Lamb Crop 2022

Maximise lamb survival indoors

Nutrition Focus: Poppy Frater, SAC Consulting Sheep & Grassland Specialist

The Lamb Crop webinar series focussed on highlighting methods to maximise lamb survival for indoor, outdoor and hill systems. The first in the series focussed on indoor lambing where we heard from Poppy Frater, SAC Consulting Sheep and Grassland Specialist, Heather Stevenson, SRUC Veterinary Investigation Officer and Graham Lofthouse, Bankhouse Farm.

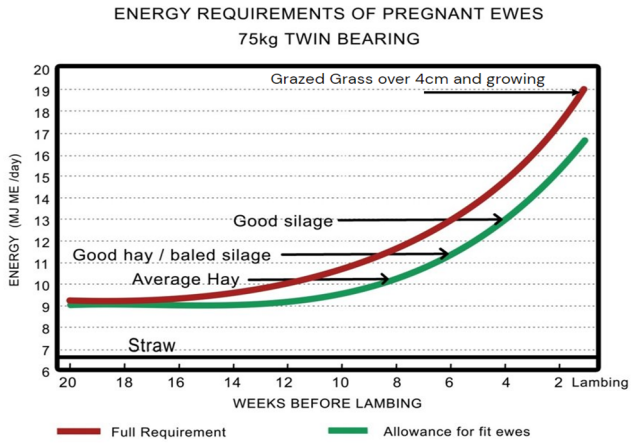
Ewe Nutrition & Management for Lambing Success: Nutrition can make the greatest difference with preventative health management and productivity. Nutritional management of ewes taking into account the quality and quantity of base feed forages at key times in the cycle along with condition scoring ewes is the key to success.

Weaning to tupping Get ewes fit for production aim for body condition score 3 - 3.5

1st 50 days tupping time and 34 days after tupping when implantation of the egg occurs. Avoid management changes in this period, energy and protein demand are low and ewes are to maintain condition.

2nd 50 days placental growth time, ewes are resilient and egg is nicely implanted. Scan (50 - 90 days) and BCS ewes to manage their nutrition in separate groups (triplets and thin twins, singles and fat twins etc).

3rd 50 days energy requirements increase rapidly, supplementation can be reduced by feeding better quality forage as shown in the graph below. Understanding forage quality and how to supplement this to meet the shortfalls is key to success



Example:
70 kg pregnant ewes with twins

kg/head/day	Weeks before lambing			
	7	5	3	1
Hay		Ad Lib		
Supplement Offered	0.1	0.3	0.5	0.7
Very Good Silage		Ad Lib		
Supplement Offered			0.15	0.35
ME MJ/day	11.4	13.1	15.3	18.3

Lactating Ewes need more energy than pre-lambing and lambs will do well on milk alone until 4 - 5 weeks of age and then the lambs' demand exceeds the ewes provision and will need additional nutrition from grass or creep. Maximising ewe milk at this time will get the lambs off to the best start. If grass is below 4 cm ewes will need to be supplemented with additional feed to milk well.

Key Points:

- Condition scoring ewes is a great gauge of nutrition and influences ewes' performance
- Late pregnancy is a key period to increase ewe nutrition for lamb survival
- Analyse forages and quantify the energy deficit
- Lactation demand is greatest—coincide with pasture production to get lambs off to the best start and reduce costs

Resources: **AHDB "Feeding the Ewe"** *request from info@ahdb.org.uk*,

SAC Consulting "Forage First Sheep Systems" *request from livestock@sac.co.uk*

QMS Ewe Nutrition and Body Condition Score Timeline *request from info@qmscotland.co,uk*

Funded by University Innovation Fund from the Scottish Funding Council