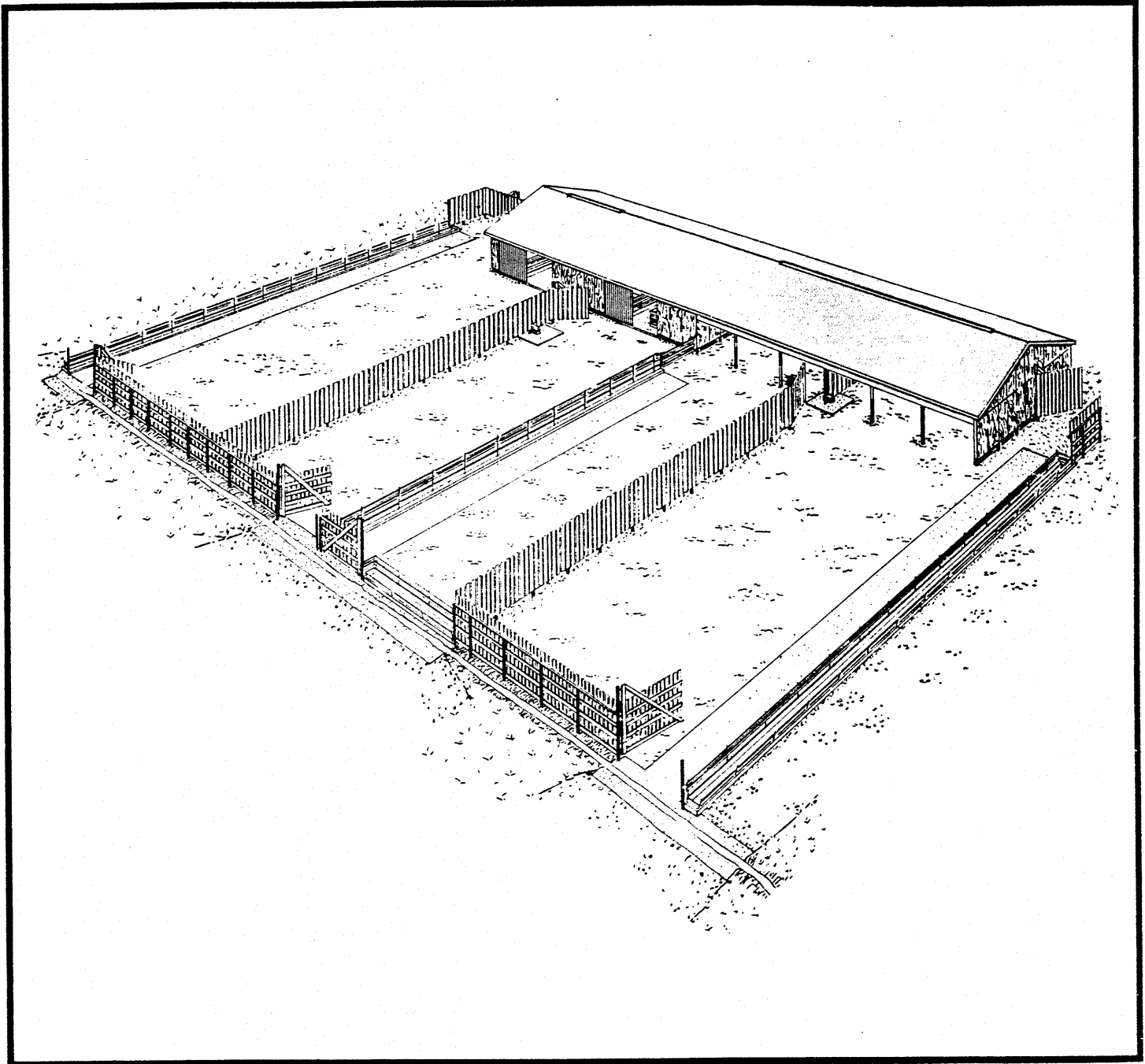


LAMBING UNIT



The Canada Plan Service prepares detailed plans showing how to construct modern farm buildings, livestock housing systems, storages and equipment for Canadian Agriculture.

This leaflet gives management information and describes one of these detailed plans. To obtain a copy of the Canada Plan Service detailed plan, contact your local provincial agricultural engineer or extension advisor.

