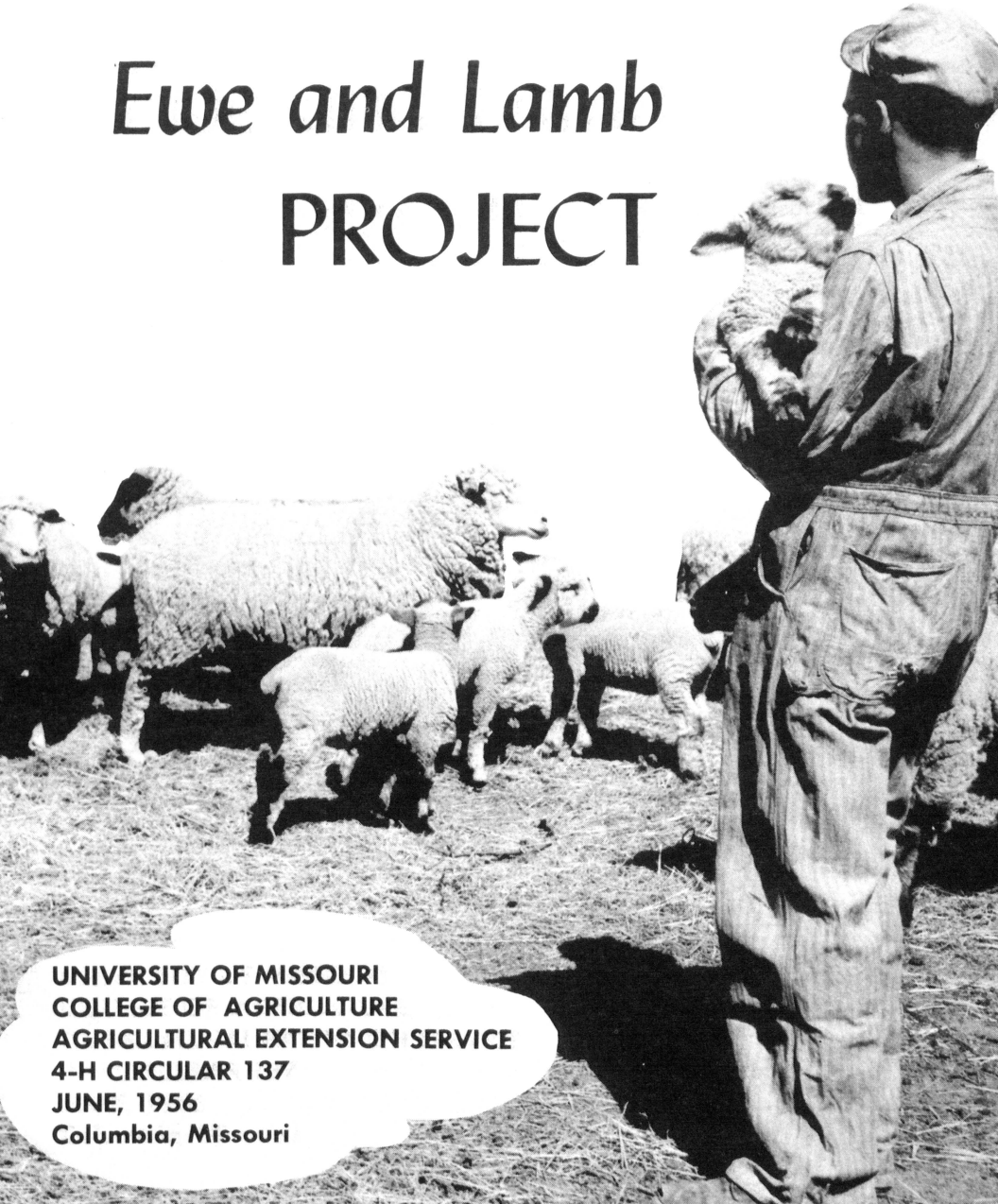


#137



4-H

Ewe and Lamb PROJECT



UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE
AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE
4-H CIRCULAR 137
JUNE, 1956
Columbia, Missouri



THE 4-H EWE AND LAMB PROJECT

—by Sam Rowe

The 4-H ewe and lamb project offers a good opportunity for experience in sheep production. The sheep enterprise is a practical and profitable one on a large number of Missouri farms.

4-H members should start with five or more ewes and add to the number as experience is gained.

Selecting Breeding Ewes

The beginning sheep producer will probably want to start with good quality grade ewes, produced locally or brought in from a western state.

The range ewes are to be preferred, because they are not so apt to be infested with internal parasites. They usually produce a more desirable fleece and they cross well with good mutton rams.

