

# PREPARING FOR LAMBING SEASON: NUTRITION, HEALTH, AND MANAGEMENT TIPS

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February brings new beginnings, and for some producers, that means a new lamb crop. The following information outlines key considerations to keep in mind when implementing practices in your operation as lambing season approaches.

## EWE NUTRITION AND MANAGEMENT

Ewes should ideally be in a **body condition score (BCS) of 3.0–3.5 at lambing**. If ewes are too thin, this can lead to poor milk production, weak lambs, and more difficult breed backs. If ewes are too fat, there is a higher risk of dystocia. Separating young and thin ewes from more mature, well-conditioned ewes can be a cost-effective way to create healthier, more uniform conditions across your flock.

Energy requirements increase significantly during the last **40–50 days of gestation**, as approximately **70% of fetal growth** occurs during this period. Properly supporting a ewe's nutritional needs based on her stage of production is a major key to flock success. Below are average nutritional requirement ranges:

### Dry Matter Intake (DMI)

- Maintenance ewe: 2.0–2.5% of body weight
- Late gestation: 2.5–3.5% of body weight
- Peak lactation: 3.5–4.5% of body weight

### Energy Requirements (TDN) – Single Lamb

- Maintenance ewe: 55–58%
- Late gestation: 58–60%
- Early lactation: 62–65%

*Twins and triplets will require 10–25% more energy.*

### Crude Protein (CP)

- Maintenance ewe: 9–10%
- Mid-gestation: 10–11%
- Late gestation: 12–14%
- Early lactation: 14–16%.

AgCentral carries an array of feeds and supplements to support ewe nutritional performance. Highlighted options include the **13% All Purpose Sheep Feed, Accurration High Fat Sheep and Goat Tub, Supreme Sheep Loose Mineral, and Blueprint Sheep-Lyx Mineral Tub.**

## FEATURED NUTRITION PRODUCTS

### **Co-op 13% All Purpose Sheep Feed**

**\$12.89 / 50 lb bag**

Formulated for a variety of production situations and can be used year-round with minimal additional supplementation during gestation and lactation.

### **Purina Accurration High Fat Sheep and Goat Tub**

**\$120 / 200 lb tub**

Ideal for co-mingled sheep and goat flocks. Encourages grazing in underutilized areas and supports forage utilization and energy needs in animals in good condition.

### **Co-op Supreme Sheep Loose Mineral**

**\$15.59 / 25 lb bag**

Formulated with organic zinc for hoof health, selenium and added vitamin E to help prevent white muscle disease, and molybdenum with no added copper to reduce the risk of copper toxicity.

### **Crystalyx Blueprint Sheep-Lyx Tub**

**\$64 / 60 lb tub**

Designed for sheep and lambs fed alongside forages. Provides completely organic mineral sources for maximum absorbability, supporting digestive health, immune function, and reproduction in convenient packaging.

**Guessing is more expensive than knowing what your forages truly provide.** Reach out to the Livestock Nutrition Team at AgCentral to have your forages tested and receive a nutrition plan tailored to your operation.

Sheep are known to be parasite-sensitive due to their close grazing habits. Establishing a routine deworming schedule and strategically rotating products with different active ingredients is critical. This may include **Safeguard pellets (10 lb bag, \$63.99) paired with either Ivomec drench (1 L, \$102.56) or Cydectin drench (1 L, \$94.29).**

Another important health practice is vaccinating ewes pre-lambing with CD&T to ensure immunity passes to the lamb. AgCentral carries a **25-dose bottle for \$11.81.**

## LAMBING MANAGEMENT

Having dry, prepared lambing areas can make a significant difference in lamb survival, especially during cold and wet conditions. **Port-A-Huts** are an excellent shelter option when other facilities are unavailable. **AgCentral carries multiple sizes, including a 6x7 model for \$759**, helping lambs stay warm, dry, and protected from frostbite.

After birth, lamb navels should be **dipped—not sprayed—all the way to the stomach wall using 7% iodine or 2-4% chlorhexidine** to prevent joint ill, navel ill, and septicemia. Because the navel is an open pathway for bacteria, dipping should be done as soon as possible. **AgCentral carries both options, including 2% chlorhexidine for \$15.99 per gallon.**

Lambs need to receive approximately **10% of their body weight in colostrum within the first 24 hours**, with intake ideally beginning within the first two hours of life. The highest antibody absorption occurs within the first 6-12 hours. For peace of mind, AgCentral offers colostrum replacement for emergencies—**available in 1 lb bags for \$28.99.**

Identifying at-risk lambs early is critical. Even small issues are best addressed quickly, as early intervention can prevent larger health problems.

## COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID

### Small Flocks

- Overfeeding grain
- Keeping unproductive ewes too long
- Culling based on emotion
- Ignoring mineral balance and requirements

### Commercial Flocks

- Feeding one ration to all ewes
- Delayed health intervention
- Poor bunk space
- Failing to meet minimum bunk space of 16-18 inches per ewe in late gestation

**Have questions or want to fine-tune your lambing plan? Visit AgCentral and let our team help you prepare for a successful lambing season.**