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BASIC SHOW LAMB FEEDING AND CARE

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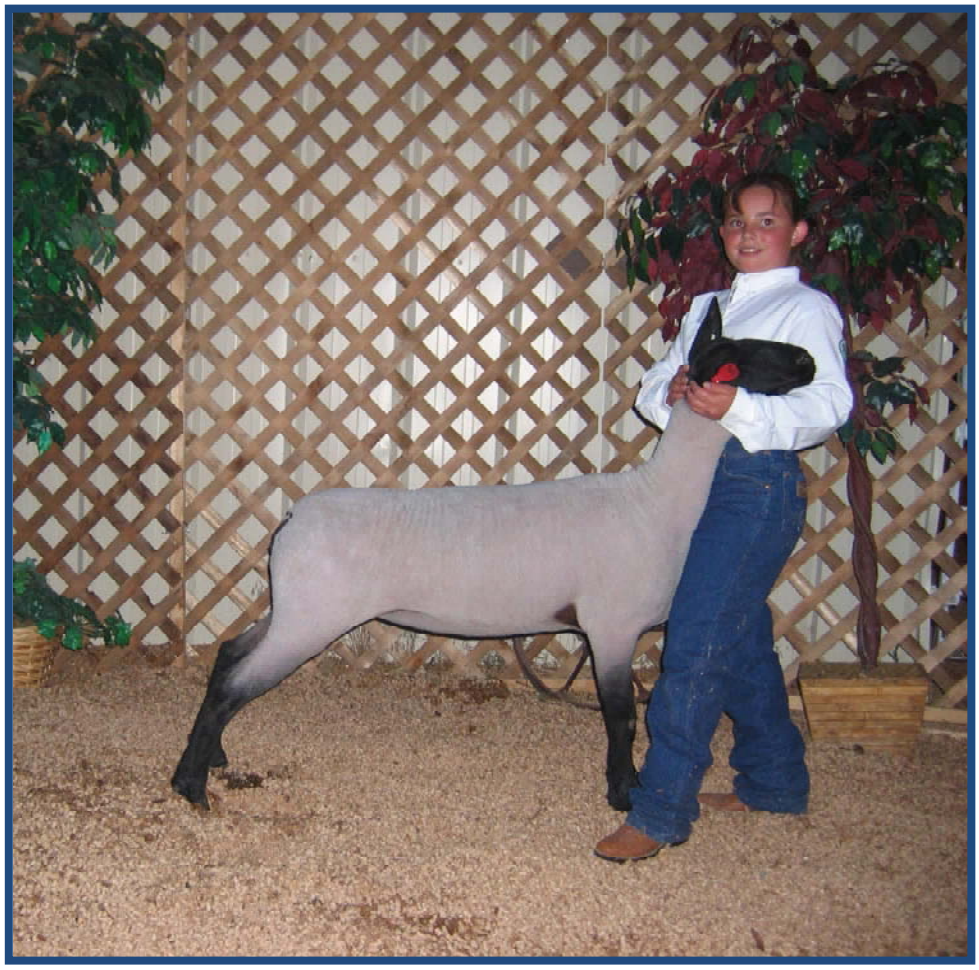

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WHY SHOW JUNIOR LIVESTOCK?

The junior livestock program is a unique opportunity to use live animals to help youth develop. Youth learn something about agriculture and livestock production and develop an appreciation for the livestock industry. However, the main objectives are to teach life skills and help youth become productive citizens. The experience of youth owning and working with animals, being responsible for their care, health, and growth, and exhibiting them in a competitive environment is a tremendous character building process. Junior livestock projects help develop life skills such as; leadership, communication, decision making and problem solving skills. Character building, record keeping and the development of personal responsibility are other skills youth can develop as a result of their involvement in the broad range of programs in junior livestock.

FEED TROUGH OPTIONS

There are several ways to feed a project lamb that can aid in the development of leg and loin muscle. Feeding off the ground will keep lambs from stepping in the feed and feed troughs can be easily cleaned and will be comfortable for the lamb to eat out of. Feeding on the ground may cause lambs to show a break behind the shoulders. Use the feeding method you feel will be the best for your program.

NUTRITION

Feed Rations

It's not the brand name that is important, but the protein, fat, fiber content of the feed, as well as palatability. Five basic nutrients are required for feeding show lambs as well as all livestock. They are water, protein, carbohydrates and fats or energy, minerals and vitamins. There are commercial lamb feed rations or you can mix your own.

