

November 2012

Peter Stockdale: Sheep Nutrition

- Sheep alimentary canal is different from cattle who can use mature grass: sheep need shorter grass which is higher in protein
- Scoring your sheep: see diagram in Healthy Flocks binder
- Assessing feed quality
 - ✚ Long, coarse grass – will just hold condition
 - ✚ Short grass – excellent, but if on alfalfa, need only short periods of time, can bloat in 10 minutes!
 - ✚ Hay only – 18% protein ideal – need alfalfa mix for this; 16 to 18% is fine
 - ✚ Grain – Peter uses barley, but any sheep appropriate mix can be used
- Nutritional year: for lambs going to market, condition score of Level 4 is ideal.
- March: or 1 month before lambing, re-introduce grain slowly; growing lamb displaces rumen slightly, twins more, so need more concentrated nutrition. Want to avoid pregnancy toxemia or 'twin lamb disease'.
- 1st 2 – 3 weeks of nursing: continue grain, then put out to grass.
- If lambing on good grass, don't need grain; grass also good because it is clean.
- 1 month or so before breeding: up the nutrition again

This area is short on Selenium and Iodine. Can we feed too much mineral?

Not usually : it varies with the time of year, nutritional score, lambs or ewes.

Kelp – lots of iodine, but mineral mix is better balanced.