pounds per head per day, depending on how much milk they are getting and the quality of the pasture. Lambs eat more feed when it is fresh and clean. At first, put out just enough grain to cover the bottom of

the trough. Increase the amount as the lambs grow.

Starting Lambs on Feed

If lambs are allowed access to a creep when they are a few days old, little difficulty should be experienced in getting them on feed.

Sometimes it is difficult to get older lambs started on feed. Confine a few old ewes in the creep for a few days to encourage lambs to enter the creep and teach them to eat.

Feeding ewes and lambs together outside the creep for several days will start many lambs on feed. Gradually move the feed into the creep and exclude the ewes.

Advantages of Creep Feeding

1. Ewes remain in better condition by not being suckled down so much.
2. Creep feeding adds weight and improves the finish, often permitting earlier marketing.
3. The lambs tend to be more uniform in size and finish.
4. Shrinkage is less at weaning time and when shipped directly to market.
5. Creep feeding aids in the development of future breeding stock.
6. Lambs are more easily started on full feed and the feeding period is shorter.
7. Creep feeding helps market home-grown feeds.

Disadvantages of Creep Feeding

1. Extra labor and equipment are needed.
2. The spread in price may not be enough to justify creep feeding.
3. Large pastures with more than one watering place may require more than one creep for satisfactory results.
4. It may be difficult to get older lambs started on feed especially if the pasture is good.

