



Incisor teeth should meet the dental pad, particularly when breeding replacements.



Check molar teeth from the outside.



Scrotal size is important for fertility.



Check for two, large, evenly-sized testicles, free from lumps.

Buying rams early also allows you to choose from the best. Run rams in the groups that they will be in when breeding. This allows a pecking order to be worked out and reduces fighting.

QUARANTINE

A newly purchased ram can carry diseases into your flock. They can also transfer disease between groups of ewes on your farm.

Newly purchased rams should be isolated for three

weeks from the rest of the flock, so they can be given preventative treatments and checked for diseases like footrot, CODD, scab, lice, orf, pink-eye and CLA. While there is a cost to all of this, it will be far less than the cost of treating your entire flock.

☛ If there is any uncertainty about the past clostridial vaccination programme of your new rams, start again with two shots four to six weeks apart.

☛ Footbath on arrival fol-

lowed by two more footbathing sessions five to seven days apart.

☛ Dip soon after arrival to control scab and lice. Avoid dipping rams within eight weeks of the start of the breeding season. Ensure that the dip is clean. Alternatively, use injectables for scab and a pour-on for lice.

☛ To reduce the risk of bringing in anthelmintic resistant worms on arrival treat with a group three (macrocyclic lactone) and a group four (zolix) wormer sequentially. Alternatively, treat with a group three and a group five (starect) wormer sequentially. Keep sheep off pasture for at least 24 hours and, ideally, for 48 hours. Then put onto pasture recently grazed by lambs.

☛ If there is any uncertainty about the risk of liver fluke or if it is considered a risk dose for it.

AFTERCARE

Once the breeding season is over, all rams should be re-checked. Sort out any health problems like lameness, brisket sores and injuries as early as possible. Rams that lost condition during the breeding season will need meal feeding. Do not forget to fluke dose and the annual clostridial vaccination. While there is cost to all of this, it will be far less than the cost of premature culling of rams.

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