

Care of Livestock during January



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Contributed by the Animal Research Division

WEANING is an important event in the life of a lamb and special care at this time will be well repaid. Long-wool lambs should be shorn and all others crutched.

WEANING LAMBS

If the weather is wet, lambs should be given a full dose of 20 grammes of phenothiazine at weaning; otherwise drenching may be postponed until the advent of rain. If fattening crops are not available, lambs should be drafted into "clean" paddocks. Lambs should never be weaned into paddocks in which ewes and lambs have been grazed during the previous month. Unless very good paddocks of spelled pasture are available, hoggets should be spread thinly over as large an area as possible.

Rape should not be grazed by lambs until the leaves show a purplish tinge. "Unripe" rape does not fatten lambs so quickly and seems to "scald" them more readily.

FODDERS FOR LAMB FATTENING

Best results are probably obtained by grazing rape in breaks which last the lambs about a week. Keeping lambs on a break until the last leaf is eaten is false economy; they should be moved on while they are still getting a full feed, and the paddock can be cleaned up with ewes. Run-offs have little to recommend them, and unless they contain good pasture, they will depress the lambs' rate of growth. If hay is fed, it must be of the very best quality. Thousand-headed kale is splendid lamb-fattening fodder, but because it is relatively unpalatable, it must be managed properly. It must always be fed in small breaks and grazed only lightly before the lambs are moved on to the next break. A run-off should never be used. Treated in this way, kale makes excellent regrowth and can be regrazed several times; if necessary, grazing can be extended into autumn and winter.

Modern sheep dips are so effective that the eradication of lice and ticks should be quite feasible. However, best results will be achieved only if the instructions for mixing and replenishing dips are followed accurately.

DIPPING OF SHEEP

Carelessness in dipping can cause disastrous losses. If sheep are dipped off shears, the shear cuts are likely to become infected and deaths from blood poisoning may occur, but this can be prevented by vaccinating the sheep with black-leg vaccine at least a fortnight before dipping them. The vaccine is available at a reasonable price. Veterinarians or Livestock Instructors should be consulted about its use.

Lambs being fattened on rape. Rape should not be grazed by lambs until the leaves show a purplish tinge.

After lambs have been weaned the ewes should be gone through carefully to select those which require culling. Feet and wool should be examined carefully. Special attention should be paid to udders and teats,

CULLING OF EWES

and ewes should be culled if they have defective udders or very large or damaged teats, as the lambs of such ewes often die from starvation before they are a week old. Provided ewes are in reasonable condition and have sound udders and good fleeces, they should be retained. Even "gummy" ewes will rear satisfactory lambs on good pasture. Lambing percentage increases with the age of the sheep and reaches the highest level when the ewes are 5 to 8 years old. Many ewes on fat lamb farms could well be kept for 1 or 2 years longer, but fat ewes which have not reared a lamb should be culled. Ewes should be kept on low rations for 2 months after weaning to prevent their becoming overfat.

Sheep that eat St. John's wort become sensitive to sunlight and develop scabs on the ears, face, and back. If sheep in such a condition are dipped, they take convulsions and may be

ST. JOHN'S WORT MAKES DIPPING DANGEROUS

drowned. If possible, sheep should be grazed on country free from St. John's wort for several weeks before they are dipped. If that is not possible, they should be dipped only on dull days.

Serious lameness in cattle can be caused by their eating hay heavily infested with ergot. Such hay can be easily recognised by the black ergots which re-

ERGOTISED GRASS MAKES DANGEROUS HAY

place the seeds of ryegrass and other grasses. Where ergot is known to occur hay should be made before the grasses have time to seed.

Campaigns for foot-rot eradication should be started as soon as the lambs have been weaned. Once foot-rot

ERADICATION OF FOOT-ROT

has been eradicated from a flock it does not recur unless it is reintroduced from outside. Department of Agriculture Bulletin No. 325, gives full instructions for eradicating foot-rot from a flock.