



A unique Quality Assurance

Programme for Finnish sheep herds

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Introduction

Animal diseases and deficiencies in animal husbandry weaken the productivity and profitability of sheep farming and endanger animal welfare. In addition to the acute diseases like parasitic gastroenteritis, coccidiosis, perinatal lamb mortality, mastitis, listeriosis and disturbances in calcium and energy metabolism, subclinical problems may only occur as slow growth and suboptimal reproductive performance. Our aim was to draw up a quality assurance programme to prevent animal diseases and improve treatment practices by influencing the root causes of the problems in typical Finnish family herds engaged in professional sheep farming with 80-400 ewes.

Material & Methods

When drawing up the programme, we applied some of the HACCP principles. Initially, we described the events of the ewe production cycle in chronological order and constructed a unified lamb breeding process. We set a perspective on ewe on the assumption that ewe's health and wellbeing form the basis for the health of lambs. Next, we assessed which support functions typically associated with sheep farming are necessary for the management of the production process and for which good practice guidelines (GMP) can be drawn up. Thirdly, we assessed what kind of indicators a producer would need to monitor the management of the process. In addition, we decided that the programme should integrate the parasite prevention programme we developed earlier (EMOP XII. Turku. 2016).

Results

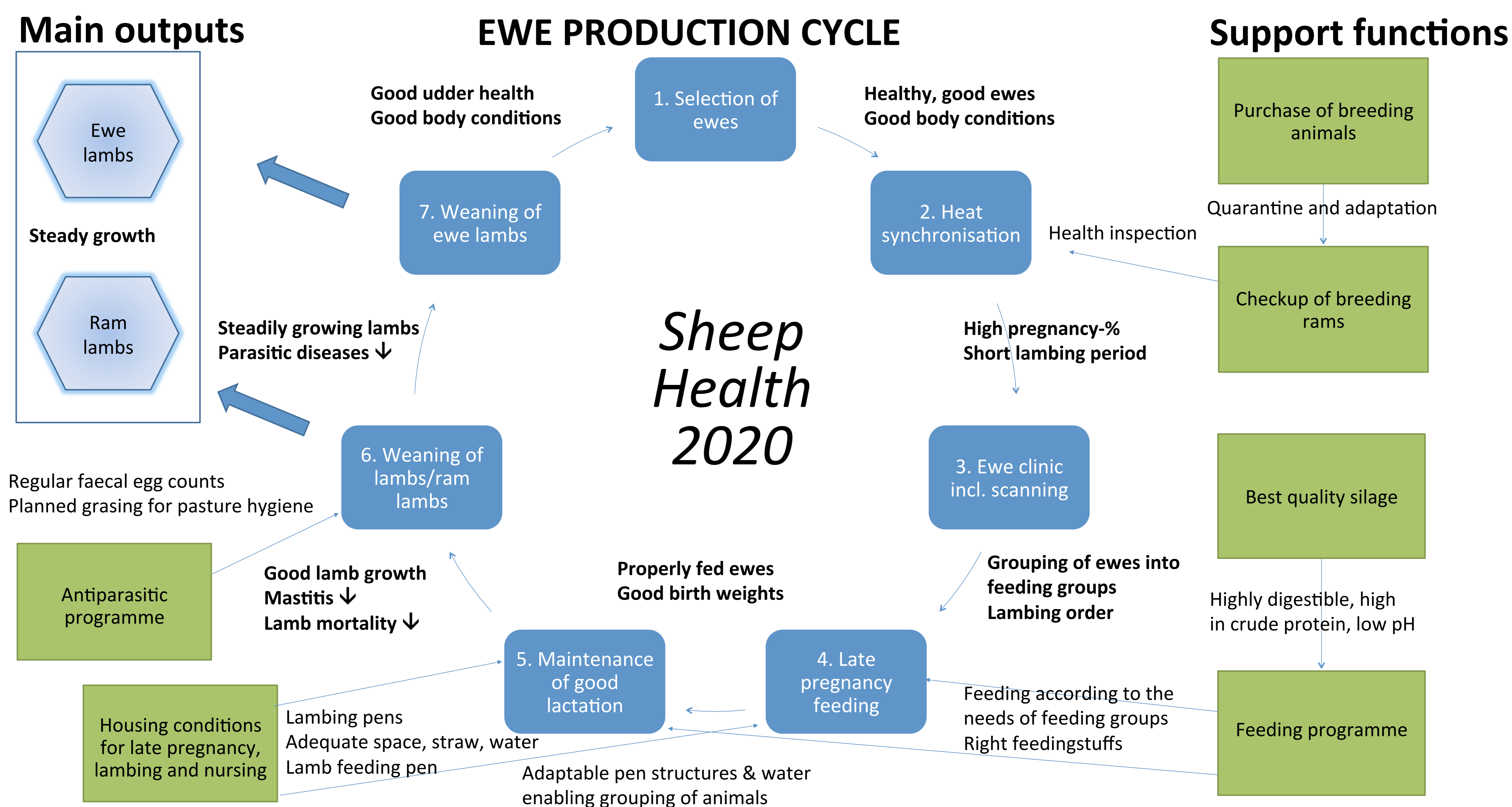


Figure 1. The sub-processes of ewe production cycle and their outputs (bolded) & necessary support functions. The indicators either describe the state of the process at key control points, or the use of support functions, and finally the production results.

Conclusions

The quality assurance programme we have drawn up (*Sheep Health 2020*) creates good conditions for the comprehensive management of animal disease risks and compliance with good practices in sheep herds. Instead of partial optimisation, it is more profitable to avoid underperformances at any individual production stage.