



## Culling Underperforming Sheep from Organized Farm

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### INTRODUCTION

In organized farms animals are added and removed every year. Therefore, decrease and increase in number of animals in organized farms is a routine practice. Lambing is main cause responsible for increase in livestock number at an organized farm whereas culling, mortality, sale and distribution of animals are causes responsible for reducing the flock strength. The culling of animals from flocks (farms) is done on the performance of individual and presence of undesirable traits in an individual (Shivahre et al., 2014). Culling of underperforming animals is an important selection and managerial decision which determines the overall farm performance (Kumar et al., 2016). As culling of the undesirable stock at farms reduce cost of flock maintenance in terms of feed, fodder and human resources. The culling is done on the basis of health and low production.

### Importance of culling

1. Culling underperforming animals will reduce the cost of flock maintenance.
2. Annual culling of ewes with poor mothering ability from breeding stock is an important method to improve the pre-weaning average growth rate of lambs over the long-term (Wenhui & Purvis, 2012).
3. Culling also acts as a confounding effect on growth traits in particular when researcher is studying the effect of parity and birth type on growth traits e.g when slowing growing lambs born to dams in first parity or born as twins are sold before weaning and a researcher is studying effect of these factors on weaning weight may not find significant difference between first and subsequent parities and between single born and twin born lambs at weaning and subsequent ages.
4. Culling of the lambs for feedlot purpose should be done at early ages to increase the economic returns due to reason that feed conversion ratio and average daily gains decrease with increase in age of lamb.

**Reasons for culling**

**Age:** Age is always main reason of culling. Corbett, (2001) has reported that maximum wool is produced by sheep at 3 to 5 years of age with variable rates of decline thereafter (Rather, et al., 2021). Further, Schoenian, (2014) reported that ewes after attaining 5-6 of age produce fewer lambs of lower body. In addition these ewes also produce less quantity of milk for lambs thereby resulting in decreased pre-weaning growth rate and lower average weaning and market weight of lambs. Ewes in managed in small, ewes receive individual care and ewes receiving good care in terms of nutrition and management have higher average culling age as compared to ewes managed in large flocks.

**Disease conditions and morphological deformities:** Health and good body conformation are important parameters for selection of an animal in breeding programs. Animals suffering from any congenital deformity or acquired disease are culled at premature age. Morphological deformities remain major cause of culling of lambs of 0-6 month age group and Gid remains major cause of culling for animal of 6-24 months age group. Similarly, mastitis and brucellosis is main cause of culling for ewes and for rams it is Orchitis and brucellosis for rams. Hoof deformities caused by footrot etc are also among cases of culling for all age groups. Animals suffering from chronic respiratory distress not responding to treatment are also culled from flocks. Sheep with abscesses, pink eye, mouth lesions, respiratory distress, extremely poor body condition, chronic diarrhea, bottle jaw etc should also be culled. Mouth defects affect grazing and feeding hence of sheep. Sheep suffering from overshot jaw or parrot mouth (lower jaw is too short) and under short jaw or monkey mouth (lower jaw is too long) should be culled at premature age. Further, such animals should not be used for breeding as these jaw conditions are inherited (Hassani et al., 2014). The condition of animals teeth depend upon its diet.

Animals on a rough, coarse diet will grind their teeth away faster than animals on an easily eaten diet. The molar teeth are far more important than the incisor teeth as they do the grinding of feed. Ram with bad breath and sloppy mouths may have teeth problems (Hassani et al., 2014). Animals with teeth problems should also be culled.

**Performance:** Sheep are reared for mutton and wool. Fast growing animals produce more mutton at low inputs in short time. Therefore, fast growing lambs are retained whereas slow growing lambs are culled at premature age. Animals producing course wool or wool having medulation are culled when sheep are reared form wool traits. Lower body weights at different ages remain main cause of culling form lambs born as twins and triplets.

**Fertility:** Ewes which fail to produce lambs are culled at premature age from flocks.

**Dystocia:** The incidence of Dystocia (difficult birthing) can be reduced significantly by culling the ewes and lambs produced by ewes suffering from dystocia.

**Farm capacity:** The capacity of farm also remains an important factor which determines the magnitude of culling.

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