

Sheep Feed

Veterinary Nutritionist, Debby Brown, highlights the importance of good ewe nutrition.

The lambing season is fast approaching. It is important to manage ewe nutrition in good time as this can affect the overall profitability of prime lamb production. The link between healthy lambs, good colostrum and milk production is undeniably linked to good ewe management.

The only way we can meet the increasing energy requirements of the ewe is to ensure rumen function is as efficient as possible. This means optimising dry matter intake from our forage source and then supplementing with concentrate when necessary. This is usually within the last six weeks of gestation. We should not substitute forage with concentrate.

Over the past three years, I have completed work for EBLEX and part of this research involved studying the results of optimising ewe nutrition on farm.

A survey done by SACS revealed that 4 million lambs are lost the week before, and within a few days after lambing. The economic loss is estimated at £120 million to the industry. 55% of these losses were due to poor ewe nutrition.

What can you do to help?

- Get your forage analysed so you have an idea of the quality of the majority of the diet.
- Ensure the ewes have a clean, accessible water supply.
- Check the condition of the ewes regularly to ensure you know if they are losing or gaining condition.
- Scan the ewes to enable feed to be prioritised to those with multiple lambs.
- Ensure the ewes are healthy, and if necessary, have been dosed for fluke and possibly worms.
- Check for lameness and follow the 5 point plan to control.
- At the time of lambing draw some milk from the ewes and assess whether it is watery or whether it is thick and creamy. The latter means we have got it right.

What should you be looking for as a supplementation?

- Energy level >12.5MJ/kgDM
- DUP >5.5%
- Soya at least 6%
- Oil 4.5-5.5%
- Ash <9%
- Fibre <10%
- Protein - balanced between rumen protein and bypass protein (DUP) and at a level representative of the forage being fed on farm

The above attribute can be found in our **Superior Ewe Nuts**.



During the final six weeks of gestation, the ewe's energy requirement increases while their appetite decreases. This is the result of rumen space being reduced considerably as the lamb foetus grows. It is therefore important to feed a high energy feed, with the best quality protein. This will optimise the health of the ewe as well as drive production, especially if she is carrying multiple lambs. If wheatfeed is near the top of the ration it will be very difficult to meet this requirement.

If you would like more information on ewe nutrition, please get in touch: debby@arn-ltd.com