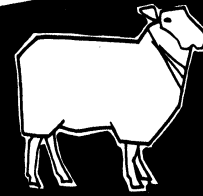




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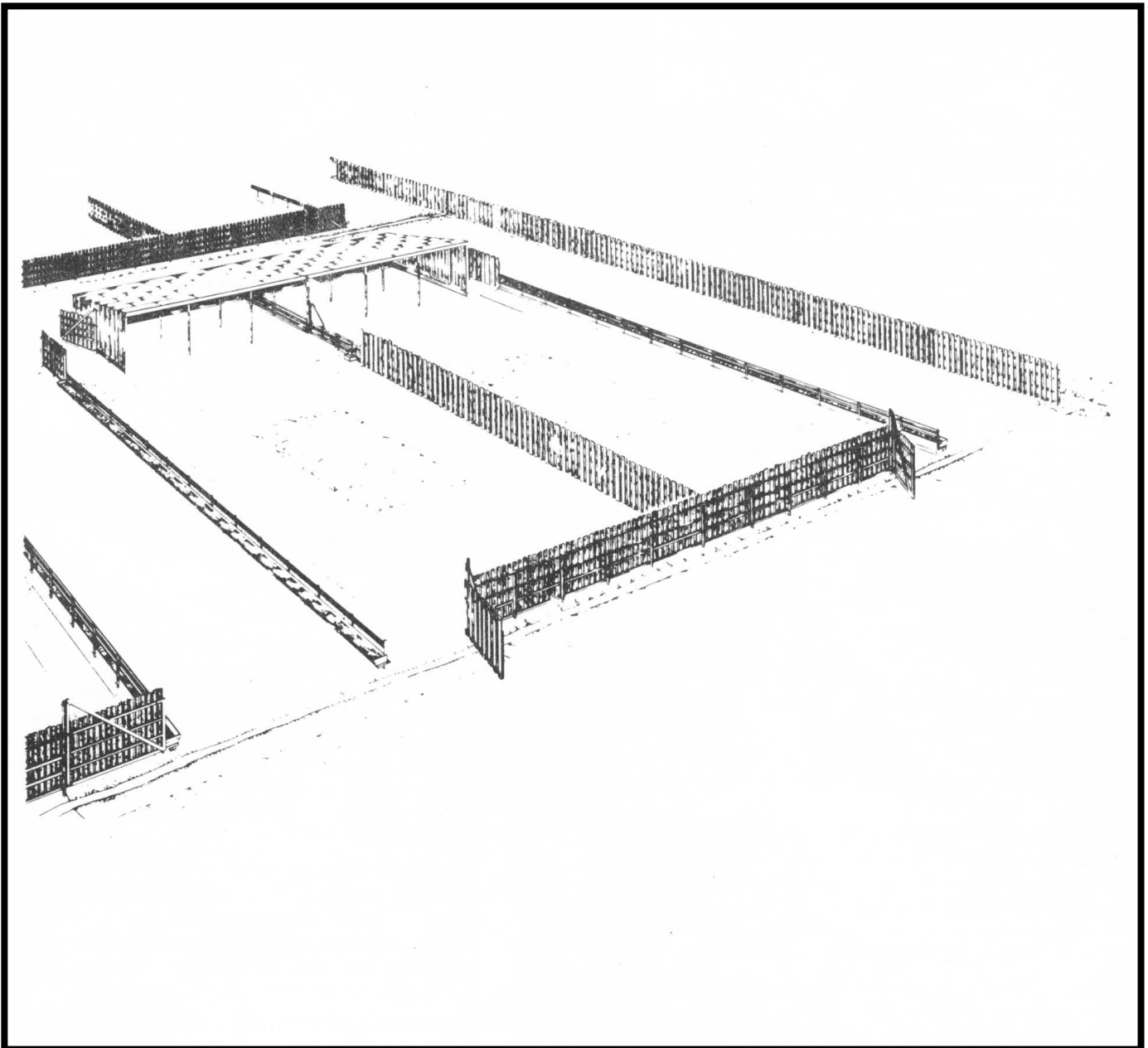
Agricultural Building Systems Handbook



