

# Accelerated Lambing

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## A little about me

- Current manager at USMARC
  - 2500 breeding ewes
- 220 hd ewe flock in northwest Iowa
- Part time sheep shearer
  - Seen intensive and extensive systems from around the world
- Not a vet
  - If I mention the use of any pharmaceutical product, it is still your responsibility as the producer to have a conversation with your vet to determine if it will work on your operation
- Bachelors of Dairy Science from Iowa State in 2009

# Purpose of today's talk

- CAN YOUR OPERATION BENEFIT FROM ADDING THE ACCELERATED LAMBING SYSTEM?
- I will speak in terms of sheep, but most concepts can be transitioned to goats
  - May need some tweaking
  - I have very little hands-on experience with goats

# Pros and Cons of Accelerated Lambing

- Extra lamb(s) per ewe
  - Do you have a market for these lambs
- Increased use of facilities
  - More ewes lambing per year with the same flock size
- Increased return on investment?
  - Does it make financial sense

# Pros and Cons of Accelerated Lambing

- Need for extra:
  - Time
    - Labor
    - Management
  - Facilities
    - Can you lamb sheep when its cold?
  - Feed
    - Do you have the extra feed resources needed or a place to source that feed
      - Need higher quality feed for the extra late gestation and lactation diets

# Accelerated Lambing Timeframe

- In an ideal system the lambing interval is changed to every 8 months
  - Most commercial flock see 25-75% of ewes will hit that target
  - Very few can consistently get 75%+ to fit the 'perfect' timeframe
- 3 distinct lambing groups in most systems
  - Winter, Late Spring, Fall

## 2 year snapshot

- January 1, 2022
  - 35 day lambing period
- March 15<sup>th</sup>
  - Wean lambs and feed ewes a recovery diet before rebreeding
- April 7<sup>th</sup>
  - 35 day breeding period + gestation time
- September 1<sup>st</sup>
  - 35 day lambing period begins

## 2 year snapshot

- November 15<sup>th</sup>
  - Wean lambs and feed ewes a recovery diet before breeding
- December 6<sup>th</sup>
  - 35 day breeding period
- May 2, 2023
  - 35 day lambing period starts
- July 10<sup>th</sup>
  - Wean lambs and feed ewes a recovery diet
- August 7<sup>th</sup>
  - 35 day breeding to lamb January 1, 2024



# Key takeaways from the calendar

- **Poor breeding time management leads to year-round lambing**
  - Absolutely important to keep ram exposure dates limited!
  - Yes, we want all the ewes to lamb-but at what time expense to the producer?
- Ewes not breeding should be rolled into the next group
  - How many times do you let the ewe show up open?
    - 1 yr open is my recommendation
    - Each ewe would have had 3 chances to breed and cycle 2 times= 6 open cycles

# Key Requirements for Successful Accelerated Lambing System

- Housing and Feeding
  - Must be able to lamb 2/3 of ewe flock at 1 time
    - **Cold weather** lambing 2/3 of ewe flock
  - Lambs may be on feed nearly year round
  - Feed a minimum of 2 groups of ewes at any given point of time
  - 10-20% more ewe feed will be necessary
- Current ewe flock should have a minimum of 1.3 lambs marketed/retained as breeding replacements
  - Michigan State recommendation
  - Low production levels will not offset the increased costs

# Key Requirements for Successful Accelerated Lambing System

- Producer must be conscious of the calendar
  - Breeding, weaning, and late gestation are 3 critical times
- RAMS!
  - Do not forget about the rams
  - Maintain adequate body condition
  - Select for high libido rams
    - Higher prolific sheep tend to have rams with higher libido
- Body condition of the ewe flock
  - BCS of 2 or less will be detrimental to output
  - Lower success rate when rebreeding
    - Lower conception and/or drop rate

# Other Thoughts

- Teaser rams
- Hormone Induced Breeding
  - CIDRs
- Light Therapy for the ewes
  - 8-12 weeks long light (16 hrs)
  - Return to normal light (8 hrs)
    - 6-8 weeks of normal light- ewes start to come into heat
  - Rams can also show positive response to light treatment

2021  
Accelerated  
Lamb Financial  
Snapshot-CIDR  
use to get fall  
lambs

- 65 ewes available to breed in April 2021
- 65 CIDRs= \$455
- 65 hd of ewes flushed (cost over maintenance ration)= \$585
- 65 hd ultrasound= \$250
- 40 hd bred ewes 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> trimester (cost over maintenance)= \$0
- 40 hd bred ewes late gestation ration (cost over maintenance)= \$336
- 40 hd bred ewes lactation ration (cost over maintenance)= \$1176
- Lamb Feed (creep and grower ration)= \$1400
- **TOTAL COST OVER MAINTENANCE= \$4202**

2021  
Accelerated  
Lamb Financial  
Snapshot-CIDR  
use to get fall  
lambs

- 58 Lambs sold
- 16 wether lambs Dec. 15, 2021
  - 62 lbs @\$3.85/lb= \$3820
- 29 ewe lambs sold as replacement breeding stock
  - \$350/hd weighing approximately 80 lbs January 15<sup>th</sup>
- 13 wether lambs sold January 19, 2022
  - 67 lbs @\$4.15/lb= \$3600
- Total Revenue=\$17,590
- Return=\$13,388
  - Realize that maintenance cost, labor, and fixed cost must still be deducted from this total

Questions?

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