LAMBING UNIT

PLAN 4311 NEW 5:76

This plan is for a central lambing unit designed to fit into a sheep production facility for 1,000 ewes (see Plan and Leaflet 4121). Size is based on 170 ewes lambing every 2 weeks, for a 12-week lambing period.

Construction is simple pole frame walls supporting a 40-ft clear-span trussed roof. This type of construction is versatile; the clear-span interior can be penned off in any number of ways, and the modular spacing of poles and girts in the walls and trusses in the roof makes it easy to insulate and line the interior where necessary.

All pens are portable and can be set up temporarily for the lambing period. After lambing, remove and store the portable pens, and use the whole unit for other purposes such as lamb raising, shearing, etc. The barn is divided into 3 main sections, for lambing, claiming and hardening.

LAMBING SECTION

This is an open-front uninsulated section at one end. The front can be partly closed with plywood and plastic curtain panels for lambing in bad weather. Ventilation is by natural air flow through vents under the eaves and along the roof ridge. Do not try to close this area tightly or it will be too damp.

An insulated office within the lambing section is for the operator to keep an eye on ewes about to lamb, and for storage of birth records and medications.

CLAIMING SECTION

This is an insulated area for up to 50 claiming pens, each 4 X 4 or 4 X 5 ft; the plan shows an arrangement for 46 pens of both sizes. Heat lamps are suggested for supplemental heating; use only CSA-approved heat lamp reflector-receptacles properly suspended from screw-eyes and plugged into outlets at the ceiling. The plan indicates the number of 250-watt heat lamps required for various outside temperatures. To control ventilation and temperature, a small 2-speed exhaust fan in the north wall is wired to a thermostat at the center of the room. Two inlet baffles in the ceiling can be adjusted for good fresh air distribution.

HARDENING SECTION

This is a cold, uninsulated area for acclimatizing the lambs before they return with the ewes to the standard drylot units (Plan 4122). This section has 6 portable pens each 12 X 12 ft and holding 8 to 10 ewes with lambs. A covered creep area can be built in the corner of each pen and heated with heat lamps, if early lambing is practiced. For ventilation, use natural air flow through openings at the eaves and ridge.

In milder weather, one or more groups of ewes and lambs can be let out to feed in the outside lot.

OUTSIDE DRYLOT AREA

This optional area is included to make the lambing unit function as a standard drylot unit when not in use for lambing. It has the same perimeter feed bunk, paved feeding strip, frost-

proof water tanks and porous windbreak fencing that are part of typical Western sheep feedlots (see Plan 4122). For humid Eastern regions, this would require some modifications such as eavestroughing on the south eave of the barn, more paving, and less feedlot area.

MANAGEMENT

Just before lambing, groups of 170 ewes (2 pens of 85 ewes each) are moved into the lambing unit. The ewes can be confined in the lambing area during severe weather conditions if necessary. The ewes lamb in the shed area after which the lambs are picked up and carried to the claiming pens. The mother ewe normally follows the lamb as it is being moved to the claiming pens. The ewe and her lambs remain in the claiming pens two days or until she has accepted her offspring. During peak lambing periods, there may be as many as 16 ewes lambing each day if the breeding program was in the proper sequence. There should be enough claiming pens to house 10% of the ewes that will lamb within a 1-month period (or 35 claiming pens for 1,000 ewes). The additional claiming pens can be used to house orphan lambs.

When the ewe has accepted her lambs they are moved into the hardening area where 8 to 10 ewes and their lambs are placed in group pens for 2 to 4 days. The ewes and lambs become accustomed to one another and learn to find each other in a group. From the hardening pens the ewes and lambs are moved back to their original drylot.

The last group of ewes to move into the lambing facilities could remain there, as this space will be required to house ewes and lambs.

A criticism of a central lambing facility is the reduced ability to control diseases during lambing. Some diseases can be readily transmitted from ewe to ewe or to lambs if the after-birth is not cleaned up and the buildings are not properly disinfected. Good management can reduce the disease problem; however, if problems develop, the ewes could be left in their own drylot area for lambing.

FEEDING

The expecting ewes in the lambing area can be fed outside in the fenceline feed bunks or inside the barn with portable feeders during bad weather.

In the claiming pens, ewes are fed and watered individually. Rectangular plastic pails attached in one corner make suitable waterers.

The ewes in the hardening pens are fed in racks attached to the pens. Water can be provided in drums filled by garden hose. If the sheep are let outside, they could be fed in outside feed bunks. A lamb creep feeder is not yet required.