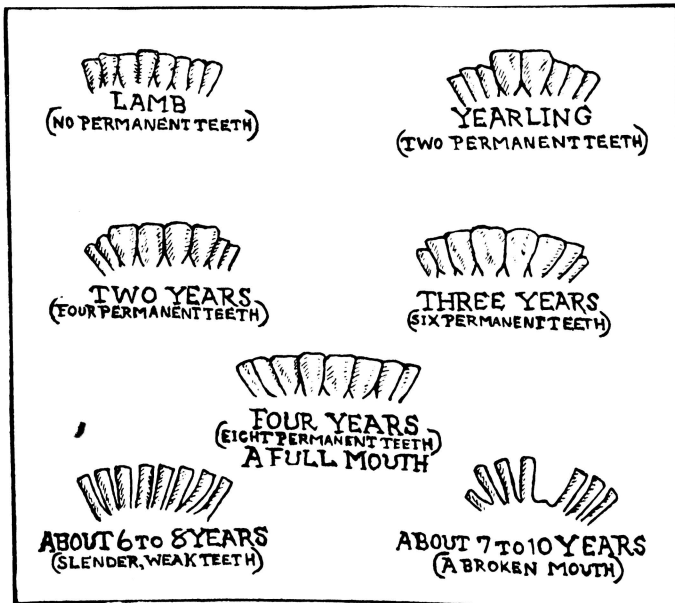


Chart for estimating age of sheep from their teeth.

Ewes should show vigor, growth, and evidence of good health. They should weigh from 90 to 110 pounds if yearlings and 140 pounds if mature ewes.

If range ewes are purchased, the older ewes are cheaper in price, but yearling ewes are preferred because they have a longer period of usefulness.

The western ewe is usually best for replacement purposes, because she can be bought for about what a good, fat ewe lamb will bring at the market.

When you select mature ewes (2 years old or older) check to see that they have good udders. Lumps in udders and string-like growths in teat canals indicate bad udders.

The age of a sheep is told by the teeth so when buying sheep, it is well to "mouth" them to be sure of the age.

Care of Ewes from Breeding to Lambing

The feed, care, and management of the ewes from breeding until lambing are important for success in this project.

The ewes should be kept on the best pasture available from two weeks before breeding until winter weather makes it necessary to start feeding hay and grain. Lespedeza is especially good as pasture, and it is advisable to have some early-seeded, fall grain for pasture after the lespedeza is mature. Clean water should be available at all times.

With yearling ewes that will lamb in January or February, start feeding some grain 60 to 75 days before lambing. Feed the ewes corn, oats, soybeans, cottonseed or linseed oil meal, and keep a mineral mixture of equal parts feeding bonemeal and salt in a box in their shed where they can lick it. The oats and corn are fed equal parts by measure. Use the best hay on the farm for your ewes. If they are in good condition, feed $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 lb. of the grain per head daily. If the hay is just average legume hay, feed 1 lb. daily of soybean, cottonseed or linseed oil meal to each 4 or 5 ewes. If legume hay is not available, feed 1 lb. oil meal to each 3 or 4 ewes. If small grain pasture has been seeded early and has good growth, you will not need to use the supplement

Range ewes from western states are excellent for this project. They usually have fewer internal parasites and more desirable fleeces than natives.



until 30 days before lambing.

With ewes 2 years old and older with solid mouths the pasture should keep them in good condition until 30 days prior to lambing. Then feed them the same as the yearlings except, if they are in excellent condition, you can leave the corn out of the ration, using oats for the grain feed.

The only shelter the ewes will need until lambing time is an open shed that is dry and well bedded. When ewes have access to pasture, they will get the necessary exercise. In case of stormy weather that makes it necessary to keep the ewes in the barn and small lots for a few days, reduce the hay and grain ration by one fourth. Be sure they have plenty of water and make a special effort to get ewes out to exercise for a short time each day.

Lambing Time

Lambing quarters should be well ventilated, dry, and free of draft. In very cold weather, use a heat lamp to keep the newborn lamb from chilling. Be sure the lamp is 2 to 3 feet above the bedding to prevent fire. Do not get the lamb too warm. If the lamb has become chilled, take it to the house and keep it there until it is warm and dry. Give it 2 to 3 ounces of warm milk, and return the lamb to its mother as soon as possible.

Most lambs are ready to nurse within 15 to 30 minutes after they are born. Milk a few drops from each of the ewe's teats to be sure that the teats are open, and also to be certain the ewe has milk. If ewes have been properly cared for, they rarely fail to claim their lambs. However, many good shepherds put the ewe and her offspring together in a pen for the first 2 or 3 days. In the case of twins, watch to see that both lambs are nursing. Sometimes a ewe doesn't want to claim one of the twins or gives it very little attention.

Get the lambs out in the sunshine as soon as possible. When the weather is not stormy, the best place for the ewe and lamb is out in the pasture.

