

Feeding Through Drought in Montana Dry Lotting Ewes Through Drought

Brent Roeder-MSU Sheep and Wool Extension Specialist
Dr. Chris Posbergh-Assistant Professor, Sheep Production
MSU Extension and Department of Animal and Range Sciences

Once a producer has reached at least one of the three grazing thresholds in all of their pastures (70-80% utilization or two inch stubble height or 50% bare ground), some tough decisions need to be made with the input of your banker or CPA. Hopefully before reaching that point, you have reduced numbers as much as possible through culling, early weaning, ultra-sounding and selling dries, and sending ewe lambs to a feedlot. With input from a financial expert, a producer needs to choose one of two options: 1) Do I have enough feed resources and financial equity to dry lot my stock for many months or even a year? or 2) should I completely destock, sell everything, bank the income and use a drought deferred tax strategy to hold the money and restock when conditions improve? Every operation is different and there is no cookie cutter answer to help make this decision. Whatever your decision, make sure you get an analysis on any feed you buy or harvest.

	DM Lbs	CP Lbs	TDN Lbs	Ca g	P g
Dry Lot 165lb Mid Gest	3.2	0.3	1.8	3.65	3.1
DDGS Pellet	0.2	0.06	0.16	0.05	0.83
Wheat hay	2.8	0.24	1.46	1.91	2.54
Total in ration	3.2	0.32	1.79	1.98	3.63
Pct of Requirements	100.0	105.67	99.44	54.18	117.06
Crested hay	3.0	0.26	1.65	3.54	2.18
DDGS Pellet	0.2	0.06	0.16	0.05	0.83
Total in ration	3.2	0.32	1.81	3.59	3.0
Pct of Requirements	100.0	106.6	100.56	98.42	96.86
Wheat straw	1.5	0.05	0.62	1.22	0.34
Crested hay	1.3	0.11	0.71	1.53	0.94
DDGS Pellet	0.5	0.15	0.4	0.14	2.06
Total in ration	3.3	0.31	1.73	2.89	3.35
Pct of Requirements	103.13	104.7	96.11	79.29	107.98
Dry Lot Late Gest Single 165lb	4.1	0.44	2.4	6.25	4.8
Wheat hay	1.5	0.13	0.78	1.02	1.36
Wheat straw	1.3	0.05	0.53	1.06	0.29
DDGS Pellet	0.7	0.21	0.56	0.19	2.89
Corn	0.6	0.06	0.52	0.05	0.79
Total in ration	4.1	0.44	2.39	2.33	5.33
Pct of Requirements	100.0	100.16	99.79	37.23	111.13
Wheat	1.0	0.16	0.87	0.18	1.91
Crested hay	3.1	0.27	1.7	3.66	2.25
Total in ration	4.1	0.43	2.58	3.84	4.15
Pct of Requirements	100.0	97.66	107.29	61.4	86.56
Dry Lot Late Gest Twins 176 lbs	4.4	0.49	2.9	8.3	6.1
Corn	0.7	0.07	0.61	0.06	0.92
Wheat hay	3.2	0.27	1.66	2.18	2.9
DDGS Pellet	0.7	0.21	0.56	0.19	2.89
Total in ration	4.6	0.55	2.83	2.43	6.71
Pct of Requirements	104.55	111.94	97.69	29.29	110.05
Crested hay	3.2	0.28	1.76	3.77	2.32
Alfalfa hay	0.5	0.08	0.26	2.83	0.5
Corn	0.5	0.05	0.44	0.05	0.66
Wheat	0.5	0.08	0.44	0.09	0.95
Total in ration	4.7	0.48	2.89	6.74	4.43
Pct of Requirements	106.82	98.76	99.83	81.26	72.65

Looking at harvested forage available across Eastern Montana, most people will be using either wheat hay, Crested Wheatgrass hay or incorporating as much wheat straw in as they can. It will be every difficult to utilize any wheat straw in a ration fed to late pregnant or lactating twins, but can be used sparingly in rations for singles.

I wouldn't recommend feeding wheat as a grain source on top of wheat hay and would try and use either corn or a DDGS (Distillers Dried Grains) pellet.

As you can see from the rations, one of the biggest concerns using any wheat feed is the critical calcium/phosphorus imbalance. It will be imperative to feed a good quality mineral when dry lotting ewes.

One of the biggest issues facing everyone in today's ranching environment in addition to the drought and high feed costs is the lack of available labor. As producers reduce ewe numbers to match available winter feed, you consider ultra-sounding ewes, selling dries, marking single verse twin. At lambing pre-paint brand all the ewes, lot lamb the singles in larger groups and do not jug. Ewes carrying twins can be placed twenty-five in a mixing pen prior to lambing and set lambed there with only two or there jugs in each mixing pen.