

Intensive Management Can Double Lamb Production

MINNEAPOLIS, MN. — Intensive management practices and innovative veterinary techniques can enable sheep producers to double or even triple lamb production per ewe, Robert Ashley Robinson, BVSc, Ph.D., of St. Paul, MN, told editors at the annual meeting of the American Association of Agricultural Editors.

Dr. Robinson, Vice President of the American Association of Sheep and Goat Practitioners (AASGP), described opportunities to increase reproductive efficiency at a Livestock Health News Conference co-sponsored by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) and three other national veterinary organizations.

"Some farmers now produce well in excess of 200 lambs weaned per 100 ewes mated, and the more ambitious are aiming to produce one pound of lamb per ewe per day over a 365 day period," Dr. Robinson said.

Sheep have a gestation period of only five months, but unlike cattle or swine, they tend to be seasonal breeders, and most ewes lamb only once a year, Dr. Robinson explained. Some ewes will lamb twice yearly or at least three times

every two years. Another strategy is to induce multiple births, he said.

Cross-breeding with certain breeds can have dramatic effects on flock reproductive performance by extending the breeding season (e.g. Dorsets) or by stimulating earlier onset of puberty and increased ovulation rates (e.g. Finnish Landrace).

Breeding soundness evaluations of rams should be conducted on a regular basis, Dr. Robinson said, because even temporary infertility can have a dramatic negative effect on reproductive efficiency. These evaluations also assure the timely culling of rams affected with various infectious diseases that influence semen production.

New techniques now available through veterinarians include a pregnancy diagnosis that tells farmers which ewes are pregnant and how many fetuses each is carrying to facilitate extra feeding of ewes carrying multiple fetuses. Embryo transfer and artificial insemination are techniques with great potential for improvement of reproductive efficiency, but the sheep industry has been slow to adopt them, often because of technical problems, Dr. Robinson said.

Exposing ewes to vasectomized rams can also improve reproductive efficiency by inducing ovulation before mating with a fertile ram. Vasectomized rams are also being used to identify ewes that are not pregnant for culling.

Other new techniques sheep practitioners are now able to offer producers include estrous induction (bringing ewes into heat), synchronization of cycles to get all ewes in a flock lambing at the same time, and induction of parturition to control the timing of deliveries. Two promising new techniques now being used successfully overseas have yet to be approved in the U.S.: use of androstenedione as a vaccine to increase the ovulation rate and melatonin, a hormone that advances the breeding season.

Dr. Robinson highly recommended veterinary investigation of abortion outbreaks in sheep flocks, noting that several effective vaccines or management changes are now available to prevent recurrences.

"Upwards of 15 to 20 percent of all lambs born die before weaning. Once a veterinarian determines the cause of these losses, it is possible to reduce mortality significantly by implementing preventive mea-

asures," Dr. Robinson said. "By implementing an accurate, computerized recordkeeping system and having a veterinarian examine the flock at three or four times during the year, sheep farmers can institute changes in nutrition and management based on data instead of seat-of-the-pants intuition. The result will be signif-

icant increases in reproductive efficiency," Dr. Robinson said.

Joining Dr. Robinson at the news conference were George E. Washington, D.V.M., President of the American Association of Bovine Practitioners, and Wayne R. Freese, D.V.M., President of the American Association of Swine Practitioners.

USDA Issues 1987 Grade Loan Rates For Virginia Fire And Sun-Cured Tobaccos

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Commodity Credit Corporation today issued grade loan rates for 1987 crop Kentucky and Tennessee dark air-cured tobacco (types 35 and 36) and fire-cured tobacco (types 22 and 23).

Loan rates reflect the average support level of \$1.054 per pound for dark air-cured tobacco and \$1.238 for fire-cured tobacco. These support levels are approximately 0.3 percent less than the 1986 average support levels.

Adjustments were made in all grades to reflect the overall grade distribution change. Tobacco associations through which price support is made available to producers

will deduct one cent per pound to help cover overhead costs.

Rates for dark air-cured tobacco will range from 24 cents to \$1.72 per pound. Rates for fire-cured tobacco will range from 23 cents to \$1.88 per pound.