In case of difficulty at lambing time, ask an experienced sheep man to look at the ewe, or call a veterinarian.

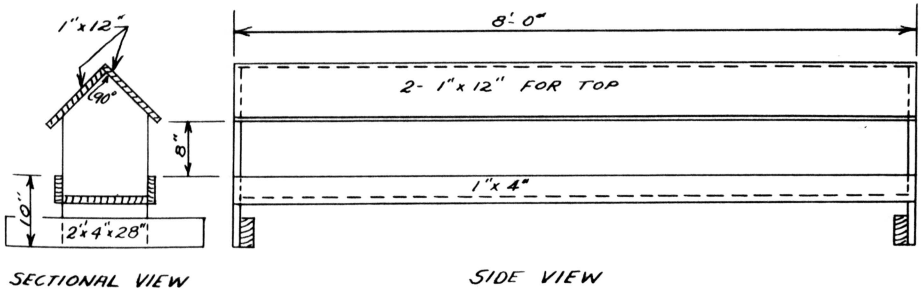
If some of the lambs should have watering eyes look to see if the lower eyelid is turned in and causing this trouble. If so, roll the lid out and rub it dry. If it turns in again, your club leader will show you how to sew it open.

, Feed and Care for Ewe and Lamb

Soon after the ewe has lambed, give her a drink of water fresh from the well—not ice water. For her first few feeds after lambing, use oats or bran for the grain, with access to the best hay available. After two or three days, put some corn in the ration; gradually increase it until again feeding corn and oats, equal parts by weight. Be careful not to overfeed the ewe while she is in the pen. A pound per day will be sufficient. If the ewe does not seem

to have a liberal supply of milk, include some soybean or linseed oil meal after the second day. Increase the feed gradually until the ewes are getting 1 to 2 pounds of the grain and protein feed daily, the amount depending on the quality of the hay and the amount of pasture available.

Take special care to see that the ewes have access to water, as they drink much more when they are suckling lambs. Also, be certain that they have access to the mineral mixture until they are on an abundance of good pasture. Then keep salt-phenothiazine before them in a feeder or trough that is protected from the rain.



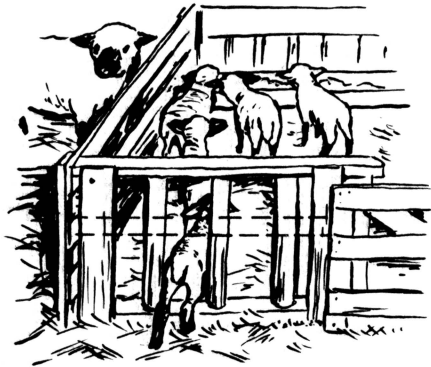
SECTIONAL VIEW

SIDE VIEW

BILL OF MATERIAL
 3- 1" x 12" x 8' - BOT. AND TOP
 2- 1" x 4" x 8' - SIDES
 1- 1" x 12" x 4' - ENDS
 1- 2" x 4" x 5' - SUPPORTS
 2 LBS. NO 8 BOX NAILS

Design for a good covered feed trough for lambs.

Sketch of creep feeder. Make upright boards adjustable so holes can be made wider as lambs grow. Horizontal board (dashed line) to adjust height will help keep ewes out when holes are widened.



Since lambs will begin to eat grain when they are two to three weeks old, make a creep in the corner of the pen where it is light and start giving the lambs whole oats and cracked corn. Put the feed in a trough that is covered to keep the lambs from getting in (see drawing). After all lambs are a month old, feed shelled corn. Lambs will start eating hay when 3 weeks old. Give them green, leafy legume hay. If legume hay is not available or milk supply fails, feed cottonseed, soybean, or linseed oil meal at the rate of 1 pound to each 10 to 15 lambs. When pasture gets good, lambs may not eat

over one-third as much grain as they have been getting due to the additional milk from the ewe and the good grass. Do not quit feeding them, for after two or three weeks they will start eating more grain and will be fatter and ready for market earlier than if they are not fed.

Docking and Castrating

Dock and castrate the lambs when they are one to two weeks old. It is preferable to do this in the forenoon on a sunny day when the lambs can go out on pasture. Don't delay doing this, though, on account of the weather.

The only tool needed is a sharp knife. Disinfect the knife and have clean hands when you perform this operation. Have a pan of disinfectant to keep the knife in. If the weather is warm and there is danger of flies, apply Smear 335 to the wounds. Ask the club leader or county agent to show you how to dock and castrate. The so-called bloodless methods of castration are not recommended.

Shearing the Ewe

In Missouri, sheep should be shorn in April. Try to get someone to do this work according to the method approved for shearing contests. (The county agent has a booklet telling how this is done.)

