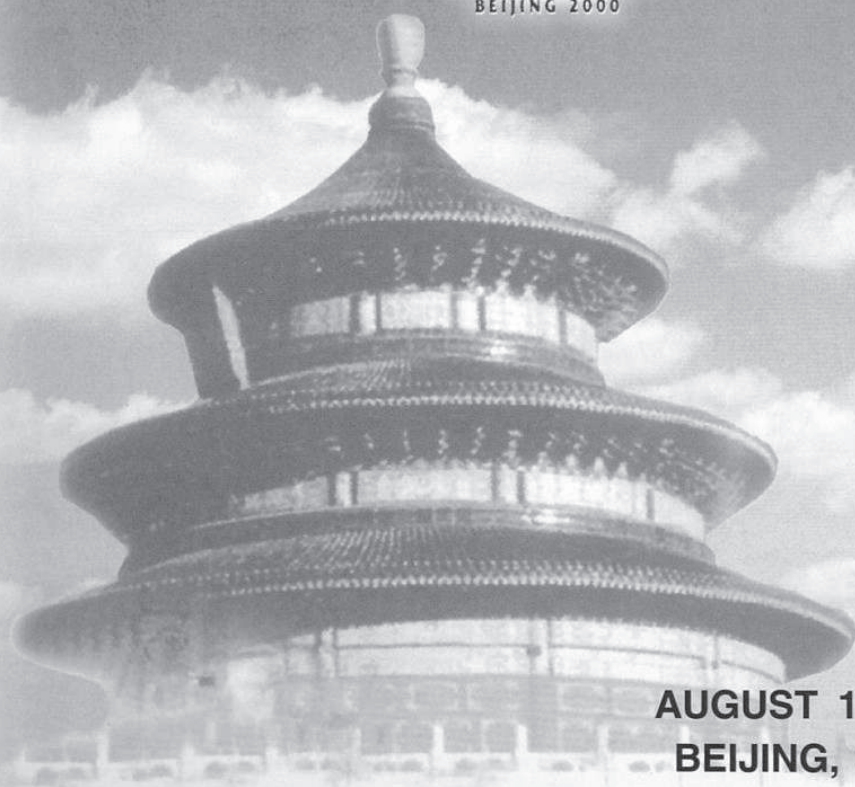


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EFFECT OF BODY CONDITION AT LAMBING ON THE POSTPARTUM ANESTRUM OF MERINO BEIRABAIXA EWE

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The main goal of this study was to identify the percentage of ewes with resumption of postpartum ovarian activity (POA) and the Postpartum anestrus length (PAL) in function of Body Condition Score (BC) at lambing. This study was done in the School of Agriculture of Castelo Branco - Portugal (Latitude 39° 49'N; Longitude 7° 29'W). Sixty ewes of the breed Merino Beira Baixa, lambing in the Autumn (1998) were allocated to three groups:

Group 1 (G1)	n=20	BC; 2,63 ± 0,15 ^a	Weight at Lambing (Kg); 37,0 ± 6,6 ^a
Group 2 (G2)	n=20	BC; 3,11 ± 0,13 ^b	Weight at Lambing (Kg); 39,3 ± 4,7 ^a
Group 3 (G3)	n=20	BC; 3,56 ± 0,11 ^c	Weight at Lambing (Kg); 45,9 ± 5,6 ^b

The animals in the trial were kept within the flock and grazing the available resources in the field.

At 35 days postpartum, 38,3% of the animals have restarted ovarian activity, with significant differences within the groups; until the end of the trial no significant differences within the groups were observed. Up to 30/12/98 (88,4 days postpartum) 98,3% of the animals restarted the ovarian activity; only 1,7% (1/60) animals did not restart the ovarian activity. The PAL was 38,4 ± 12,9 days, with no significant differences within the means of the groups. The interval between weaning and postpartum ovarian activity (IW-POA) was -29,7 ± 13,8 days. This results, shows that POA occurred near the middle of the interval between lambing and weaning (IL-W) (67,8 ± 9,9 days).

	BC		Weight (Kg)		POA (%)		PAL (days)	IW-POA (days)
	Nov 7	6 Lambing	Nov 7	6 Lambing	Nov 7	Dec 30		
G1	2.40 ^a	- 8.7	33.9	- 8.4	30 ^a	95	40.0	- 25.8
G2	2.46 ^a	- 20.9	35.4	- 9.9	55 ^b	100	37.9	- 32.4
G3	2.80 ^b	- 21.3	40.8	- 11.1	30 ^a	100	37.3	- 30.7
Mean	2.55	- 17.7	36.7	- 9.8	38.3	98.3	38.4	- 29.7
SD	0.32		5.7		0.16	0.06	12.9	13.8

Nov - November; Dec - December; 6 - variation to the lambing

The levels of body condition used in the trial reflect the range of body condition usually observed in this breed and season; the results show an identical reproductive potential within the groups. The main conclusion is that neither BC or the weight at lambing, affect on a significant way, the percentage of POA or PAL. These results are in accordance with others obtained by Várzea Rodrigues *et al.* (1997).

We believe that the postpartum anestrus is not extended by the lactational anestrus, since the restart of ovarian activity postpartum occurs, in average, in the middle of IL-W; all the animals have restarted the ovarian activity before the weaning (59/60). This breed shows a high rusticity and is very well adapted to the harsh conditions prevailing in the region in terms of climate and grassland availability. In spite of mobilising 18% of BC and 10% of weight in 35 days, a high percentage of animals restart the ovarian activity (38,3% in 35 days and 95% in around 70 days) in a short period (38,4 ± 12,9 days).