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Summary only

THE EFFECT OF CORTISOL ACETATE
ADMINISTRATION ON GROWTH AND CARCASS
QUALITY OF LAMBS

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Relationships between adrenal cortex activity and growth and carcass quality of sheep have been investigated by attempting to manipulate circulating cortisol levels. Preliminary experiments indicated that reasonably consistent elevations in circulating cortisol levels could be obtained by administering cortisol acetate every two or three days. When cortisol acetate was administered to growing lambs at the rate of 50 mg/animal every second day over an 8-week period, it produced an initial elevation in circulating cortisol levels. After approximately 5 weeks these levels fell, so that at slaughter they did not differ from control levels. There were no detectable effects of this treatment on growth rates, carcass composition or meat tenderness.

Acute administration of cortisol acetate at 150 mg/animal for 3 days immediately before slaughter did not affect carcass characteristics or meat tenderness.

It is concluded that the relationship between adrenal cortical activity and productivity reported for cattle either does not hold in lambs or, if it does, it is not a simple cause and effect relationship.