



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

WRITTEN BY: MEGAN COLL, LIVESTOCK NUTRITION SPECIALIST

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, Accuration 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 Accuration 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.