

Feeding Ewes with Triplet Lambs

Table 1. Observed feed intake and body weight gains of triplet-rearing ewes and their lambs.

Item	Trial 1 (30 days)		Trial 2 (41 days)	
Ewe feed intake	lb/d		lb/d	
Hay	2.0		3.3	
Pellets ¹	6.9		7.6	
Total	8.9		10.9	
Daily gain	n	lb/day	n	lb/day
Ewes	8	0.29	14	0.55
Lambs	23	0.49	42	0.71
3 lambs		1.47		2.13

¹High Energy Lamb Pellets, Agway Inc., Syracuse, NY. A key ingredient to improve intake was 20% soy hulls.

DMI of ewes in trial 2 was almost 7% of body weight. Furthermore, although digestibility data were not available, the available energy fed in this trial most probably exceeded that anticipated by the NRC (1985). Instead of losing weight, these ewes all gained weight while their triplet lambs gained rapidly and at an outstanding rate in trial 2. These results indicate that, if the diet is formulated properly so that intake is not limited, a negative energy balance for ewes with twins or triplets during early lactation is not obligatory.

These feeding trials (Hogue, 1994) were conducted to determine if a diet with sufficient FNDF would allow ewes nursing twins or triplets to consume enough feed to prevent weight loss in early lactation. Hay consumption was restricted to the amounts shown in Table 1.

Total feed intake was much higher than the NRC (1985) expected dry matter intake of 6 lb for ewes of this weight rearing twins during early lactation. In fact, total

Literature Cited

- Hogue, D. E. 1994. Further observations on feeding highly productive sheep. In: Cornell Nutrition Conference. p 140 - 141.
- NRC. 1985. National Research Council - Nutrient Requirements of Sheep. 6 ed. National Academy Press, Washington, DC.