1-Water

Water is the most important nutrient. It is essential to keep the body functioning properly. Keep plenty of clean fresh water available at all times.

2- Protein

Protein requirements for lambs vary depending on their stage of development. Young, fast-growing lambs need rations with protein levels of 16 to 18 percent. This is important for development of the proper muscle mass. When lambs are getting fat and close to market, protein levels can be 11 to 12 percent. Lambs that are fed more protein than they need convert it to energy. This is very expensive, so only feed the lamb the protein requirements it needs for its stage of development.

3- Carbohydrates and Fats (or energy)

The body needs energy for necessary bodily functions. Grain and protein supplements are high in energy, while hay contains less carbohydrates and fats (energy). Be sure to have the proper energy for your lambs development. Talk to your feed company's nutritionist.

4-Minerals

Salt (sodium chloride), calcium and phosphorus are important minerals. Have free choice loose salt, and loose trace minerals available at all times. Calcium and phosphorus are essential for proper growth and development. A ration should be 2.5 parts calcium to 1 part phosphorus. ***Be cautious of the copper level in sheep rations**.* Sheep can't handle the levels of copper that cattle can and too much copper can kill them. Ask your veterinarian what signs to watch for that indicate copper toxicity.

5-Vitamins

Lambs require very small amounts of vitamins. If lambs are receiving alfalfa hay or pellets in their diet, vitamin A should not be a problem. It is a good idea to give your lamb a shot of Vitamin B complex to help it stay healthy and stimulates appetite.

EARLY CARE OF NEW LAMBS

When preparing to bring a lamb home be sure to check the pen for any sharp corners or obstacles. Feeding two or more lambs together has several advantages:

- They will settle down better in their new home**.**
- They will eat better due to competition.

STARTING YOUR LAMBS ON FEED

For the first few days allow the lambs to get used to their new home. Start the feeding routine slowly.
Feed some good quality grass, sorghum or alfalfa hay. Don't feed grain for the first few days if they have not previously been fed grain such as creep feed.

Start feeding grain in small amounts and allow the lambs digestive system to get used to the concentrated grain. This should be about 1/4 to ½ pound of grain per day. Allow lambs 15 minutes to finish their grain. If they don't clean up their grain in 15 minutes, remove the uneaten feed and reduce their next feeding by that amount. Increase feed gradually to approximately two pounds of grain and two pounds of hay per day. After two weeks your lamb should be on full feed.

SUCCESS IN FEEDING

Contact with your lambs twice a day is critical to monitor their progress. Feed on time, within 15 to 30 minutes of a regular schedule. Hand feeding is the best way to do this. This allows you to regulate the feed intake. It is easier to keep lambs on feed and overeating is less of 3 a problem when you hand feed. You will learn several things by seeing your lamb at feeding times. They are:

- Know when to increase or decrease feed by feeling your lambs finish.
- Know when concentrate level should be increased to put on more finish.
- Know when to put the lamb on a holding ration to prevent him from getting to fat (increasing oats will do this).
- Weigh your lamb regularly to help you determine how he is growing. This will help you decide how much to feed him to reach your weight goal for the show.

FACILITIES

The recommended amount of space per lamb is 200 square feet. This provides ample room for the lamb to move around. If several lambs are in a pen that is too small they may pick at each others wool and cause patches on the body with no wool. This will take away from the overall attractiveness of the lamb. A good tree can provide a great shaded area for a lamb pen.
If natural shade isn't available, construct a simple shade for the lambs to provide needed protection. This also allows for proper air circulation.

EXERCISE

Exercising a lamb is very important and is beneficial in several ways:

- Development of muscle
- Condition or feel of muscle
- Stimulation of appetite
- Proper finish or fat cover

If lambs have a large area for exercise during the entire feeding program they may not need a forced exercise program.

More exercise is not always better. You need to make sound management decisions for the exercise program that works best for you and your lambs. Some producers think that too much exercise can cause blue carcasses which is undesirable in the slaughter house.

Walking lambs on halter on level ground does not give them enough exercise to tone muscle. This is, however, excellent for halter breaking and getting you used to your lamb.

