Lambing Protocol

1. Booster CD&T vaccine and deworm ewes ~3 weeks before their due dates. Sheer ewes prior to lambing, especially around perineal area.

2. Know your lambing dates and separate ewes into a lambing pen ~1 week prior to their due dates (average gestation period is 143-151 days). Lambing pens should be in an enclosed barn/shelter with minimal drafts and clean bedding.

3. Udder development begins ~4 weeks prior to lambing. The vulva will begin to swell ~1 week prior to lambing. The flanks will appear sunken in and the ligaments at the base of the tail will soften ~12hrs prior to lambing . Monitor ewes from a distance every 3-4 hrs for signs of labor including: isolation from flock, mucous from vulva, discomfort/restlessness and protrusion of fetal membranes from the vulva.

4. While early labor signs may occur for several hours, once straining and fetal membranes are observed delivery should occur within 60min. Once the feet are seen protruding from the vulva, delivery of the fetus should occur within 30 min. If after 30 min of straining, no forward progression toward delivery is observed intervention should be performed by the producer or a veterinarian (always be sure to use good sanitation when pulling lambs).

5. Allow 30 min between fetuses prior to intervening if multiple lambs are expected. If intervention is required for one fetus it is likely all fetuses thereafter will have to be pulled.

6. Once a lamb is born clear mucous from its nasal passages and mouth and tickle inside the nares with straw to stimulate breathing. Lambs delivered hind legs first or that have been in the birth canal for a prolonged time should be gently shaken/swung to clear fluid from airways. Shorten umbilicus if longer than 2 inches and dip the navel in 2% chlorhexidine or 7% iodine solution. Place lamb in front of the ewe for her to clean. Strip plugs from ewes teats and monitor from a distance the lamb standing and nursing within 30-60min. Meconium should be passed within the first couple hours after nursing (if straining to defecate or no meconium is passed with 2-4hrs an enema may need to be performed).

7. If the ewe does not clean lamb and the lamb appears weak and unable to nurse and remains wet, hypothermia (rectal temp <99F) can develop rapidly. Intervention should be taken to warm the lamb via towel drying followed by a heat lamp or warm water bath and colostrum should be administered via stomach tube.

8. Monitor the ewe for further signs of labor with suspected multiple fetuses, profuse bleeding from the vagina, weakness, passing of the placenta and vaginal or uterine prolapse. Call your Veterinarian if persistent bleeding, prolapse or retainment of the placenta (>24hrs) occurs.

9. Ensure lambs receive colostrum within 6hrs after birth. Lambs should consume 1oz colostrum per pound body weight 3 times (~every 8 hrs) during the first 24 hrs of life.

10. After lambs are born move the ewe and lambs to individual lambing jugs (~5x5 ft, dry, well bedded and draft fee enclosures). Keep single lamb ewes in jugs for 24hrs, ewes with twins for 48hrs and ewes with triplets for 3 days to allow bonding and maternal recognition of the lambs.

11. All aborted fetuses or neonates that die within the first 48hrs of life with no apparent cause should be necropsied and placentas evaluated for signs of infectious disease by your veterinarian or CSU Diagnostic lab.

12. Tail docking and castrating should be performed at 2-5 days of age. Tails should be docked at the point where the caudal skin folds merge with the tail, leaving the stump ~1-2 inches long.  If ewes were not vaccinated against CD&T prior to lambing, lambs should receive a CD&T vaccine as well as a tetanus antitoxin vaccine at the time of tail docking.