

Instructional Scenario

Evaluating Rams and Ewes



Course/Duty Area: Livestock Production Management / Exploring Sheep and Goat Production

Scenario

You are working with a sheep producer who wants to supply market lambs to the local cultural/international market for upcoming holiday celebrations—young, lean lambs weighing 40 to 60 lbs. are in particular demand. The producer raises Suffolk, Katahdin, Dorset, and Dorper breeds of sheep. The farm also houses 50 mature ewes and 4 rams and has pasture, hay, supplemental feed, and veterinary support. Your boss needs help selecting the best breeding stock and timing breeding so that lambs are born, weaned, and ready for market at the correct time, approximately 120 days after birth. As the livestock management specialist, you are responsible for the following tasks:

1. Breed selection
 - Identify breeds suitable for market lamb production.
 - Compare the available breeds for growth rate, carcass quality, hardiness, and suitability for the cultural/international market.
 - Recommend which breed(s) should be used for this production goal.
2. Individual animal selection
 - Evaluate individual ewes and rams for reproductive potential, growth traits, and carcass quality.
 - Identify the animals that should be bred to produce market lambs.
3. Breeding schedule
 - Determine the ideal breeding window to have lambs born on a timeline that meets market demand.
 - Consider gestation length and weaning schedule when planning.
4. Marketing alignment
 - Consider nutritional, environmental, and management factors that affect breeding and lamb growth.
 - Explain how breed and management choices will affect lamb quality and market value.
 - Consider timing, carcass size, and cultural preferences of the target market.

Big Questions:

- How do breed selection and breeding management affect the quality and market readiness of lambs?
- How can producers plan breeding schedules to meet the specific demands of niche or cultural/international markets?

Focused Questions:

- Which sheep breeds are most suitable for producing lambs for the cultural/international market, and why?
- What traits should be considered when selecting individual ewes and rams for breeding?
- How long is the gestation period for sheep, and how does this influence breeding timing?
- How do birth dates affect the age and weight of lambs at market?
- What management practices should be followed to ensure healthy pregnancies and lambs?
- How does nutrition of ewes influence lamb growth and market readiness?

Project Based Assessment:

- Written Breeding Plan: Include breed selection, individual selection, breeding calendar, and management notes.
- Presentation: Explain your recommendations to the “farm manager” and justify your choices.
- Calculation Task: Include expected lambing dates, weaning dates, and market-ready dates.

Scenario submitted by Kristin Beery, Valley Career and Technical Center, Augusta County Public Schools