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susceptible to rodent damage. A rodent infestation can damage structures by thousands of dollars in a matter of months. Additionally, rodents may gnaw on electrical wiring, causing equipment malfunction, power outages, and potentially dangerous short circuits.

Droppings, tracks, burrows, pathways, and fresh gnawings, including rodent-damaged feed sacks, indicate areas where rodents are active. Around swine facilities, insulated walls and ceilings are common nesting locations for rodents, especially mice.

Effective control involves sanitation, rodent-proof construction, and population reduction. Reduction techniques include trapping, poisoning, and fumigation.

Food Safety and Pork

Food safety is an issue that has become increasingly prominent. A safe food supply has been expected by consumers and delivered by the industry for many years. However, an increasing awareness of the potential for safety problems arising from changes in production practices and processing techniques has made consumers more determined that safety must be guaranteed.

Public confidence in the safety of pork consumption is high, but a greater awareness of chemical, microbiological, and drug/antibiotic problems has made public confidence very susceptible to change. One news headline reporting an incident involving unsafe pork products could seriously damage consumer perceptions of pork quality and lead to decreased consumption and demand.

Most of the safety concerns in the past have been centered on pathogenic microorganisms, because meat provides a very good environment for microbiological growth. Safety concerns about chemical compounds used in pork products for processing and presentation, particularly sodium, nitrate, and antioxidants such as BHA and BHT, have been raised as issues.

While chemical and microbiological safety are determined largely by the packer and processor, the more recent focus on antibiotic and drug residues in meat is the primary responsibility of producers. All antibiotics and drugs used must be managed carefully to avoid residue problems.

Care and Marketing Of Fleeces

Working at a wool pool and watching wool come in to be graded show that wool is one of the most poorly handled farm products marketed.

Some sheep producers get only half of what their wool should have been worth, because they have marketed fleeces that are full of hay, straw, burrs, manure, mud, or other foreign materials. Fleeces are often tied with everything from baling wire to binder twine. Paper twine is the only acceptable product for tying fleeces.

When you shear sheep and handle fleeces, follow these important procedures:

- Shear only when the wool is dry.
- Clean the straw off the belly and legs before starting to shear.
- Shear on a clean, dry surface. A piece of old carpeting or a piece of plywood works well.
- Avoid second cuts; remove the fleece in one piece.
- Remove all tags, dung locks, and stained wool from the fleece, and bag them separately.
- If there is a lot of hay, chaff, or other material in the neck area, remove this section of the fleece and bag it separately.
- Bag separately black fleeces or fleeces with a large amount of black in them. Remove black leg and face wool from the fleece and bag with black fleece wool.
- Roll fleece with the flesh side out and tie securely, but not too tightly, into a neat package.
- Tie fleeces with paper twine only.
- Tie fleeces separately. Do not tie several together.
- Be sure fleeces are not contaminated with black plastic. This has become a very serious problem — in fact, serious enough that several wool manufacturers have instructed their buyers to reject any wool that shows signs of being contaminated with plastic twine particles.
- Store the tied fleeces in a wool bag in a clean, dry area that is protected from dust, dirt, and rodents. Do not store in plastic bags (the kind used for garbage or lawn clippings) or paper bags.

If you live in an area that holds a wool pool, it may be to your advantage to market through the pool. At least check present wool prices before you sell to local buyers, so you will have an idea what your wool is worth.

Feeding the Stud Ram

Even though very little research work has been done on the nutrition of the stud ram, some general recommendations can be made.

The stud ram, like the brood ewe, requires adequate nutrition in order to perform efficiently. Poor nutrition can result in lowered fertility or even infertility, as well as loss of vigor and strength. For best results, the ram should be in moderate condition at breeding time.

In the summer and just before the breeding season, the ram can receive all of his nutrient requirements from pasture. If the ram begins to lose weight during the breeding season or if he is thin before the breeding season, he should receive from 1 to 1-1/2 pounds per day of shelled corn or a concentrate mixture similar to that recommended for ewes. If a ram lamb is being used, he should be fed more than this amount.

During the winter months, feed the ram so that he gains some weight but does not become excessively fat. One and a half pounds of a concentrate mixture and 3-1/2 pounds of legume or mixed hay per day should be enough for a 200-pound ram. Feed a 265-pound ram the same level of concentrate and 4 pounds of hay per day. When silage is fed, substitute 2 to 3 pounds of silage for each pound of hay replaced.

Care of the Foaling Mare

Birth of young is a critical time for the survival, health, and future breeding productivity of all animals.

Horses are certainly no exception. In their ancestral desert home, the environment and nomadic existence of the horse prevented exposure to infections and parasites which plague horses under modern husbandry.

Preparation for successful foaling of a healthy foal and a healthy mare should begin when the mare is bred. Regular daily exercise, good nutrition, and a parasite control program are necessary to have the mare in fit condition for foaling.

Excessive fat almost guarantees problems at foaling time. Mares and all other female animals approaching parturition (birth of young) should be gaining in condition during the last six weeks of pregnancy, but they should not be fat at parturition.

Never cut down a mare's feed during this period; ketosis and pregnancy toxemia are sure to follow. The foaling mare should be in good flesh, not fat, and alert and active with a good appetite. A mare in that condition is in condition to withstand the critical time of stress ahead.

The normal gestation period for the foal is 315 to 350 days. A live healthy foal born within this period or even before or after this period may still be considered normal. It is not impossible but it is very rare that mares will come back in heat and accept service when they are already pregnant.

There are two ideal places for mares to foal: a clean pasture or a clean box stall. Ideally, a paddock close to the farm home where the mare will have adequate grass, shade, cool water, and privacy from other horses and animals is the best place for foaling after the middle of May in Pennsylvania.

A maternity stall should be at least 14 feet x14 feet with ventilation to the floor on at least one side. Before the mare is put into the maternity stall, the stall should be thoroughly cleaned, washed down with a sanitizer detergent, and left empty of bedding and any other animals until just before the mare is put into the stall. The best material for bedding in the maternity stall is clean bright straw. Shavings and sawdust are less desirable.

Pasture for Horses

Pasture is not an absolute necessity for horse production. However, if properly managed, it does provide an excellent source of quality feed and may result in lower feed costs.

Pasture is the natural feed for horses. No one feed is as nutritionally complete as green pasture grown on fertile soils, and few feeds are fed in a more healthful environment.

The nutritional value of pasture depends upon the amount of forage available, the maturity of the forage, and the type of forage. As forage in the pasture matures, it increases in fiber, and its nutritional value declines appreciably, making it necessary to supply grain and/or protein supplement to the diet. Hard working horses need supplemental energy feeds because of the high water content of grass. Dry grass is usually low in protein and vitamins.

Heavy stocking rates may pose a parasite problem. Use a rotational grazing program, if possible, to break up the life cycle of the parasite. Pastures should be clipped regularly to control weeds and to expose the parsite larvae to the killing environmental forces.

Clipping also promotes new lush growth. Let cattle or sheep graze pasture formerly grazed by horses. They are not affected by the same parasites, and thus the parasite life cycle may be broken. Using a chain harrow or a section of chain link fence will help scatter droppings and expose larvae to sunlight. If possible, use a parasite-free pasture for young horses, as they are more susceptible to parasites than older horses.