

EFFECT OF LATE GESTATION SUPPLEMENTATION OF MULTIPLE BEARING EWES ON LAMB BIRTH WEIGHTS, SURVIVAL AND WEANING WEIGHT

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Late gestation level of supplementation is being evaluated in 3 flocks located in Curry County (200 ewes), Douglas County (200 ewes) and at OSU (180 ewes) to determine its effect on lamb birth weight, survival rate and weaning weight. This project is being funded by the Oregon Sheep Commission.

At each location ewes carrying multiple fetuses were identified using a linear real-time ultrasound device and half of the group at each location assigned at random to a control or supplement treatment. The control group at each location consisted of the normal flock nutritional management for late gestation (i.e., winter pasture plus supplemental hay fed to the entire flock with no preferential feeding for ewes with multiple fetuses). The supplemental group at each location received the same nutritional regime as the control group plus 1 pound of corn the last four weeks of gestation.

One month prior to lambing all the ewes at the various locations were body condition scored and weighed. Ewes were again body condition scored just prior to lambing. At each location lamb birth weights, lamb survival rates (24 hour, 1 week) and lamb weaning weights will be recorded. The numbers and weights of lambs weaned will be related to supplemental feed costs to determine likely returns. This should allow producers the opportunity to determine economic benefits of using ultrasound to determine fetal numbers and supplemental feeding of multiple bearing lambs.