

Sheep Raising Can Return Twice Net Profit

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of rams, according to A. David Weaver, D.V.M., Columbia, MO, University of Missouri, College of Veterinary Medicine.

"Some farmers now wean well in excess of 200 lambs per 100 ewes mated. The more progressive producers are aiming for one pound of lamb per ewe per day over a 365 day period," said Robert Ashley Robinson, BVSc, Ph.D., of St. Paul, MN, vice president of the American Association of Sheep and Goat Practitioners.

Cross-breeding can have dramatic effects on flock reproductive performance by increasing multiple births, wool production, carcass quality, mothering ability, and off-season breeding, Rasmussen added.

• **NUTRITION:** Sheep are adaptable to an endless variety of feeding situations. Good management can yield high profits. It is important to make sure the ratio of calcium and phosphorus is adequate to balance the grain and roughage being fed. Optimum weight gain can be accomplished by selecting concentrated rations with higher feed to weight gain conver-

sion ratios.

• **FLOCK HEALTH:** This program should include the practice of good lamb husbandry after a condensed breeding season, thus eliminating hypothermia, pneumonia, and farm hazards. Specific clostridial vaccination programs devised by a veterinarian can decrease mortality. Planned veterinary programs of parasite control — parasite targeted and evaluated by fecal ova count — can also decrease morbidity. Geriatric programs for breeding ewes designed by a veterinarian can lengthen the utilization of specific high quality animals.

Sheep raising is easily adaptable to many different types of farming programs, Rasmussen said. It requires equipment that is relatively inexpensive, and raising sheep complements other livestock operations.

For example, sheep are excellent weed destroyers, because they eat plants other animals won't touch. They are able to convert poor protein into usable protein, so they can forage on waste land. And because of their preference for high ground, they leave fertilizer where it is most needed.



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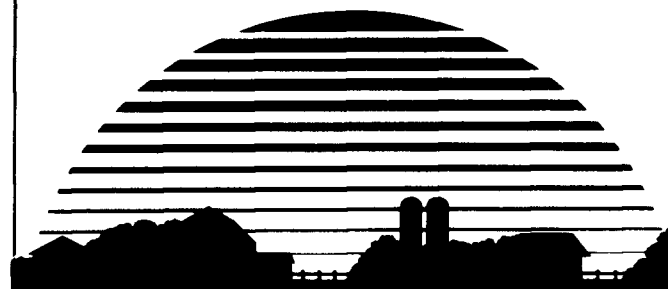
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