

THE EFFECTS OF DIFFERENT HOUSING AND FEEDING SYSTEMS ON THE GROWTH AND MUSCULARITY OF WEANED LAMBS

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Summary. In many EU countries fattening lambs are usually left in the stables, while those for breeding are grazed somewhere nearer the stables and fed additionally. Unfortunately, sheepbreeders of Lithuania mostly choose the extensive method of lamb raising (without concentrates and without additional feeding) because low sheep purchase prices dominate, and there is no system of payment according to the quality of carcasses.

The purpose of the study was to determine the efficiency of lamb grazing and keeping in the sheepfold and to define the effects of extensive and intensive feeding on the growth and muscularity of weaned lambs. Weaned native coarsewooled lambs were allotted into groups. In 2007, 15 female lambs and 12 male lambs were turned to pasture, and also 15 female lambs and 13 male lambs were left for feeding in the sheepfold near the stables. In 2008, 8 female lambs were left in the sheepfold and 8 turned to pasture. Besides, there were two groups of five male lambs each for fattening in the stables. The two groups of lambs were fed daily, respectively, 500 g and 200 g compound feed and each animal in the groups received 2-3 kg grass daily. The fattening of lambs lasted for 60 days (from 3 to 5 months of age). The lambs that were grazed (from 2 to 7 months of age) received only pasture grass and those kept in the sheepfold received 200 g of compound feed and 2 to 4 kg of green feed (beginning from August – 0.8 kg hay).

The results of the study indicated that pasturage of weaned lambs and fattening of male lambs had a positive effect on their growth rate and muscularity. Grazing female lambs from 2 to 7 months of age gained daily on the average 14 g while male lambs 8 g. Thus, at the age of 7 months they were by 1.31 - 2.34 kg heavier and their muscularity was by 0.11-0.55 points higher than that of their contemporaries fed in the sheepfold. Fattening lambs gained 3.06 kg more weight in 60 days.

Keywords: lambs, grazing, feeding, growth, muscularity.