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SYNCHRONIZATION OF OESTRUS IN EWES

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RAM-INDUCED synchronization of mating and lambing was studied over the period 1965-7 in two Romney and two Corriedale flocks at Lincoln (latitude 44°S), in one Romney flock at Mayfield (44°S) which is a cold elevated region and in two Romney flocks in Southland (46°S). In each flock, raddled entire rams were placed with successive groups of ewes (previously separated from rams) for 10-day periods initially, and later re-introduced to the groups at the time a control group of ewes was mated.

In the Romney flocks, the optimum times for the introduction of rams to synchronize oestrus were the end of February at Lincoln and mid-March in Southland. Results from the flock at Mayfield were similar to those in Southland. Synchronization of mating in Corriedale ewes can occur about one month earlier than in Romneys. These results arise from differences in the normal onset of oestrus. In the absence of a "ram effect" the average dates of first oestrus in Corriedales at Lincoln, Romneys at Lincoln and Romneys in Southland are approximately February 25, March 25 and April 5, respectively. The presence of rams with ewes before the breeding season advances the breeding season by 10 to 15 days.

Where ram-induced synchronization of oestrus is good, the following results can be achieved: 80% of ewes mated in 6 days, 55-66% of ewes lambing within one week, 12% of ewes lambing in one day at the peak of lambing and this date predictable to ± 2 days.