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*Summary only*

CONDITION SCORING OF SHEEP

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A total of 885 Romney ewes from four flocks were weighed and assessed for body condition score at mating. The effects on subsequent lambing performance were evaluated.

The total regression coefficients of lambs born on score ( $0.187 \pm 0.033$ ), lambs born on ewe body weight ( $0.021 \pm 0.003$ ) and ewe body weight on score ( $4.890 \pm 0.339$ ) were all significant ( $P < 0.001$ ). This suggested that condition score was more effective than body weight as an indicator of subsequent lambing performance.

However, when each of the four flocks was considered separately, the regression of lambs born on score reached significance ( $P < 0.05$ ) only once, whereas the regressions of ewe body weight on score and ewe body weight on lambs born were significant ( $P < 0.01$ ) on all occasions, and multiple regression analysis established that weight, rather than condition score, was the variable most closely related to subsequent lamb production.

The repeatability of condition score was examined using three operators and 36 sheep each being assessed for condition three times on one farm. The mean condition score for operators A, B and C was 3.1, 3.3 and 3.1, respectively, with the difference between Operator B and Operators A and C being significant ( $P < 0.01$ ). The repeatability of condition score was 0.49, 0.58 and 0.67 for the three operators, respectively.

It is considered that condition score mainly reflects variations in body weight. Because condition score is a subjective measurement with only a moderate repeatability, the technique would require initial learning and subsequent yearly recalibration before it could be used with any precision by farmers.