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We've been breeding and selecting for a 200% lamb drop or better on a consistent basis for 20 years. Now that we've achieved this level the amount of milk available to lambs is critical. Not enough colostrum at birth can greatly hinder immunity for future diseases. And later, a shortage of milk will cause everything from starvation to lower weaning weights; artificial rearing then falls into place.

Our Jan/Feb 2017 lambing group, an all OPP-negative status group, was our first 200% lamb crop for this time of year. All ewes had soft pliable udders with lots of milk like they should have. The few milk replacer lambs from this group were good and healthy. No bad lambs in this group at all: *Cull rate was cut in half. Nice to cull for reasons other than hard udders. Lamb death loss from birth to market is lowest we've ever had. Lamb weaning weight average is in the 50# range for all whiteface lambs weaned.*

Our April 2017 group dropped our biggest lamb crop ever, 233%. This is a test-positive group of ewes with many not able to feed a second lamb, much less a third. Lack of colostrum is an under-statement, but we did good for what we had: *A large cull rate, a 50% increase in death loss from birth to market, a 4# less average weaning weight, and these are terminal-sired lambs for market.*

In May 2017, another test-positive group of ewes lambed for us and had the usual 200% lamb drop and the lack of colostrum continued: *An even larger cull rate, a 100% increase in death loss from birth to market compared to our negative group, a 7# less average weaning weight, and again these are speckle faced lambs. Not at all looking forward to lambing these last two groups of ewes in Jan/Feb 2018.*

Anyone considering raising sheep on a current or future large-scale basis needs to seriously consider eradicating OPPv from their flock. Test all breeding sheep and cull, or manage as a separate group of positive ewes. Buy or build your own set of OPP test-negative ewes for your future replacements.

This money stealing virus — adding the expense and labor due to raising milk replacer lambs; higher replacement costs due to high cull rates; lower weaning weights and higher death losses — will keep future sheep producers from continuing in this enterprise. This is the last thing that we need.

- **Dorset, Finn x Rambouillet x Dorset, Finn x Rambouillet x Polypay**; primary ewe flock home bred; large group purchased early in the trial; rams purchased and home bred
- **Symptoms: hard udder, little or no milk, weight loss despite good appetite**
- **Accelerated flock; groups lamb in Jan/Feb, March, May and October**; various buildings: cold open (animals in and out) and cold closed barns, also mechanically heated barn with ventilation; pasture in season
- **Baseline: 390 adult ewes**; those home bred were 42% pos on initial partial-flock test; purchased group of 87 were 64% pos; no testing done prior to the trial
- **Potential replacements** tested during the trial, most weaned at 2 months of age:
  - 2013 (born Jan/Feb): 1 of 42 (2%) test-pos @ 9-10 mo
  - 2013 (born Oct): 6 of 14 (42%) test-pos @ 24 mo *(these were missed inadvertently, so not tested as young lambs)*
  - 2014 (born Jan/Feb): 7 of 50 (14%) test-pos @ 6-7 mo
  - 2014 (born Oct): (none retained)
  - 2015 (born Jan/Feb): 3 of 82 (4%) test-pos @ 7-8 mo
  - 2015 (born Oct): 1 of 13 (8%) test-pos @ 6 mo
  - 2016 (born Jan/Feb): 5 of 60 (8%) test-pos @ 6-7 mo
  - 2016 (born Oct): 3 of 30 (10%) test-pos @ 8 mo
  - 2017 (born Jan/Feb): 2 of 91 (2%) test-pos @ 6 mo
- Producer is a member of the Pipestone Management Program and follows that protocol, so young ewes join the main breeding flock at around 2 years of age; this has been an added challenge
- Ewes in such large management groups present another challenge: too many to count on a daily basis; a single test-pos ewe jumped in with a neg group and went undetected for months
- While genetic susceptibility testing was done early on, producer no longer relies on this; a purchased test-neg ram with the favorable 1,1 TMEM154 diplotype turned positive at 4 years of age following exposure to test-positive ewes
- Rather than retaining every available test-neg replacement to speed flock turnover, owner has continued to select on production merit as well as test status; slower, but a more valuable outcome
- This highly prolific flock is making excellent progress; will lamb the remaining test-positive ewes for the last time in Jan/Feb 2018