

Double lambing possible with Polypay ewes

WASHINGTON, D.C. — According to a report issued by the USDA, doubling production without a proportionate increase in overhead costs is the "impossible dream" of every business person. Only such a dream is no longer impossible for sheep producers as SEA-developed Polypay ewes promise to make twice-a-year lambing a viable reality.

The name "Polypay" means "multiple paychecks" and that is exactly what these ewes can mean to

sheep producers for they are potentially capable of conceiving and raising twin lambs twice a year in addition to a wool crop.

Today's market price for lamb is rising because demand is high while supply is low. U.S. producers currently market less than three pounds of lamb per person per year. Consequently, we import nearly \$20 million worth of lamb each year. Polypay ewes could help our producers better meet domestic needs, stabilize market prices and

also increase their net profits.

Polypay ewes originated from crosses of Targhee x Dorset and Rambouillet x Finnsheep breeds which in turn were crossed to form the final, four-cross breed. The synthetic breed was developed under the leadership of SEA animal physiologist Clarence V. Hulet.

Polypays are a part of a plan to develop an intensive lamb production system.

The need was for a breed of sheep possessing a relatively short gestation and postpartum interval (the interval between lambing and conception) as well as a long breeding season.

Polypays are well endowed with each of these characteristics. From the Rambouillet and the Targhee breeding they obtain hardiness, herding instinct, size and the long breeding season. Dorset breeding contributes carcass quality, milking ability, short gestation and, again, the long breeding season.

Finnsheep breeding adds early puberty, short gestation and postpartum fertility as well as high lambing rates.

Initially, hormone treatments were used to induce twice-a-year lambing. Prior to the Polypays, the best hormone-induced conception rate in lactating ewes within 6 weeks of lambing was 44 per cent. Following hormone treatment after Spring lambing, Polypay ewes have achieved a 56 per cent lambing rate in the Fall plus an 85 per cent

rate in the following Spring with no additional hormone treatments.

Also, it appears possible to achieve twice-a-year lambing in Polypays with hormones. They can lamb in February and a considerable number will, and breed naturally in March, lamb again in August and breed quite successfully in September. Continued careful selection will be required to achieve a high level of success without hormones at the March breeding.

Furthermore, 85 to 95 per cent of the Polypay ewes possess the ability to breed at the age of 6 to 7 months and give birth to one or more lambs at 12 to 13 months. This ability to breed at such an early age enhances the Polypays' potential for putting more U.S. lamb on the dinner table of consumers.

For more information, Dr. Clarence V. Hulet's address is U.S. Sheep Experiment Station, Dubois, Id. 83423.

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