

Effects of Some Factors Affecting Optimum Reproductive Capacity of Local Breeds of Sheep in Nigeria

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Abstract : This study was conducted to investigate some of the factors affecting the optimum reproductive capacity of the indigenous breeds of sheep in Nigeria. A total of 767 sheep of different breeds were investigated. The reproductive indices considered were birth/weaning weights, litter size, parity, mortality, reproductive problems/disorders, body condition score (BCS), as well as growth traits. The results showed that litter size, parity, and BCS had significant ($p < 0.05$) effects on birth/weaning weights, mortality rates and growth traits of the sheep breeds studied. Similarly, the rearing method/system significantly ($p < 0.05$) influenced other reproductive traits such as birth/weaning weights, mortality, growth performance of lambs. However, the major reproductive problems/disorders in the ewes were dystocia (30.94%), retained placenta (16.91%), mastitis (15.83), pregnancy toxemia (11.51%), uterine prolapse (6.48%) and vaginal prolapse (3.24%). In the rams, the incidence of reproductive problems included cryptorchidism (1.08%), orchitis (2.87%) and scrotal dermatophilosis (1.79%), among others. This study concludes that the four breeds of sheep (Balami, Yankasa, Uda, and West African Dwarf sheep) and their crosses exhibited varied genetic make-up and potentials. However, the large number of sheep farmers practicing the extensive production system might be responsible for the low reproductive performance of this species in the country. It is, therefore, recommended that significant improvement could be achieved through enhanced management practices of these animals.

Keywords : sheep, breeds, reproduction, disorders

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