TECHNICAL NOTES

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE

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FLUSHING OF RANGE EWES

A definition of flushing is increasing the nutritive intake of female animals shortly before and during the breeding period. In California, breeding coincides with a period of rapidly declining nutritive value of the annual range. Flushing, therefore, offers perhaps the most efficient way of improving lamb production and at the same time encourage the application of Proper Grazing Use in the course of your conservation planning work.

The following was excerpted from the Journal of Range Management, Volume 25, No. 5.

> "Flushing has been well established among sheep breeders. There are two effects of flushing; firstly, a reduction in the number of dry ewes, and secondly, an increased twinning rate. The physiological mechanism operating in increasing the incidence of multiple ovulation is not well understood.
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> The lambing performance of range (annual grasses--mainly Bromus spp., annual forbs and some subterranean clover--September) ewes was compared with that of similar ewes which were: (1) supplemented for 17 days prior to and the first 17 days of breeding (four years); (2) fed in dry lot (four years); (3) grazed improved pasture (two years) over the same period. Supplementation - (2.25 kg alfalfa pellets/ewe/week, fed twice weekly) did not significantly improve mean lambing percentage. In individual years, the effect of supplementing was significant in 1966. Dry lot feeding - (1.82 kg alfalfa hay/ewe/day) increased the number of lambs born/ewe present at lambing from 101 to 128%. Access to improved pastures - (mixture of subterranean clover and Hardinggrass mown prior to maturity and left in the swath) also increased lambing percentage (from 110 to 138).
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> On the basis of current feed costs and lamb prices, the returns from the extra lamb production achieved by the dry lot flushing treatment were in excess of the cost of the feed used to produce the effect. The economics of the improved pasture treatment are more difficult to assess, being complicated by the availability of a suitable area of pasture and alternative uses of that pasture."

In assisting landusers with ranch planning and application, Supplementation, dry lot feeding and access to improved pastures offer excellent alternatives for fostering Proper Grazing Use of range.

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