

ALBERTA SHEEP

Alberta Sheep Facilities

Planning Sequence

Before you begin:

- Determine lambing pattern and the number of animals, (by groups) to be housed.
- Decide on the type of facility desired for each group.
- Compute the size of all facilities. (Plan for some flexibility in facilities.)
- Sketch each major building or facility.
- Identify possible sites. (Consider the overall size, access, possible use of existing buildings, future expansion, utilities, and natural drainage.)
- Make sure your facility complies with applicable zoning, building code, and sanitary regulations other restrictions may include easements and neighbours reactions to odours, noise, dust, and flies.

Site Selection

Topography - A gently sloping site usually involves the least site development cost. Surface characteristics of the land (such as direction and steepness of slope, gullies, ravines, streams, swamps, and rocks) affect site development, pollution potential from manure runoff, and use. Locate feedlots far enough from streams to permit control of feedlot runoff and high enough to avoid flooding from stream overflow.

Water Supply – An all-year water supply of adequate quantity and quality is needed, either from a public water system or from private development.

Windbreaks – Consider natural protection provided by wooded areas.

Existing Buildings - Use existing barns only if their size, location, physical condition, and inside arrangement fit your overall plan.

Building Decisions

Options when building

1. be your own contractor
2. use a design and/or construction firm
3. hire a consulting engineer

Plans - show all the necessary dimensions and details for constructions.

Specifications - generally describe materials to be used, including size and quality

Contract - is an agreement between the builder the owner; it includes the price of construction, the schedule of payments, guarantees, responsibilities, and starting and completion dates.



Facilities are needed for:

- pregnant ewes
- ewes with newborn lambs
- orphan lambs
- lactating ewes with lambs
- ram pen
- feeder lambs

Facilities that reduce drafts and keep lambs dry; play a key role in reducing lamb death loss.

Barn Roof Styles

Shed Roof

- provides good head room
- simple to build

Gable Roof

- most widely used for both open-front and enclosed barns.
- fairly simple to construct and insulate.
- medium in cost.
- adaptable to natural ventilation through eaves, sidewall, and ridge openings, and clear-span construction with trussed rafters.

Offset Gable Roof

- has two identical slopes of different length, so one eave is higher than the other

Three Types of Common Housing for Sheep

Open-Front Barn with Lot

- usually keeps inside temperatures a few degrees cooler than outside temperatures in hot weather and a few degrees warmer in cold weather
- open side of barn should face away from prevailing winter winds (North)
- install fence line feeders in lot area
- pave heavy traffic areas, around waters, and along feed bunks

Solid Floor Confinement

- feed does not get wet or blow away in a confined barn
- snow and ice doesn't collect in feed bunks
- it is difficult to provide adequate bunk space for group-feeding in confinement

Slotted Floor Confinement

- provides clean, dry floors with minimum cleaning labour
- about twice the animals can be housed on slotted floors as an equivalent size solid floor, so the added investment is spread over more animals
- drafts through the floor can be a problem especially for small animals

Facility Planning

Corrals are penned areas for treating, handling and sorting animals. Locate a corral:

- near the sheep and barns
- near a serviceable road
- on a well drained site
- where electricity and water are available

Corrals should include a:

- gathering area - reception pen (for sheep from the field or barn) and a crowding pen
- working area - is for sorting, tagging, foot bath, worming, vaccinating, etc. (in many cases one chute serves all)
- holding area - sheep from the working chute are transferred or sorted into holding pens

Treating and Handling Facilities

Treating and handling facilities are used for tagging, vaccinating, weighing, pregnancy checking etc.

Related Facilities

Weighing - a useful location for a weigh scale is in the sorting chute before the sorting gate.

Loading Facilities - a portable loading chute is useful for multi-pasture set ups. Consider a permanent loading ramp for large flocks and to reduce animal injury.

Shearing - handling pens next to a shearing barn make sorting easier and quicker. Small catch pens are necessary for shearing. Construct floors that can be kept clean (slats are often used). Wool bagging equipment and storage space may be necessary.

Equipment for Raising Orphan Lambs

Newborn lambs can be successfully milk reared on milk-replacer diets, low-labour self-feeders, and early weaning from liquid diets. Young lambs require a liquid diet until stomach development permits solid feeds. For minimum labour and maximum growth feed lambs free-choice. Nipples attached to tubes leading from an insulated chest are a satisfactory feeder.

Feeders

There are many types of feeders that sheep producers may choose from such as:

- fenceline bunks and grain bunks
- steel barrel feeder (self feeder)
- hay feeders
- creep feeders

Utilities

Utilities for sheep barns include electricity for feed handling, lighting, heating, and ventilation; gas for heating and water for sanitation and drinking