

Sheep Breeding

Main behavioral signs of heat:

When an animal is in heat it indicates they have entered a period where they are fertile and most receptive to breeding.

Different behavioral signs means changes in how the animal acts. Ewes generally reach puberty between 7-12 months of age.

Some behavioral signs that they are in heat include;

1. The ewes are restless
2. Shaking their tails repeatedly
3. Nervousness
4. Loss of appetite
5. Ewes repeatedly rubbing their heads or body's against the ram
6. The ram is constantly seeking the ewes out



Main Physical signs of heat:

Physical signs of heat means what physical changes can you see on the animal. Some physical signs include:

1. Swollen/Inflamed and reddened vulva

2. Watery mucous discharge from the vulva



How to assist with the preparation of the mating (artificial/natural methods):

Artificial insemination is the process of humans collecting semen from a male and using it to impregnate the female. How do we do this? We inject the ewe with PRID which creates the correct hormones in the animal to bring them into heat. Step by step- We collect semen from the specific ram that we have chosen to impregnate the females. We then use a syringe to inject the ram's semen into the ewe.



Naturally the male will mate with the female. How does this work? The flock of sheep are generally mated by a single ram, which has been chosen from the farmer. The ram will be introduced to the ewes and will then look for the ones in heat. He

will then mate with them for around 2 weeks, then the ram will be removed from the flock. The ram can also be fitted with a raddle which is a harness that carries a special crayon that mark the ewe when they have been mated.



What check should be made on mothers for signs of birth:

The teats begin to feel firm and full of colostrum.

The lips of the vulva will become slightly swollen.

In the last hours before lambing, many ewes will separate from the flock.

Udder health of all ewes should be assessed.

Animals with lumpy hard udders or infections should be culled.

The ewes with very large teats or slack udders should also be culled as these can have problems mothering and an increased mastitis risk.



Health and safety procedures to follow whilst lambing:

For humans-

1. Wash hands in diluted disinfectant solution
2. Arm length disposable plastic gloves should be worn
3. Wearing the correct PPE
4. Obstetrical lubricant greatly facilitates manipulations
5. Dispose used plastic gloves
6. Wash hands in diluted disinfectant solution after delivery of the lambs.

Make sure when checking the lambs you are keeping yourself safe by not checking a sheep alone/handwashing/hygiene practices and correct



PPE

For sheep/lambs-

1. Keep lambs and new mothers inside for comfort
2. Young lambs should be kept inside because of wildlife like foxes and also weather changes

Ewes can lamb at any time this can often be late at night or in bad



weather etc.

How is a lamb weaned from its mother?

Lambs can't stay with their mums forever, so often when they are around 6-8 months old you can intervene and separate the lambs from the ewes.

You should put them into different fields to graze separately.

Decrease the amount of milk and provide consistent interaction with other lambs.

Determining if a lamb is ready to leave its mum is by them being on a food



What are some signs another gives you to let you know they are ready to give birth?

- They may lie down
- They may stand irregular
- Pawing the ground

Or otherwise act out of sync of normal flock patterns.

Stages of labour:

First stage labour-

First stage labour is represented by cervical dilation which takes 3-6 hours but is more rapid in older ewes.

During first stage of labour a thick string of mucous is often observed hanging from the vulva.

At the end of first stage labour there will be a appearance of the water bag

Second stage labour-

Rupture of the water bag with a rush of fluid.

The amniotic sac appears at the vulva and frequently ruptures at this stage.

However the amniotic sac may not rupture until the ewe stands up and the lamb has expelled.

Successful delivery of the lamb signals the end of second stage labour.

Reproduction facts

- One ram can service 50+ ewes
- Ewes can recognise their lambs bleat
- At birth lambs usually have no teeth
- Their milk teeth appear in the front lower jaw at around 5 months old
- Young lambs often have their tails docked to keep their rear end clean



Rams

What is a ram?

A ram are adult male sheep.

The rams testicles should be palpated to determine that they are well-developed and normal. They should be firm, evenly sized, and move freely within the scrotum.

- Most ram lambs reach puberty between 5-7 months of age.
- Horns commonly grow in male sheep or rams
- Rams typically weigh a lot more than ewes
- Rams make a rumbling sound during courtship