Be sure the wool is dry. Keep the ewes in the shed the night before they are to be shorn. After shearing, tie each fleece separately, using paper wooltwine. To get fleece ready for tying, place it flesh side down on clean canvas or floor. Turn each side in toward center, then turn neck wool back to shoulder. Roll the fleece from the tail end (britch) forward. This will leave the shoulder wool, which is the best part of the fleece, on the outside. Use only enough twine to hold the fleece together loosely. Do not tie it tightly.

Many good sheepmen prefer to sell their wool on a graded basis. This usually results in a greater return from the wool.

Marketing Lambs

Early lambs should be fat and heavy enough to market by June 15. Market all lambs weighing 80 to 100 pounds. Keep lambs that are not fat by this time with their mother on the best pasture available. On July 1, wean and shear the lambs. Treat individually for internal parasites, and keep them on good lespedeza until September 15. At that time they should be fat, but if they are not, start feeding corn while they are on pasture and expect to have them ready for market within 30 days.

Summer Care of Ewes

After the lambs are marketed or weaned, plan to keep the ewes on good pasture until ready to breed them for next year's lambs. To help control

stomach worms, drench ewes with liquid phenothiazine November 1 and March 1 and keep a mixture of 1 part phenothiazine and 10 parts salt constantly before all sheep. During winter months, the phenothiazine can be combined with the steamed bone meal and salt mixture. If the condition of the flock indicates the need, additional drenchings can be given during the summer months.

If tape worm segments are observed at any time, treat immediately with phenothiazine-lead arsenate.

Changing the sheep to a different pasture every three weeks will help control internal parasites.

Flocks that have ticks or lice should be dipped or sprayed, preferably within 2 weeks after shearing.

Replacement Ewes

Many people want to keep ewe lambs to increase the size of their flock or to replace older ewes. If that is done, only the largest, early lambs should be kept.

Since the large early lambs will usually sell for enough to buy a yearling Western ewe, try to get breeding ewes from that source. These ewes when bred to a good mutton ram and properly handled, will produce a market-topping lamb. The range ewes from some sections are relatively free of internal parasites. They flock together well, making them easy to handle in small or large flocks.

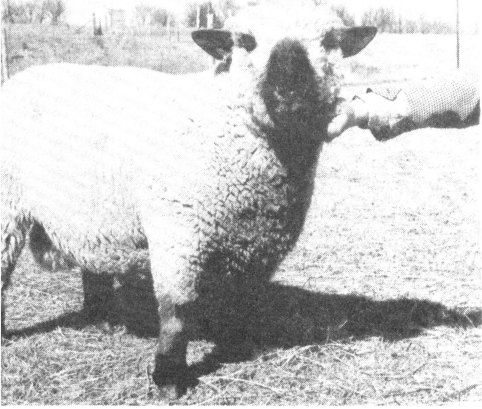
With a small flock of ewes many Missouri farmers prefer January or February lambs because they are out of the way before general farm work becomes pressing.

Early Lambs

Lambs should reach market at a time when they generally sell higher. Early lambs also have less difficulty with worms, dogs, etc. For early lambs, turn the ram with the flock about August 15. Count forward 143 days to the date when you can expect the first lambs.

Breed the ewes to a good mutton ram to be sure to have top market lambs that are fat at an early age. The breed will depend somewhat on the ewes. Do not use a ram that is not registered. A good ram will sire lambs of a desirable type that will fatten readily with good feed, care, and management.

Two weeks before the date when you plan to turn the ram with the ewes, put the ewes on fresh pasture so that they will be in condition. Then from this time on to lambing, try to supply excellent pasture or hay. When this is done the ewes will probably drop more twin lambs, stronger lambs, shear a better and heavier fleece, and return a greater profit.



Breed the western ewes to a good mutton ram to get lambs that fatten early and bring top prices. The breed of ram you choose will depend some on the type of ewes. Be sure he is a registered ram.

Care of Ram

Shear the ram 3 or 4 weeks before the breeding season. Be sure he is free of internal parasites. Supply good pasture and plenty of water. It's a good idea to feed some whole oats and bran. Also supply the mineral mixture used for the other sheep. Turn the ram with ewes at night or for about 1 hour in the early morning.

Small Grain Pasture

Since good pasture is so important to the success of the flock, plan to have some early-seeded (August or early September) barley or rye to use after the lespedeza matures. Small grains or fescue make excellent fall, winter, and early spring grazing. Then, too, since the ground has been plowed, the field will be free of internal parasites. This makes for healthier, thriftier sheep. First-year sweet clover, red clover and pasture mixtures containing legumes make good pasture.

Using methods described in this circular, 4-H club members have produced lambs weighing 85 to 95 lbs. at 5 months of age.

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE COOPERATING

J. W. BURCH, Director, Agricultural Extension Service
Distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8, and June 30, 1914

