

PRE-LAMBING SHEARING OF EWES . . .

3. Shorn ewes do not get cast.
4. The lamb finds it much easier to get its first drink.
5. For the foregoing reasons there tends to be a better lambing percentage.
6. Easier mustering for docking and more ready identification of late and dry ewes.
7. Practically no attention is required after docking, which thus leaves labour available for spring work.
8. The ewe will feed easier in late spring and will maintain its milk supply without the interruption of shearing and associated mismothering, etc. The lactation period of the ewe will also last longer.
9. The lamb gets an uninterrupted milk supply through the critical stages of its growth, thus avoiding the check at shearing which retards its progress.
10. As lambing is such a disturbance to the ewe, no matter what care is given to the flock a wool break will occur in many a fleece. Therefore such wool damage is avoided by shearing before lambing.
11. To a great extent pre-lambing shearing eliminates the need for crutching.
12. The body of the ewe requires the heat and energy of its fats during the winter and early pregnancy, and consequently less "condition" is found in the early-shorn wool.

It is cleaner and brighter and consequently commands a higher price.

13. Shearers and shed hands are generally more freely available before the main shearing period. Similarly, shearing before lambing also helps to alleviate the rush period at the wool stores, as the clip would be handled before the bulk supply came in.

Not the least of the advantages is the saving in labour, as will readily be realised by practical sheep men. For instance, it is obviously much easier to muster ewes before than after lambing.

Farmers who have undertaken this practice have proved without a doubt that ewe losses at lambing time have decreased by 3 to 4 per cent.

Disadvantages of Practice

The disadvantages of shearing before lambing are:—

1. The weather over a period of years may not be as good during the pre-lambing period as the average weather experienced in October, November, or December.
2. The actual shearing may not be quite as easy, as with the colder weather the wool has not begun to "lift."
3. Many fleeces do not roll as compactly or easily as when shearing is done in warmer weather, and if they are not handled carefully, there

is a probability of a greater number of broken fleeces.

4. Where the type of farming entails the buying in of 5-year-old ewes each year, as is common with fat-lamb farmers, the prospect of obtaining only 6 to 9 months' wool instead of a full year's clip would not appeal.
5. The farmer with inefficient dogs may find it more difficult to catch a shorn ewe at lambing time than if it has a good fleece.

In the sale of wool farmers who shear early stand to gain on a falling market, but on a rising market a lower return is probable.

Interested Waikato sheep men whose opinions were sought by the writer substantially agreed with the advantages and disadvantages stated.

Farmers who are inclined to adopt pre-lambing shearing are urged to give careful consideration to what it entails and satisfy themselves that they have the facilities, shelter, and feed available.

If such a large and increasing number of farmers in the colder south are adopting and persisting in the policy of shearing their ewes some weeks before they are due to lamb, it would seem that there are possibilities of increasing the efficiency of sheep farming on the easier country of the North Island where established farmers have the facilities to approach this practice carefully. To a great extent it is by the dissemination of information gathered from farmers who have developed new ideas and proved them successful that other farmers can copy their techniques and so increase their own efficiency. There is no doubt that farmers who have been willing to learn from others in the past have improved their methods greatly. The high standard of New Zealand's farming is substantially due to this, and as each farming unit becomes more efficient so the whole of the economy of New Zealand benefits.

Vaccination Against Contagious Abortion

APPLICATIONS by farmers for vaccination of their calves against contagious abortion in 1950 are now due. The charge is 1s. 6d. per calf for the first 14 calves in any herd and 1s. 3d. per calf thereafter. The closing date for applications is January 13 and a late fee of 10s. is payable on all applications received after this date.

As in previous years members of veterinary clubs should apply to the secretary of their club and other farmers should apply to their nearest Inspector of Stock, from whom they can obtain the necessary application forms. Applications to Inspectors of Stock must be accompanied by a cash payment calculated on the basis of the charges mentioned above.

It is desirable that applications be sent in as early as possible so that vaccinating officers can arrange the work efficiently. Farmers are therefore requested to forward their applications by December 31.

Vertical Lever-fastener for Taranaki Gate



TO give the necessary tension to the wires of the gate, a Taranaki (wire-and-batten) gate is best fastened with a lever. The common form of lever-fastener is one which is horizontal in action at the side of the strainer. The illustration, which was obtained on the farm of Messrs. Kelson Bros., Waimana, shows an improvement on this type of fastener. Here, the lever is situated on top of the strainer and is vertical in action. The pull is therefore more direct than is the pull of the side lever and, in addition, this top lever is much more easily handled from either side of the gate.

To complete the fastening of the gate from the position shown in the illustration the lever is depressed and the end of it is engaged in the wire loop permanently attached to the top wire of the fence.

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