PLAN

351-21

SEMICONFINEMENT SHEEP FACILITIES FOR 1000 EWES



DEVELOPED BY CANADA PLAN SERVICE

SEMICONFINEMENT SHEEP FACILITIES FOR 1000 EWES

CPS

PLAN 4121

NEW 10:75

This leaflet describes how to combine component units for setting up semiconfinement sheep facilities for up to 1000 ewes. Each unit is described in detail in reference plans, made up as follows:

1 Lambing Unit	- Plan 351-24	(CPS 4311)
1 Sheep Corral Unit	- Plan 353-01	(CPS 4811)
2 Sheep Drylot Units (136' x 138')	- Plan 351-22	(CPS 4122)
4 Sheep Drylot Units (108' x 138')	- Plan 351-22	(CPS 4122)

The facilities can be built in stages, starting with the lambing unit. This can be used for housing sheep throughout the year and set up for lambing, using portable equipment. Build other units in the above order as the flock increases, so that the facility, when finally complete as shown in Plan 351-21 makes a balanced and efficient sheep operation.

The 1000 ewes are divided into 6 groups of 170 ewes each. Each group of 170 ewes is housed in a drylot unit. (Plan 351-22), and divided into two pens of 85 ewes each. The sheep drylot units are similar except that two units have additional shed space for housing the nursing lambs. The ewes are reduced from 85 to 60 per pen in the small drylot units when the nursing lambs are kept with the ewes. The remaining ewes are regrouped, with the last group of ewes to lamb remaining in the lambing unit.

Management

Good management is the key to the success of any sheep enterprise. In most operations, ewes are bred in fall and lamb in late winter or spring (gestation period 147 days). This leaflet outlines this well-established practice, using semiconfinement facilities. The Table on page 5 illustrates the production cycle and the use of the facilities during each stage.

The facilities are adaptable to new production practices. The program cycle can be shifted to an earlier or later lambing period. New programs in the sheep industry such as multiple births or year-round lambing may also change the program cycle.

Using semiconfined facilities, the ewes are kept on pasture or fed a maintenance ration in the drylot unit during the summer. From August through October the ewes are bred on pasture, or in the drylot where they can be observed more easily. The ewes are bred in groups over a 3-month period so that 170 ewes will lamb every 2 weeks from January through March.

Before lambing, each group of 170 ewes (2 pens of 85 ewes) is moved into the lambing unit. The ewes can be confined in the lambing shed by adding plywood front-panels and hinged-up plastic windows during severe weather. After lambing in the shed, the lambs are picked up and carried to the claiming pens and the ewe normally follows. Each ewe is kept with her lambs in a claiming pen for 2 days or until the motherhood bond is established.

During peak lambing periods, there may be as many as 16 ewes lambing each day if the breeding program was in the proper sequence. Enough claiming pens should be provided to house 10% of the ewes that will lamb within a 1-month period, or a minimum of 35 claiming pens for the 1000-ewe operation. The additional 11 claiming pens shown in Plan 351-24 can be used to house orphan lambs.

When the ewe has accepted her lambs they are moved into the unheated "hardening" area where 8 to 10 ewes and their lambs are placed in group pens for 2 to 4 days. Here the ewes and lambs learn to find each other in a group. No creep-feeder is needed here.

From the "hardening" pens the ewes and lambs are moved back to their drylot units. The ewes with their lambs from the four larger drylot pens are returned to their own pens. The ewes from the eight smaller pens are regrouped so that 60 ewes with their lambs are housed in each pen. The remainder of the ewes are grouped together with the last group to lamb, which stays in the lambing unit.

Central Lambing

One limitation of a central lambing unit like Plan 351-24 is the requirement to control diseases, particularly those carried in the manure and afterbirth. Lambing buildings should be cleaned and disinfected thoroughly between lambings. If problems develop, ewes can be left in their own drylot units for lambing. The sheds can be enclosed and equipped with portable claiming pens. This involves more work and makes close supervision more difficult.