The 1987 individual grade loan rates are based on historical production records which serve as a basis for projecting average grade distribution, assuming normal production and weather conditions.


Dark air-cured tobacco graded N1L, N1R, N1G, N2L, N2R, N2G, "No-G" (no grade), "U" (unsound), "W" (doubtful keeping order), "BH" (big heads), or scrap will not be accepted for price support.


Fire-cured tobacco will not be accepted for price support when graded "No-G" (no grade), "U" (unsound), "W" (doubtful keeping order), or scrap.

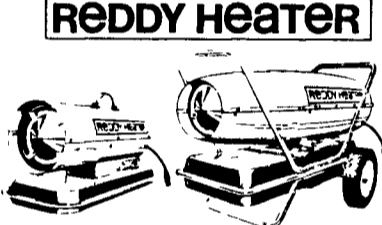
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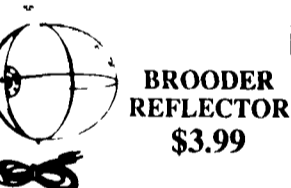
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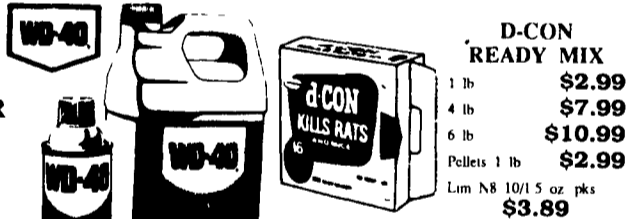
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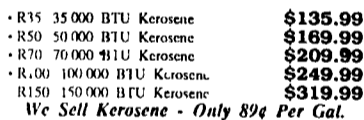
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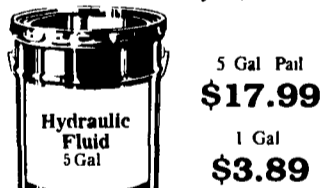
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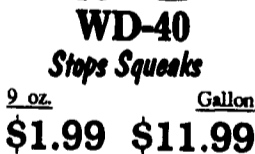
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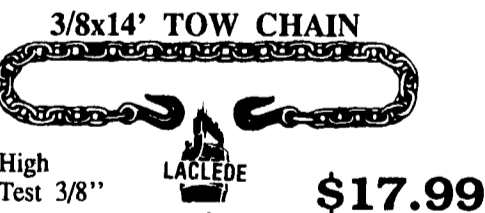
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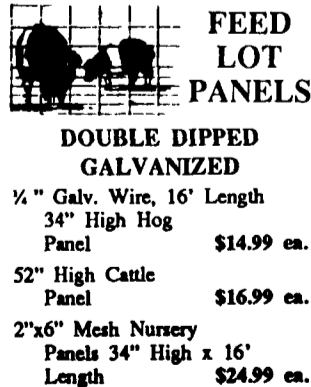
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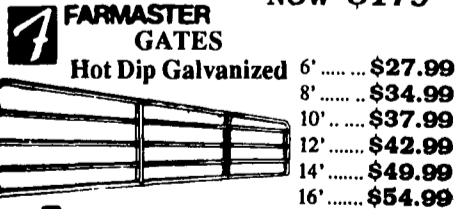
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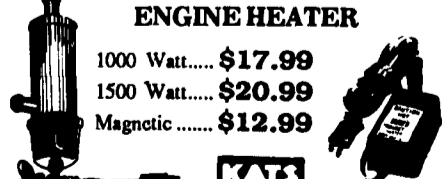

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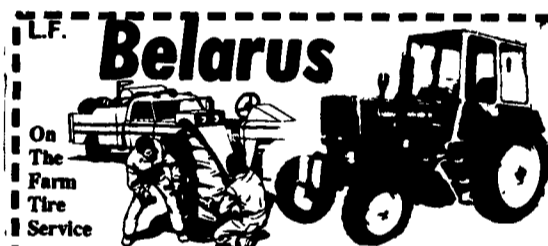
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