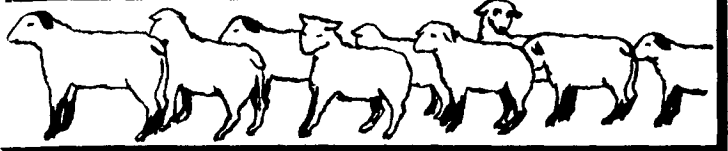




Flock Forum

by
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Penn State Extension Sheep Specialist



CAN YOU TOP THIS?

Time, genetics, production records, strict culling, good management and nutrition seem to be

paramount in making sheep profitable for Art and Marg Christensen of Dillon, Montana. I had the privilege of visiting the Christensen

ranch in southwestern Montana a few years ago. Recently, upon receiving some production/management information on the Christensen operation, I was reminded of this visit and some of the non-traditional management practices the Christensen's were applying, at the time, right in the mist of a very conventional sheep producing region. Since Art has spoken at several sheep education programs over the years some of you may already have heard or read in detail about this successful sheep operation. However, for those who have not and yet seek to improve production levels, here are a few factors that have worked for the Christensen's. I find these same production/management practices universal and a worthy challenge for any profit minded

Shepherd.

Can you take 569 ewes, including drys and replacements, and wean 197 percent with an average production of 158 pounds of lamb per ewe at 140 days? This is one year's production under modified range conditions. Being in a fenced range operation, the Christensen's credit much of this production to genetically high producing ewes matched with a sound nutrition program. You might say, "I can do better in Pennsylvania." I would agree, but for now how well are you doing, and with some commitment could you do better?

Their ewes are primarily of two groups. The foundation commercial ewes are a Targhee-Rambouillet cross that are the result of 28 years of selection with

the aid of production records. He calls them "Christensen Targhees". The next group or "bread and butter ewes", states Christensen are the "Christensen Targhee"-Finn ewes. Art feels the 1/4 Finn x 3/4 Targhee type ewe is the best for their production/management system. The ewes are bred back to Targhee rams and Percentage rams (1/2 Finn x 1/2 Rambouillet or Targhee) used for developing replacement stock.

Nutrition and high production go together says, Art. They flush both the ewes and rams two weeks prior to breeding time. It is important to keep the ewes in a strong thrifty condition through gestation. "Exercise is also important in helping prevent Pregnancy dis-

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M4950	6	49.57	12/4
M5950	3	58.00	12/4
M6950	3	66.44	12/4
M7500 LP	4	72.00	16/4
M7950	4	75.44	12/4
M8950	4**	85.00	24/8

*Manufacturer's estimate **Turbo aspirated

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