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Feeding, Docking, and Castrating Spring Lambs

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Feeding, Docking, and Castrating Spring Lambs*

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THE results of two experiments are reported in this circular. The object of the first experiment was to determine the economy of feeding grain to suckling lambs that were with their mothers on a good pasture. The object of the second experiment was to determine the effect of docking and castrating lambs. The feeding experiment was started in 1929 and the docking and castrating experiment was started in 1930. From 1930 to 1933, inclusive, the two experiments were conducted simultaneously on the same group of lambs.

When the lambs were large enough to begin eating grain each February they were divided into two groups, approximately equal as to age and sex, known as Lot I and Lot II. Lambs in Lot I received grain in addition to their mother's milk, while

TABLE 1.—Summary of Results of Five Trials in Feeding Grain to Lambs, 1929 to 1933, Inclusive.

Ration	Lot I Mother's milk and grain**	Lot II Mother's milk only
Total number lambs fed and marketed	417	412
Average number days on test	96.96	96.96
Total weight when marketed, lbs.	27,380.00	25,550.00
Average final weight per lamb, lbs.	65.66	62.01
Total feed consumed, lbs.	17,614.00	----
Average daily feed per lamb, lbs.	.44	----
Total cost of feed†	\$234.17	----
Total cost of freight, yardage, and commission	\$234.19	\$229.33
Total expenditures for feed and marketing	\$468.36	\$229.33
Total gross returns	\$2,320.21	\$1,960.89
Average selling price per hundred weight in Montgomery, Alabama	\$8.47	\$7.67
Total returns above feed cost and marketing*	\$1,851.85	\$1,731.54
Average returns per lamb above feed cost and marketing	\$4.44	\$4.20

†Price of feed per ton, \$26.59.

*No charge was made for feed eaten by ewes.

**Grain mixture, 75 parts ground corn, 12.5 parts wheat bran, and 12.5 parts cottonseed meal.

*The experiments reported in this circular were conducted on Kirkwood Plantation, Faunsdale, Ala. The authors wish to express their appreciation to Mr. A. W. Shedd, owner of this plantation, for making the work possible, and to Mr. U. C. Jenkins, manager, for his valuable assistance.

lambs in Lot II received no grain. One-half of the ewe lambs in each lot was docked, and one-half of the buck lambs in each lot was docked and castrated. All lambs were with their mothers on a good pasture composed mostly of black medic, white clover, Paspalum, and Bermuda grass. The lambs were grade Southdowns and Hampshire Downs.

When the majority of the lambs had reached a weight of 60 to 80 pounds they were shipped to Montgomery and sold. The sale was usually made between the 10th and 15th of May.

In calculating the financial returns from lambs, as shown in Tables 1 and 2, no feed or pasture charge was made for ewes. Receipts from the sale of wool was considered sufficient to offset this item.

RESULTS OF FEEDING GRAIN

A total of 417 lambs was fed grain and 412 lambs were raised on their mother's milk and pasture. The grain-fed lambs weighed 3.65 pounds more per head when marketed, sold for 80 cents more per hundred weight, and returned a profit of 24 cents more per head than the lambs which received no grain. This margin allowed \$100.08 on the 417 lambs fed during the five trials to pay for the labor involved.

These results agree with the findings of Craig (1) who reported that it paid to feed lambs all the grain they would eat while they were on good blue grass or clover pasture with their dams.

RESULTS OF DOCKING AND CASTRATING

Six hundred and sixty-three lambs were included in this experiment during the four-year period, 1930 to 1933. These lambs were divided into two groups known as Lot I and Lot II. A total of 328 lambs was included in Lot I and a total of 335 lambs was included in Lot II. All lambs in Lot I were docked and all buck lambs were castrated. The lambs in Lot II were neither docked nor castrated. The undocked and uncastrated

TABLE 2.—Summary of Results of Four Trials in Docking and Castrating Lambs, 1930 to 1933, Inclusive.

Ration	Lot I Docked and castrated	Lot II Undocked and uncastrated
Total number lambs per lot -----	328	335
Total final weight per lot, lbs. -----	20,470.00	22,110.00
Average final weight per lamb, lbs. ---	62.41	66.00
Total gross returns in Montgomery ---	\$1,487.18	\$1,565.04
Average selling price per hundred weight in Montgomery -----	\$7.26	\$7.08
Total freight, yardage, and commission	\$172.20	\$175.88
Average returns per lamb above cost of marketing -----	\$4.01	\$4.15

group of lambs weighed 3.59 pounds more per head when marketed, sold for 18 cents less per hundred weight, and returned 14 cents more per head profit than the docked and castrated group. The group of lambs which were docked and in which the buck lambs were castrated appeared to get a temporary set-back from which they did not fully recover during the experimental period of 96 days; this was reflected in their lighter weight when sold.

These results agree with the findings of Hinman (2) in that bucks gained faster than wethers while suckling their mothers. Hinman further found that until cold weather began there was very little difference in the cuts and dressing percentages of bucks and wether lambs.

POINTS OF INTEREST

The results of five trials in feeding grain to suckling lambs which were with their mothers on good pasture and which were marketed in May show:

1.—That lambs which received grain weighed 3.65 pounds more when marketed, and sold for 80 cents more per hundred weight than lambs which received no grain.

2.—That lambs which were fed grain returned 24 cents more profit per head above feed and marketing cost than lambs which received no grain.

3.—That the labor return for feeding 417 lambs was \$100.08.

The results of four trials in docking and castrating lambs show:

1.—That the group of lambs which were undocked and in which the bucks were uncastrated weighed 3.59 pounds more per head when sold in May than the group which was docked and the bucks castrated when both groups were similarly fed and managed.

2.—That the group of lambs which were docked and in which the bucks were castrated sold for 18 cents more per hundred weight but returned 14 cents less profit per head than the group which was undocked and uncastrated.

REFERENCES

- (1) Craig, J. A., Wis. Bul. 32, 1892 (E. S. R. 4, 260).
- (2) Hinman, R. B., Record of Proceedings, The American Society of Animal Production, p. 234, 1931.