

News Column  
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## LAMBING TIME

I have been synchronizing and artificially inseminating my ewes since 2016, with the first A.I. lambs arriving in January of 2017. We only got about 50% conception that first year and only inseminated 15 ewes, so lambing eight ewes in my small lambing shed wasn't a problem.

The next year we synchronized and inseminated 21 ewes while still having just five lambing jugs in a 12 foot by 20 foot shed, with a 7x13 foot drop pen. Twenty ewes conceived but one died due to pregnancy toxemia a couple of weeks before lambing – she was probably carrying quads.

In January of 2018 we lambed 19 ewes in a five-day period,....during which we received about six inches of snow. That's not a lot of ewes lambing in a short time for many shepherds, but it was a lot for the limited space we had.

That was also the year we had three sets of quads, four sets of triplets, and twins on about everything else. Triplets are fun, but they can't be kicked out of a lambing jug as quickly as can twins and singles. Quads are interesting, but never fun.

I hadn't scheduled time off work that week so I built a lot of make-shift pens in the dark. The drop pen became lambing jugs. The ram shed became space for two ewes with lambs, and the pig pen suddenly became a sheep pen too.

There weren't enough buckets and there weren't enough hay feeders, and there definitely weren't enough panels for every ewe to have her own pen, but we made it work.

The amazing lambing percent we experienced in 2018, coupled with a timely snow storm was just the kick in the pants I needed. We built the barn that fall.

The new barn was great, having indoor hay storage, lights and electricity, and water hydrants at each end — no more carrying buckets of water 100 feet from an outdoor hydrant. But it was (is) too big for the ewes' body heat to warm the barn a bit. The old shed was cramped, but it stayed a few degrees warmer than the new barn does.

My new problem was that I now needed to check for newborns more frequently on those bitterly cold nights. New babies get too cold a little quicker in the new barn.

My solution last year was to buy myself barn cameras for Christmas. I still need to wake up to check the cameras, but now I don't have to get bundled up and go out in the cold every few hours unless I see action on the cameras. I should have installed cameras years sooner.

This year I'm planning my time better and I'll take about five days off to handle the first wave of lambs. They are due January 12, and that means the first one should arrive January 11.

I'll be at home in the lambing barn the evening of January 11, but you might want to head to Holton to attend the calving school the Meadowlark Extension District is hosting that evening.

I've kind of become a sheep guy, but I used to own cows and have attended three or four of these calving schools over the years. A lot of what I learned about delivering calves also applies to delivering lambs. I would attend again if I didn't already have other plans.

A. J. Tarpoff, Extension Beef Veterinarian, will be the featured speaker. He will discuss the calving process, focusing on when to intervene and how to manage a difficult birth, as well as offering tips to improve the general health and performance of newborn calves. Dr. Tarpoff does an outstanding job with these presentations and I'm sure you will be glad you chose to attend.

The calving school will be held at the Northeast Kansas Heritage Complex in Holton.

That's the location of their fairgrounds which were built new about ten years ago. The evening will start with supper at 6:00 p.m., followed by about two hours of learning.

Reservations are needed by January 8 and can be made by contacting the Holton Extension Office at 785/364-4125.

If you have questions, you can reach me at the Riley County Extension Office at 785/537-6350. Or, you can send e-mail to [gmcclure@ksu.edu](mailto:gmcclure@ksu.edu).

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