

CONSTRUINDO SABERES, FORMANDO PESSOAS E TRANSFORMANDO A PRODUÇÃO ANIMAL

PERFORMANCE OF EWES AND THEIR LAMBS AFTER PRE-PARTUM SHEARING

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Pre-partum shearing promotes a higher birth weight for lambs and becomes a useful tool to minimize perinatal mortality rate in lambs due to the exposure/starvation syndrome and hypothermia caused by the intense cold in the Southern region of Brazil during lambing season. Shearing during pregnancy causes stress in ewes and if applied between 50 and 90 days of gestation, period in which the placenta mostly grows, it causes an additional growth of the placenta, which also increases fetus and lamb weight at birth. The objective of this study was to evaluate the performance of ewes and lambs after pre-partum shearing management in terms of weight, weight gain and body condition score. Ten Texel ewes from the herd of *Instituto Federal Farroupilha - Alegrete Campus* were used, maintained under the same grazing conditions and as a single plot throughout the experiment. The breeding season occurred in the first semester of 2017, and 45 days before the expected lambing period, the ewes were distributed into the following treatments: five were shorn 45 days before parturition (45SH) and five were unshorn (UNSH). In the pre-partum period (after shearing), at lambing and in the postpartum period (until lamb weaning), ewes were weighed and body condition score was determined every 15 days. The body condition was obtained through a score scale of 0 to 5, where 0 = very lean and 5 = fat. In lambs, weight and body score data were collected at birth and every 15 days until weaning, which occurred at 45 days of age. The experimental design was completely randomized, with a variance analysis using F test and the means compared using Tukey test (5% significance). No statistical difference was observed for ewes' initial weight (an average of 56.8 kg) and initial body score (2.25 points). The weights and body conditions of ewes at lambing were similar, an average of 54.9 kg and 2.15 points. The lambs had similar weights at birth (average of 4.7 and 5.4 kg for lambs from 45SH ewes and UNSH ewes, respectively) and at weaning (14.9 and 16 kg, respectively for lambs from 45SH and UNSH ewes), showing an average daily weight gain of 0.231 kg and 0.237 kg, respectively for 45SH and UNSH treatments ($P = .9139$). The results indicate that pre-partum shearing management in Texel sheep hardly modifies the performance of ewes and their lambs until weaning.

Keywords: birth weight, body condition, lambing weight, shearing.

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