

Ewe nutrition

Pre tupping to early pregnancy

Phillipa Page BVSc BSc MRCVS



Objectives for optimum ewe nutrition and management

- Optimum body condition score (BCS) – 3.5 for lowland (2.5 hill)
- Achieving body weight targets at mating
- Maximising fertility – ovulation rate, conception and low barren rate

Early pregnancy nutrition

- Maintaining pregnancy – reducing embryonic loss

Target body condition score

- Assess and group AT WEANING and split
- Target – 3.5 BCS for lowland ewes and 2.5 for hill ewes pre tuppings
- Allow 10 -12 weeks from mating
- To gain a condition score (=10% bodyweight) i.e. 70kg ewe – 7kg gain over 100 days.
- Energy requirements – 15.4 MJ/day = 1.54kgDM per ewe per day
- Available nutrition
- Action plan

Key nutrition points

- BCS –biggest impact on fertility (follicular development/maturation) scanning result.
- Flushing – of main benefit to ewes below condition target ‘short term fix’ (n.b increased triples in older ewes and prolific breeds)
- Leaner ewes will eat 30% more DM
- Early weaning
- Supplementation;
- Be prepared if grass growth or availability is limited
- Trace element deficiencies – discuss with vet/advisor



SUPPORT THE EWES
OPTIMISE PREGNANCY

Replacement ewe bodyweight targets

- Ewe lambs – 60% mature ewe weight
- Shearlings – 80% mature ewe weight
- What is your average mature ewe weight?
- Affects future fertility of offspring – follicle number and ovulation rate
- Monitor BCS
- Sound – non lame flock
- Production limiting diseases?

Maximising fertility and ovulation rate

- Target >75% ewes hold to 1st cycle
- 98% after 2 cycles
- Avoid legumes/red clover pasture or silage 45 days pre/post tugging

Early pregnancy nutrition

- Maintain target BCS from mating for first 90 days of pregnancy
- Aim –to prevent embryonic loss – target <2% empty at scan
- Optimal placental growth – lamb viability



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Nutritional requirements and management

- 1st month pregnancy (after ram removal) – implantation of embryo
- Stable diet – avoid changes/transport/handling
- Feed to maintain BCS (7.5-10 MJ/day) = 1 KgDM autumn grass supplying 10MJ of ME.
- Leaner ewes will eat more
- Raddle marks can help
- Progesterone levels crucial



2nd and 3rd months of pregnancy

- Placental development between days 50-90 of gestation
- Essential for lamb birthweights and survivability
- Must reach full size at this stage
- Under nutrition will affect placental growth and reproductive potential of a foetal female lamb



SUPPORT THE EWES
OPTIMISE PREGNANCY

Principles of pre tupping and early pregnancy nutrition

- Assess ewes AT WEANING and group accordingly
- Plan feeding for each group to reach targets at mating
- MONITOR
- Too much BC loss can affect future fertility, and fertility of offspring
- Investigate reasons for poor body condition or delayed gain
- Avoid sudden changes in diet in early pregnancy
- Emphasis of placental development