

# **Effect of continuous suckling/“ewe-rearing” on growth and level of parasitism of lambs and on productivity and profitability of lamb operations**

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# Weaning

- **Common management practice**
- **3-4 months of age**
- **More rapid diet transition**
- **Reduce metabolic demand on the dam**
  - BCS to recover
  - Earlier resumption of postpartum reproductive cycles
- **Lambs placed into feedlots**

# Weaning

- **Psychological and nutritional stress**
- **Compromise growth, immune function, and welfare of lambs**
  - Retardation of growth in lambs up to 6 months of age
- **Leads to overall decline in productivity**

# Continuous Suckling

- **Lower susceptibility to parasitism**
  - Reduced worm burden
  - Lowers and delays peak in fecal egg count
  - Whether continuous suckling can reduce parasitism under field conditions has yet to be determined
- **Increased pre-slaughter growth rates**
  - Depression in growth rate of early weaned lambs
  - Depression may be dependent on post-weaning diet

# Market

- Increase in demand and price for lighter (<100 lbs) market lambs in the Northeast.
- Market weights can potentially be achieved by 3-5 months of age
- Lambs can be finished on pasture while suckling without being placed in a fattening facility



# Objectives

- **1. Determine the effect of continuous suckling with and without supplementation on growth rate of lambs**
- **2. Determine the effect of continuous suckling with and without supplementation on degree of parasitism of lambs**
- **3. Determine the effect of continuous suckling on weight and BCS of ewes**
- **4. Compare the economic benefit of continuous suckling of lambs to market to the traditional practice of weaning lambs and fattening to market**

# Experiment

- Spring born lambs 2.5-3 months of age
- All animals will be on pasture for the entire experiment (3 months)
- Ad libitum supplement



# Experiment Design

1

Weaned  
Un-Supplemented

2

Weaned  
Supplemented

3

Suckling  
Un-Supplemented

4

Suckling  
Supplemented

A 5<sup>th</sup> group will be comprised of the dams of the lambs from groups 1 and 2.





# What we will be doing.

- Lambs weighed every two weeks
- Ewes weighed monthly
- Body condition score ewes monthly
- Fecal egg count monthly
- Packed-cell volume monthly
- Partial budget analysis

**We are looking for producers to  
participate in this study.**

**If you are interested please speak with one of us.**





Funding for this project is provided by the USDA Sustainable Agriculture  
Research and Education Program