

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



**Weaned
Un-Supplemented**



**Weaned
Supplemented**



**Suckling
Un-Supplemented**



**Suckling
Supplemented**

A 5th 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.





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