

Accelerated Lambing Needed

(Continued from Page A1)

have instituted at their Hawk Meadow Farm puts a 400 lambing percent goal well within reach of their ability to obtain it.

"One of the easiest and least understood methods of increasing profits from sheep is to use accelerated lambing or STAR system," said Mende. "This system of breeding and lambing was developed some years ago by Brian McGee of Cornell University.

"The basic concept of accelerated lambing is that you turn the ram in at fixed intervals during the year. While this extends the lambing season, it also means that you will get more lambs per year from each ewe."

Hawk Meadow Farm was stocked with 12 ewes and a ram eight years ago. Some of the original individuals are still in 200 head flock that is now managed on the accelerated lambing program. Mende says many people who come to the farm to buy ewe lambs express an interest in the accelerated program, but they often say they don't understand how to do it.

Mende says in their program, there are five breeding and lambing sessions each year. Breeding and

lambing coincide. Approximately one-third of an established accelerated lambing flock will lamb during a particular session. You capitalize on the ewe's innate ability and don't need to alter light cycles, use progesterone sponges, teaser rams, or any of the multitude of gimmicks people say you need to use.

The chart with this article shows the breeding and lambing intervals. To get started, (if you do not already have sheep), buy ewes or ewe lambs from an accelerated lambing flock. Choose lambs sired by a ram who is a proven out-of-season breeder and sires multiple births of healthy lambs year round.

Ask to see the flock production records. Choose ewes that have a history of unassisted births, milk production to raise twins with an average daily gain of at least .65 lbs. per day from birth to 100 days. Look for lambing intervals of 175 to 240 days, and a lifetime lambing average of greater than 300 percent.

Mende says that if you already have ewes, don't sell them, but put them on the STAR system and cull with abandon.

You will have to decide what

your culling criteria should be. This will change as the flock's productivity improves.

To get started, save ewe lambs only out of your top-producing ewes. Ewes must lamb by 14 months of age. Cull any that don't lamb in this time frame.

Out of the ewes that have lambed by 14 months, cull those that do not lamb by 11 months later. Out of those that remain, cull any that do not lamb eight months later.

At the end of two years, cull any mature ewe that has not lambed at least three times within that two-year period.

What you are trying to do is to establish a flock that will consistently lamb at least every eight months. With time and strict culling, lambing intervals can be shortened to 6.5 to 7.4 months.

For the STAR system to be most profitable, the ewes must consistently have multiple births. The Mendes say their Finn cross ewes can produce eight or more live lambs in two years, but the increased profits from these ewes are only attained with more work.

"The biggest reason people abandon accelerated lambing is because their ewes don't perform," Mende said. "And the reason they don't perform is because the shepherd tries to feed them the same as he would a once-a-year lambing flock. On an accelerated lambing schedule, there is no 'flushing.' Ewes must be kept in breeding condition at all times."

To be kept as a replacement in the Hawk Meadow flock, the

lambs must be from ewes that have a 400 lambing percent. Even breeding stock sold to commercial flocks must come from ewes with a 300 lambing percent.

In the future, the Mendes hope to have two alternating commercial flocks on the STAR accelerated lambing system. This would give them a crop of lambs every month. And their ultimate goal is to be able to cull at the 300 to 325 lambing percent range.

"Over the last three years, articles on profitable sheep raising in

Lancaster Farming have been few and far between," Mende said. "Most of these articles are long on theory and short on practical know-how, written by extension specialists and veterinarians who earned their degrees in the lab and not in the barn.

"Those who elect to try accelerated lambing will find it works and can increase profits," Mende said. "The more you work with the system, the more you will find you want to optimize it to yield higher profits."

	Breeding Session	Lambing Sessions**	Weaning Date***	Possible Markets
#1	1/1 to 1/31	5/16 to 6/28	8/1	A, B
#2	3/15 to 4/14	7/28 to 9/9	10/13	A, B
#3	5/1 to 6/5*	9/13 to 10/31	12/5	C, D, E
#4	8/8 to 9/7	12/21 to 2/2	3/8	D, F, G
#5	10/20 to 11/19	3/4 to 4/16	5/20	D, G

* Change in dates due to Christmas sales falling around 12/15-18.

** Gestation length of 135-148 days.

*** Lambs can be weaned when they are 6-7 weeks old without too many problems drying off the ewe. Earlier weaning means special handling and feeding of ewes and lambs and this equates to work and money. Go by the length of lactation (at least six weeks), milk production, and condition of the ewe and not by the weight of the lamb(s).

A. Hothouse

B. Christmas fat lamb

C. Easter fat lamb

D. Breeding stock (breed in January)

E. Christmas lightweight

F. Easter lightweight

G. Feeder



LIVESTOCK TRUCKING WINTER SPRING FARM

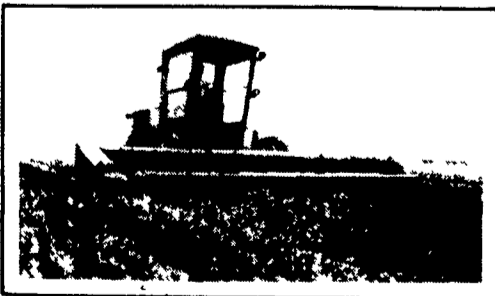
H. Charles and Joan Hoffman
Brodheads ville, PA

717-992-6295

Order Buying. Weekly trips to
Leesport, New Holland, Lancaster.

Also down cattle removal.

PRO-CUT ALFALFA



VERY HIGH DISEASE RESISTANCE PLUS RESISTANCE TO APHIDS. PRO-CUT IS VERY LEAFY AND IS BECOMING A FAVORITE AMONG DAIRYMEN IN OUR AREA. PRO-CUT IS OUR MOST POPULAR ALFALFA VARIETY BECAUSE OF ITS QUALITY STANDS.

What Will Your Stand Look Like
3 Years From Now?
Plant Pro-Cut High Disease Resistance

CHEMGRO

CHEMGRO

P.O. Box 218, State Street
East Petersburg, PA 17528
1-717-354-3296
1-800-346-4769 (GROW)

Thanks and Congratulations to

MR. & MRS. LUKE A. SNYDER

On Their New Machinery Storage Building



FEATURES

- 5376 Sq. Ft. Floor Area
- 14 Ft. Sidewall Height
- Timber-Column Construction
- Double Slide Door w/Bottom Guide and Anchor
- Painted Steel Siding w/Screw Fasteners
- Galvalume Roof w/Screw Fasteners

BUILT BY



AGRI-INC. The Construction Professionals

R.D. 4, Ephrata, PA 17522 • (717) 354-4271

Serving The Agricultural Industry For Over 20 Years

Let Our Experience
Work For You
For All Your
Farm Building Needs,
Large Or Small