



Cleon's Corner

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Shearing Time and Ked Control

I had an e-mail once from a small farm flock producer in Western Nebraska. He asked: "When is the earliest you should shear sheep in this area, how cold can they take immediately after shearing, is it safe to shear pregnant ewes? I was told that if I sheared my ewes they would be more likely to go to the barn to lamb where it is warmer, is this true? Any help you can give me will be greatly appreciated."

Regardless of the time of year, ewes should be shorn prior to lambing. This should be accomplished a minimum of 2 weeks prior to lambing and preferably 3 weeks. One must provide protection from the elements for at least 4-5 days to allow the ewe to acclimate to its new environment without the protection of the wool. Protection means out of the wind, snow and rain. Another thing to remember when we take away the insulation, is that it takes more fuel to keep the house warm. We need to provide some high energy feed, like corn. When feeding corn or other high energy feed, be cautious, start slow and gradually increase and make certain that the dominant matriarch in the pecking order doesn't get more than her share.

At shearing time you have an excellent opportunity to control external parasites, especially sheep keds and ticks. These parasites cause damage to the wool and pelts plus being an irritation to the ewe. It is important that all sheep be treated. If you miss just one sheep the problem will continue. Ectrin or Expar are approved for treatment of external parasites on sheep. It is easy to tell if the sheep has been treated with Expar as it has an oil base and leaves an oily track down the back. Ectrin is mixed with water so take some food coloring and mix with the preparation. This will give you a marker so none are missed. Lice are more difficult to control. Dipping is best for louse control but must be done at shearing time.

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Shearing time is a good time to give booster shots for overeating and other Clostridial infections. Shearing is also a good time to get the house in order for lambing. Make a list and check it twice. See our article titled "[Lambing Time Checklist](#)" for a good guide on what needs done to get ready for lambing.

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