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The effect of late gestation shearing on ewe feed intake

In Montana, sheep are typically shorn in late winter or early spring when ewes have about 6 weeks left in their gestation. This results in increased dry matter intake as sheep try to maintain their body temperature, and ultimately, increased feed costs for the shorn ewe compared to the unshorn ewe. As a sheep's wool grows back, their increased feed needs will subside and feed costs will return to normal. Shearing ewes in late gestation may also affect lamb birth weight and survivability providing a trade-off for increased feed costs. Differences in feed intake and subsequent lamb performance between shearing and treatment groups will be the topic of this research project.