

October Sheep Newsletter

Condition scoring sheep for Breeding

Good body condition before mating has been known for many years to encourage the egg producing structures on the ovary (follicles) to develop and this sets the potential lamb crop. For lowland crossbred ewes **increasing condition score from 2.5 to 3.5 can increase scanning percentage by 20 - 40%.**

Nutrition affects each stage independently and if inadequate at one stage the damage cannot be undone by heavy feeding later on.

The key hormone influencing the placenta and its ability to support foetal development is **progesterone**.

The factors that determine progesterone concentrations are:

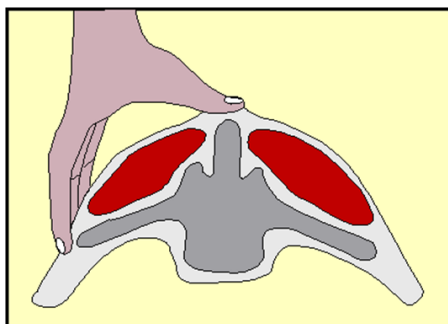
- the ewe's ability to produce it from the ovary and
- the rate at which it is lost by breakdown in the liver.

High feed intake increases blood flow through the liver.

Progesterone is also essential for preventing the ewe rejecting her embryo.

Flushing

First get mature sheep into the optimum condition score for mating. Good management practice is about setting targets for growth and body condition in the months preceding mating so that there is no need for dramatic 'catch-up' feeding or weight gain during the time that ewes are with the rams or in the months that follow.



Flushing traditional breeds that are already fit in terms of body condition will not further stimulate the ovaries to release more eggs for fertilization.

There is a place for traditional 'flushing' up to ram turnout where adult sheep have missed the condition score target due to bad weather or feed shortage.

Specifically avoid flushing and heavy feeding around mating for major prolificacy gene carriers such as the Lleyn, Cambridge, Belclare and Aberdale.

	Ewes	Rams
Tupping	3.5	3.5
Mid-pregnancy	3.0	
Lambing	3.0	
Weaning	2.5	

SUMMERLEAZE
FARM & EQUINE VETS



SUMMERLEAZE-VETS.CO.UK

01297 304007

Essential minerals for sheep

Minerals that are needed by ewes for growing bone and flesh include **calcium, phosphorus, potassium, sodium, chlorine, magnesium and sulphur**. These are also important for nerve transmission and energy metabolism. Important **trace elements** include **copper, cobalt and selenium** with infrequent **deficiencies of iodine, zinc and magnesium**. Iron and molybdenum together with the mineral sulphur are antagonistic to copper uptake.

There are good body stores of **calcium and phosphorus, most other minerals and trace elements**. However **cobalt levels need maintaining constantly** as this is not stored- being used by rumen microbes which then supply the animal with Vitamin B12. Vitamin B12 deficiency during egg production and early pregnancy should be avoided as it has long term effects on lamb survival and productivity.

Trace elements in plants are derived from soil and their availability is based on underlying geology. This varies with location, particularly for cobalt and copper. Selenium is almost universally deficient. Most soils have higher trace element content than the grass and clover growing on them.

Grazing animals are dependent on plant mineral content, but plants have no use for iodine, selenium or cobalt and can appear healthy, despite their tissues being deficient for animals. Soil acidity can affect mineral uptake. Generally as plants mature the major minerals, calcium and phosphorus, are reduced

It is recommended to address energy and protein deficits in diets before resorting to supplementation with minerals or vitamins as there is widespread overuse. This can be achieved by correcting it at pasture. It is important to correct any large deficits gradually.



**Don't forget about
FLUKE!!!**

Please talk to us about
fluke treatment.

It's the time of year that
fluke could be making an
effect on reducing weight
gain.

Our flock health club is going really well and if you are a member you now get 50% discount on all telephone consultations and advice.

Don't forget to send in a pooled faecal sample from your flock before you reach for a wormer as a lot of our recent worm egg counts have shown that worming treatments have not been necessary saving a lot of money and time.

Summerleaze Vets, Axminster, EX13 7RA
01297304007 summerleaze@summerleaze-vets.co.uk