Tips for exercising lambs:

Start slowly and build up to a full exercise schedule. Never allow a lamb to get too hot when exercising. Early morning or late evening when it's cool is the best time to exercise. Provide hurdles to jump over. These may consist of railroad ties, barrels, or pipes or boards sticking through an alley way. Only allow the lamb to jump over one obstacle at a time. In other words, don't put two sticks in one location. Lambs might get their legs stuck in between them and injure themselves. Jumping lambs over hurdles will assist in leg and loin development. Excessive jumping may build too much muscle in the front shoulders and make your lamb look heavy fronted. Running without hurdles usually firms and hardens finish. During the last six weeks lambs should get plenty of exercise unless they are light weight. They must have ample finish before this part of the program takes place. Provide a soft surface for exercising lambs such as sand or loose dirt. If your lamb is not very fat and you exercise too much it can cause the carcass to be blue when the animal is slaughtered. This is undesirable**.**

HEALTH

Any questions about a lamb's health program can be answered by your local veterinarian. With any medication be sure to follow the label recommendation and use only those that are labeled for use in sheep. Be sure to be aware of and adhere to withdrawal times. There are eight basic health aspects to consider.

Enterotoxemia (overeating disease)

There are two types of this disease that effect lambs in Utah; types C & D. Enterotoxemia is caused by lambs consuming large amounts of grain or having an abrupt change in their feeding schedule.

All show lambs should be protected with a combination vaccine (clostridium perfringens C & D) along with a booster given two to three weeks later. Additional boosters can be given at two to three month intervals.

Internal Parasites (worms)

Lambs should be drenched for stomach or intestinal round worms and other internal parasites. A second drenching should be given three weeks later. Consult your veterinarian for recommendations. These may include Tramisol, Ivomec drench, Valbazen drench which yield good results.

Soremouth

This contagious disease appears as scabs on the lips and mouth of lambs. It is a virus that can affect humans, too. Wear latex gloves when applying or handling lesions. Iodine can be applied to lesions where the scabs have been removed. This dries out the sores and reduces the infection.

Tetanus

If the lamb has been docked with a elastrator band, make sure to administer a tetanus shot. Lambs that get tetanus seldom recover and there is no satisfactory treatment. There is a combination vaccine for both tetanus and enterotoxemia.

Ringworm (Lamb Fungus)

This is a very contagious disease that can travel from lamb to lamb, from lamb to human, and from equipment to either lambs or humans. Prevention is the best measure to take.

Ringworm can be related to moisture and having the lambs wet too often. There are several treatment methods used for ringworm. Some of them are:

- Fulvicin Powder - This powder can be used to top dress feed or in a bolus form.
- Novasan - Spray on lamb equipment and pens with a mixture of 3 ounces
- per gallon of water.
- Bleach - A 10 percent solution can be sprayed on lamb, equipment and pens

Rectal Prolapse

This condition causes the rectum to protrude from the body. Get immediate attention from a veterinarian. The possible causes are:

- Feeding a high concentrated feed
- Short docking procedure
- Straining from feeding on an incline
- Pushing to get into a small creep feeder
- Coughing from a respiratory condition
- Diarrhea

- Feeding dusty or moldy feed
- Hereditary

Any one of these is not the sole cause of rectal prolapse. However, each can attribute to the problem.

Tail Docking

If tails are docked too long it detracts from the style and balance of the lamb. If they are docked too short it can contribute to the problem of rectal prolapse. Be sure to follow the rules of the show that you are going to. Plan many months before you go to the show so you can follow the rules with regards to tail docking.

Polyarthritis (stiff lamb disease)

This condition affects lambs from three weeks to five months. The lambs are inactive, don't want to get up or move and lose weight or gain weight slowly. Contact your veterinarian for treatment of a tetracycline antibiotic prescription.

SHEARING LAMBS

Shear your lambs before it gets too hot**.** Lambs will stay cooler, feel better and be more efficient on feed. Some feeders think sheared lambs will put on a smoother more uniform finish.

EQUIPMENT

Here is a list of possible items to include in a show box and/or feed room:

- stiff brush for cleaning water troughs
- shovel
- rake
- trimming table with measurements of 45 inches long, 20 inches wide and 18 inches tall
- clippers
- wool card
- rope halter
- hand shears
- portable feed and water troughs
- lamb blankets and or socks

PAPERS

Get a Bill of Sale from the seller or breeder. Ask about the appropriate Livestock Brand Inspection papers as well. For lambs coming into Utah from another state, call Utah Department of Agriculture and Food for proper procedures and laws for importation.

RULES AND REGULATIONS

It is your responsibility to know the rules of the shows that you plan to attend. Different shows have different requirements, whether county, state, jackpot or even national events. Call the representative for these shows to get a copy of the show premium book or rules.

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The author does not claim all material inside as original. Thank you and credit goes to the following sources.

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