Some sheepmen prefer to regroup ewes so that the singles, twins or triplets are together. Then the ewes with twins or triplets can be given additional care and feed.

Lambs usually are weaned at 2 months of age. The ewes are moved to other drylot pens or to pasture, while the lambs are fed in the confined drylot facilities. The lambs normally reach market weight (90 to 110 pounds) at 5 months. During the feeding period the lambs can be grouped according to age and weight in the different pens.

Feeding

Feed is distributed from a feed storage and processing center, using a self-unload feed wagon or mobile feed mill into fenceline feed bunks. To reduce baled fodder handling, bales can be stacked along the center of the driveway. Feeder lambs can be full-fed so that all lambs do not have to eat simultaneously, provided the fenceline bunks are replenished as soon as old feed is used up. Another alternative is to increase lamb feeding space by adding covered self-feeders when required in each pen.

Put a creep-feeder in the corner of the sheds so that lambs can get accustomed to grain. A heat-lamp hung in the creep-feeding area for several days attracts the lambs into the area and provides additional heat. The creep area can be enclosed by a suspended tarpaulin for additional warmth for early lambs or during severe weather conditions.

The feed driveways must be well-drained, and at least 24 ft wide to permit snow removal. A common driveway between two pens should be at least 30 ft wide; if fodder is stored in the driveway, increase the width to at least 45 ft.

Handling Facilities

Set up portable fence sections in the back of each sheep shed to treat individual animals, but build a central corral unit for treating large groups of sheep. Herd the sheep in a group along the main alley to the corral unit, using lightweight wire or lumber gates to span driveways.

A small low-bed trailer is useful to transport small groups of ewes with their lambs from the lambing barn to the drylot pens.

Rams

A small separate housing unit for rams is shown in the plan. This unit uses the same components as the other drylot units, except for the shed. This is constructed like Plan 350-03 but only 14 ft deep instead of 20 ft from open front to back wall. This holds about 15 rams per pen or 30 rams total, giving 22.4 sq ft of shed and 76 sq ft of lot area per ram.

If it is necessary to isolate some dominant rams to control fighting, consider increasing the length and decreasing the depth of the shed so it can be divided more easily into single-ram pens.

Drainage

Dry, well-drained facilities are essential in any sheep operation. A location sloping south at least 4% is preferable. A bedded earth mound in each pen also helps by providing a well-drained area during wet periods.

The pens drain better if the manure is scraped together while still partly frozen during early spring. Scrape manure into a pile in the pen or push it out into an adjacent storage area for later hauling and spreading when the fields have dried. A paved feeding strip at least as wide as the tractor and scraper facilitates cleaning.

All runoff should drain out of the pen. Use a shallow V-shaped ditch along the bottom of the pens to collect pen runoff and divert it into a holding pond. A paved V-trench is easier to clean wherever the ditch crosses a driveway.

To control water pollution, all contamination runoff should be collected in an approved storage. Obtain approval of your plans from proper local authorities before starting construction.

PRODUCTION PERIOD	TIME SEQUENCE	HOUSING MANAGEMENT
Maintenance of dry ewes	Late spring to early fall	On pasture or on maintenance ration in drylot
Breeding	Over a 3-month period beginning Aug. 1, breed 170 ewes every 2 weeks	On pasture, or in drylot for better breeding control
Gestation	Average 147 days	Ewes housed in drylot, 85 ewes per pen
Lambing	Over a 3-month period beginning Jan. 1, with 170 ewes lambing every 2 weeks	Lambing unit, Plan 351-24 ewes are moved through lambing pens, claiming pens and hardening pens
Nursing	Until 2 months old, when lambs are weaned	In drylot unit, Plan 351-22 larger pens each house 85 ewes and their lambs and smaller pens 60 ewes and their lambs; remainder of ewes regrouped, with last lambing group in lambing unit
Weaning	When lambs are 2 months old	Lambs remain in drylot, grouped according to size and age; ewes moved to separate drylot or onto pasture
Finishing lambs	Ready for market at 90 – 110 lb, or about 5 months old	Feed in drylot