

# NNYADP Research: Summer Lamb Feeding Strategies Project Early Results

*provided by Project Leader Betsy Hodge, CCE Livestock Specialist, 9/2021*

## Comparing feeding schemes for lambs of grazing ewes

This study compared the growth of lambs weaned and self-fed in the barn versus lambs left with their mothers on pasture, as well as overall profitability of the two schemes. Growth rates, treatment costs, lamb losses, cost of gain, market prices, and total costs will be compared.

The lambs were divided into two groups. Half of the lambs were weaned at 8 weeks, stayed in the barn, and were fed a specially created diet high in fermentable fiber, protein, and energy. The rest of the lambs and the ewes are on pasture, which was sampled regularly. The two groups are shown below, enjoying their pasture and grain.



The lambs were weighed once every two weeks to compare growth. The barn lambs averaged higher weights and average daily gains. Overall health and fecal egg counts are also compared between the two groups.

Sample Date	Barn Average (lbs.)	Pasture Average (lbs.)	Barn ADG (lbs.)	Pasture ADG (lbs.)
6/30/21	45.04	46.51	-	-
7/13/21	56.79	57.34	0.90	0.83
7/27/21	67.71	62.86	0.78	0.39
8/6/21	78.07	64.13	1.04	0.13
8/20/21	87.89	68.65	0.70	0.32

The study may show that weaning lambs early and feeding them in the barn may be a viable option, especially for farms that want to do multiple lambings per year. Potential advantages of the barn are lack of parasites, predators, improved body condition for both lambs and ewes and getting lambs to market size sooner. As this study continues, we will see if this is actually the case and whether the cost of grain is offset by the advantages.

It takes a lot of time and management to do a good job pasturing the ewes and lambs. Our pasture maintained high protein all summer but the energy was low compared to the all-grain ration. Filling the grain feeders was less labor. As we process the data we will let you know what we conclude. Watch [www.nnyagdev.org](http://www.nnyagdev.org) for the full project report in early 2021.