

Feed quantity & lamb growth

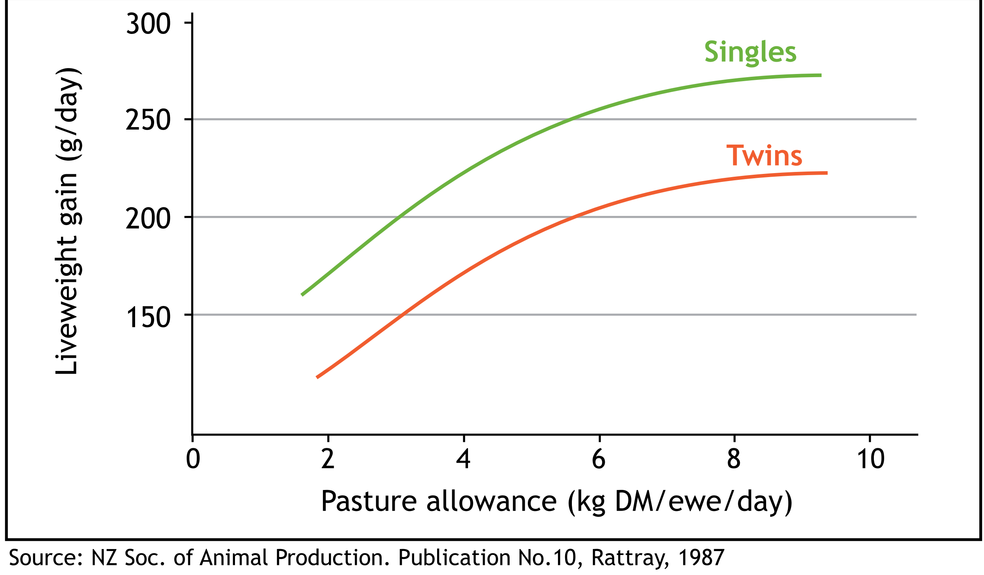
Animal Production

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Pasture yield at lambing directly affects lamb growth. When feed quality is generally good (March-October), feed quantity drives the performance of many livestock systems.

Effect on suckling lambs

Pasture allowance and liveweight gain of suckling lambs



Source: NZ Soc. of Animal Production. Publication No.10, Rattray, 1987

At lambing in early spring feed quality is typically very good, and feed quantity is the key driver of lamb growth. To achieve the best lamb growth, target pasture covers through lactation should be 1200 kg DM/ha+ (about 3 cm+ in height) for single lamb bearing ewes, and 1500 kg DM/ha+ (about 4 cm+) for ewes bearing twins.

Post weaning, feed quantity continues to be a key driver of lamb growth, as shown below.

Feed requirement of lambs 24-34 kg

Lamb growth rate (g/day)	100	200	300	400
Feed requirement (kg DM/day)	1.2	1.5	1.9	2.4
Days to target weight (34 kg)	100	50	33	25
Total feed consumed (kg DM/hd)	120	75	63	60

Source: 400 plus; A guide to improved lamb growth for farmers and advisors, 2010

Greater efficiency

The above table shows the faster lambs grow, the more efficient the system is at turning feed (kg DM) into liveweight (LWG). That's because lambs growing at 100 g/ day require energy to live, breathe and function (maintenance energy) for 100 days, whereas lambs growing at 400 g/day only need maintenance energy for 25 days. This frees up 75 days to utilise the feed in other ways.