**Feeding Cycles for Ewes and Does**

In the following article, when we refer to “feeding grain” to adults or replacements, consider 12-16% protein rations. The only time we exceed 16% rations is when we are feeding babies (lambs or kids) or show stock. Do not ever exceed feeding 20% protein. If you need high-quality feed for your sheep or goats, contact us at [www.linessafarms.com](http://www.linessafarms.com) or our feed mill at [www.foundationfeed.com](http://www.foundationfeed.com)

**Overfeeding and Fatness**

-Flushing ewes and does is the process of giving them a slight increase in feed approximately 1-2 weeks prior to expected breeding time. Although not completely understood, flushing is thought to “trick” the ewe or doe into ovulating better and has been shown to increase crop numbers. It is thought the doe or ewe will ovulate based on the available nutrition for milk production.

-Overly fat ewes and does are less likely to be successful at breeding and producing milk when compared to slightly underweight ewes and does. Again, do not overfeed your ewes and does. This will have a detrimental effect on ovulation and milk production. If you do not recall Tim’s “hand trick”, remember that the ewe or does rib cage along her flank should allow you to slightly feed her ribs. If you can feel her ribs easily, chances are she is undernourished. If you cannot feel ribs at all, she is overweight.

-Be cautious using free choice round bales within the last 6 weeks of gestation. This can promote overeating and fetus growth beyond desirable limits (think stuck babies/pulling babies/prolapase/etc).

-Late gestation grain feeding should be limited to no more than 1.5 pounds per head per day.

**Critical Stages**

-The last four weeks or gestation and the first six weeks of lactation are very important times during your annual ewe or doe cycle. Each of these time periods help to determine the overall health and welfare of your expected offspring and mothers.

-The last 4 weeks of pregnancy are very important as a time to “clean up” ewes and does. This is when antibiotic medication and anti-coccidiosis medications are very important. Antibiotics are important in helping to prevent abortion losses from diseases such as vibrio and chlamydia. Feeding 250mg of chlortetracycline daily is advised for antibiotic therapy. As a side note, toxoplasmosis is not controlled by antibiotics as this is due to coccidiosis.

-Coccidiosis medications given during this time will help prevent the transmission of coccidiosis from the doe or ewe to their offspring. Our goal at this time is to give the lambs and kids enough protection to hold them over until they can start consuming their own medicated feed.

-Preventing weak babies and white muscle disease is accomplished by feeding ewes and does high levels of vitamin E and selenium. You should be feeding the ewes and does as much selenium and vitamin E as possible at this time.

-Late gestation feeding should be no more than 1.5 pounds of feed per head per day. Overfeeding ewes and does will cause far mor complications than good.

**Lactation Feeding**

-Feeding ewes and does during lactation can be challenging. You will notice some ewes and does seem to fall apart regardless of how much nutrition you provide. Some of our best ewes and does simply put everything they take in, into their milk production. Near time of weaning, they can look underweight. Therefore, it is very important to maintain overall health and nutrition going into gestation and lactation. On a side note, an ewe or doe that looks fantastic during lactation but can’t feed her babies is not desirable. If you find yourself having to supplement with a bottle or having mother’s who can’t pay the rent, you need to consider moving them to greener pastures once culling time arrives.

-Phosphorus and vitamin E intake is very important to milk production and most ewes and does will not get enough through generic store-bought feed products. When considering amount of grain to feed lactating ewes or does, we stick with 2-2.5 pounds per head per day.

**Feeding Replacement Ewes and Does**

-You cannot throw your female ewe lambs or doe kids in with the other adult females and expect them to do well. When able, all “keeper” females should be grown out with the other littles until they are around 90lbs. At this point, we strongly encourage you to keep your replacement ewes and does separated from the adult flock until they are at least 1 year of age.

-At weaning, replacements can be fed up-to 4 pounds of grain per head per day and weaned down to 2-2.5 pounds per head per day at 6 months. From 9 months on, the replacements can be fed about 1.5-2 pounds per head per day. At one year, they can be introduced to the adult female flock.

-It is important to remember the replacements will need to take in more feed than the adult females during the first year of life to support appropriate levels of growth. They simply cannot get enough food if put in with adult females and overall growth and wellbeing will be compromised.

**Post Weaning and General Maintenance Feeding**

-Ewes and Does may need a little extra feed after weaning to get body condition to acceptable levels. As stated before, some mothers will put all the nutrition they get into producing milk.

-Be cautious about the timing of feeding post weaning. All mothers should be given poor quality hay/straw to eat for approximately 3 days post weaning and water intake should be slightly limited. Do not completely take away water from females to wean, this is not healthy and will cause more harm than good.

-For ewes and does prone to mastitis or those who have a history of not drying out well, you may want to consider injections of LA200 or dexamethasone.

-Allow females approximately 3-4 weeks post weaning before attempting to corrective feed for any weight loss.

-Normal maintenance feed for ewes and does is 1-1.5 pounds of feed per head per day.

**Feeding Males and Juveniles**

-Feeding males should always be done separately and cautiously. DO NOT EVER feed your males feed designed for females except for when the males are with the females for breeding. Feed designed for females will have an imbalance of phosphorus and calcium. This imbalance will cause males to get urinary calculi. This is also a danger to consider when purchasing big box store feed and supplements.

-Males of all ages, lambs, and goat kids should all be fed low or no phosphorus feed when possible. This includes wethers and castrated males.

-Males should be in the best shape possible just before rut/breeding. Males tend to go off feed when breeding and body condition can deteriorate rapidly during the breeding season. Consider utilizing teaser bucks and rams when available to protect body condition.