



Cleon's Corner

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Why do Breeding Soundness Examinations?

Incorporating ram breeding soundness examinations into your production practices can increase profits by \$20-27 per ewe.

During the late 1980's, a study in south central Wyoming was conducted using a range flock of 2,800 ewes divided into two even groups of 1,400 head apiece. Group 1 was exposed to rams that had undergone breeding soundness examinations (BSE's) and been evaluated as having satisfactory or better semen. Group 2 was exposed to non-tested rams that had been selected using traditional ranch selection criteria. At weaning, the Group 1 ewes produced an average of 17 more pounds of weaned lamb per ewe than the ewes in Group 2.

Assuming a low market price of \$120/cwt. and a high market price of \$160/cwt., that equates to a \$20-27 increase in revenue per ewe. This increase in revenue was realized with a cost of only \$0.60 per ewe for the BSE's. (Assumptions: the cost of the BSE's is \$18 per ram and the exposure rate is 30 ewes per ram.)

Figure 1. The sire of the rams in the picture at left served 140 ewes in one breeding season. Ninety percent of the lambs were born within an 18 day period.



How many lambs can one healthy ram with excellent semen produce in one year?

Healthy rams with excellent semen can serve more ewes in a given year and produce more lambs. In one case, a western U.S. range flock with 1,410 ewes and BSE tested rams with

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satisfactory or better semen was able to run one ram per 85 ewes. Only 50 (3.55%) ewes turned up not pregnant. More impressively, 1,050 (74.47%) of the ewes had twins while only 310 (21.99%) had singles and a total of 90% of the lambs were born in the first 18 days of lambing. Using healthy rams with excellent semen saves you money.

Ram Cost/Year

Purchase Price: \$1,000 per Ram*	
Years of Service: 4 years	
Salvage (Cull) Value: \$170	
Depreciation (4 years)	\$207.50
Interest (6%)**	\$35.10
Death Loss (5%)**	\$29.25
Feed & Maintenance	\$120.00
Cost/Year	\$391.85

Table 1. Annual ram costs of around \$400 are common when fully accounting for investment value, depreciation, feed, and maintenance.

*Average sale price at 2015 Wyoming Ram Sale.

**Based on \$585 average investment value in rams on a per head basis in any given year.

Healthy rams with excellent semen can service more ewes. Increasing the number of ewes served per ram in your operation can have a significant impact on lowering your costs per lamb produced. Assuming a 150% lamb crop and \$400 annual ram costs, using one ram per 30 ewes would translate into a ram cost of \$8.89 per lamb produced (see table 2). Increasing the number of ewes per ram to 50 head would lower the ram cost to \$5.33 per lamb produced. A ratio of 1 ram/85 ewes would lower it to \$3.15 per lamb.

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One Ram Cost = \$400 per year Assuming 150% lamb crop		
# of ewes/ram	# of lambs/ram	Ram cost/lamb
30	45	\$8.89
50	75	\$5.33
85	127	\$3.15

Table 2. Annual ram costs per lamb born can be reduced considerably by using healthy BSE tested rams to increase the ratio of ewes/ram during the breeding season.

Good information can help you make good decisions. BSE testing your rams provides you with good information that can both save you money and increase your revenues.

Prepared by Cleon V. Kimberling, Gerilyn A. Parsons, Jay Parsons, and Wayne Cunningham

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