SECTION III-7
MILKING ORDER

7. MILKING ORDER

7.1 EWE LAMBS MILKED FIRST

There are several reasons to milk ewe lambs first:

- To ensure that ewe lambs become comfortable in a parlour setting, it is important to milk them first in the milking order to allow for more time to get accustomed to the milking system. If ewe lambs are put into groups with older animals, there is a potential for them to get bullied out of being milked, and this will be associated as a negative experience.
- If ewe lambs are milked together, the milking times will be more consistent between animals, as they are all producing a simlar amount of milk, which saves time later on for the milker.
- Ewes with more than one lactation, are more likely to carry infections with contagious mastitis pathogens. Milking ewe lambs first reduces possible exposure to these infected ewes and their milk.

7.2 PHYSICALLY IDENTIFY CONTAGIOUS MASTITIS EWES

Because animals that are identified with contagious mastitis (e.g. *Staph. aureus*) generally have chronic subclinical infections throughout their lactation, it is important to treat these animals separately from the rest of the flock to minimize the potential of transmitting these pathogens to other ewes. The identification should be a milker level, be visible from the rear of the animal and be semi-permanent, i.e. should not wear off but should be able to be removed if the status of the animal changes. An example is to use leg ties such as shown in Fig. 20. Keep written records of all treatments, culture results and management decisions on each ewe (Fig. 21).

Fig. 1. Leg tie to identify udder health status

There are three common ways to manage these animals:

- Have a separate milking unit that is used for only confirmed infected ewes. For example, a special bucket milker is used.
- Disinfect each milking unit separately after it has been used on an infected animal. This is very time and labour consuming however.
- Identify ewes known to be infected with a contagious mastitis pathogen, and manage them as a separate group. Milk this group of animals last in the flock. By doing this, you eliminate the chance of infected milk being transferred to an uninfected ewe through the teat cups of the milking unit. In addition, all milking units will be disinfected after the end of milking, which eliminates the need of disinfecting them separately after each infected ewe is milked. More information is available in Section VI.8.

Fig. 2. Keep written records