

EVALUATION OF GROWTH FOR GERMAN MERINO EWE LAMBS ACCORDING TO TEMPERAMENT

Ferenc Pajor, Edina Láczó, Péter Póti

*Department of Cattle and Sheep Breeding, Szent István University,
H-2103, Gödöllő, Páter Károly 1. Hungary; pajor.ferenc@mkk.szie.hu*

ABSTRACT

This study concerned with evaluating temperament of German Merino ewe lambs using temperament test (temperament score: assessing behaviour of animals on a five-points scale, while spending 30 seconds on the weighing scale). 20 German Merino ewe lambs were fed-*ad libitum* concentrate for 41 days. Animals originated from GAK Kht, Gödöllő (Pest County). The farm has continuously monitored by The Association of Hungarian Sheep Breeders. The examined lambs were within part of Fattening Performance Testing. Temperament scores were identified three times under test, together with weighing. First measurement was at weaning while the second was at the end of fattening period, and finally the third was at 365th day. Body weights were recorded prior to and after the fattening period then at the 8th and 12th months of age. Growth curves were drawn according to weight of animals. Daily weight gains during either fattening period or life time were calculated. Temperament score test was not related to the weight at weaning, therefore measurement of temperament was not affected by the weaning process ($P > 0.10$). Twenty German Merino lambs were classified into three categories (calm, medium and nervous) by mean temperament scores (average of 1 and 2 temperament scores). Lambs with good temperament (1 category) had higher live weight at the end of fattening (33.0 kg), compared to the medium category (32.0 kg) and nervous category (29.4 kg). The average daily gain and average weight gain during life time showed a similar tendency among calm category (298.8 g/day, 338.2 g/day), medium category (265.2 g/day, 311.6 g/day) and nervous category (238.7 g/day, 304.5 g/day). Calm ewes had better growth rate, till one year of age, than nervous ewes. This difference was shown on different slopes (b) of growth curves. To sum up, lambs with calm temperament were of better fattening performance compared to lambs with poor temperament. Accordingly, including temperament measurement among selection work may improve the output of fattening.

Key words: *temperament, German Merino, ewe, fattening, growth*