

Pregnancy Scanning

Fact Sheet

Introduction

Pregnancy scanning, when done within the proper time frame, can identify animals that are not pregnant and accurately count the number of fetuses. It is very important that scanning be done during the proper time frame for accuracy. An accurate scanning can provide many management advantages for producers.

Why consider pregnancy scanning?

- To identify open ewes, allowing a management decision to cull open ewes at strong seasonal prices.
- The ability to make decisions on giving ewe lambs a second chance or marketing prior to one year of age to take advantage of lamb prices versus cull ewe prices.
- To improve lambing success through proper feed management. Feeding ewes with marrying fetus numbers according to nutritional requirements.
- The ability to reduce feed costs by not feeding open animals.

Why should I not consider scanning my ewes?

- If the only reason you are considering scanning your ewes is to determine lambing percentages then this is not for you. The cost and stress on you and your animals is not worth it.

What effects pregnancy scanning accuracy?

In order to get the maximum benefit from the scanning, it must be accurate. Factors that can affect accuracy are:

- Dirty sheep in the crutch and udder area
- Very prolific sheep
- Full rumen
- Animal movement during the scan
- Too much variation in days of pregnancy
- Sheep outside the ideal window (70-90 days after exposure)
- Over conditioned sheep
- Experience of technician

What can I do to help provide accuracy?

- Keep sheep as clean as possible
- Take sheep off feed prior to scanning
- Know the date of ram entry and exit
- Book appointment to insure scanning is completed during the proper timeframe window. (between 70-90 days after exposure)
- Secure animals properly during scanning
- Provide comfortable working conditions and labour.



Cost benefit analysis

Consider the following example of the cost benefit to scanning ewes. Using a flock of 250 ewes with an open rate of 6%, and 50 replacement ewe lambs with an open rate of 15%. Open ewes can be culled immediately taking advantage of a higher cull price. Open ewe lambs can be sold as lambs, not culls, to take advantage of lamb prices versus cull price. Cost of scanning is \$2.00 per head.

300 head scanned at \$2.00/head = \$600

Income from open ewes seasonal strong prices 15 ewes at 150 lbs x \$0.55/lb = \$1237.50

Income from open ewes during seasonal prices 15 ewes at 150 lbs x \$0.35/lb = \$787.50

Feed savings:

Hay: 15 ewes x 60 days x 5 lbs = 4500lbs x \$0.035/lb = \$157.50

Grain: 15 ewes x 40 days x 1lb/day = 600 lbs x \$0.07 = \$42.00

Total cost of feed savings just on open ewes is \$199.50

Plus additional income from ewe sales of \$450.00

Benefit of \$649.50

Open ewe lambs sold as lambs rather than cull ewes

Sold as lambs: 15% open = 8 ewe lambs x 115lbs x \$1.25 = \$1150.00

Sold as culls: 15% open = 8 ewe lambs x 115lbs x \$0.35 = \$322.00

Total gain by selling as lambs: \$828.00

Additional savings to consider:

By knowing if your ewe is having a single, twin or triplet, you can separate into groups and feed accordingly. By feeding properly you should be able to reduce your lamb mortality. If you were able to reduce mortality by only 3% using an average birth rate of 150% you would have an extra 13.5 lambs to sell (300 x 150% lambing rate = 450 lambs x 3% = 13.5 lambs) 13.5 lambs x 110lbs x \$1.25 = \$1856.25 in extra gross income.

Conclusion

Pregnancy scanning your ewes can be used as a cost effective management tool. Extra money can be made by using this tool. One must take into consideration other costs such as your labour cost if applicable, and the stress on the animals if proper facilities are not used.

Contacts:

Agriculture Knowledge Centre

(866) 457-2377
aginfo@gov.sk.ca

Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture

Jessica Podhordeski, 3830 Thatcher Avenue
Livestock Development Specialist Saskatoon, SK S7K 2H6
(306) 933-5099
jessica.podhordeski@gov.sk.ca
www.agriculture.gov.sk.ca

Saskatchewan Sheep Development Board

(306) 933-5200 2213C Hanselman Court
sheepdb@sasktel.net Saskatoon, SK S7L 6A8
www.sksheep.com

Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVM)

(306) 966-7178
www.usask.ca/wcvm/vth/lac/about.php