Impact of early weaning on rumen development and fermentation profiles in artificially-reared lambs

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Introduction

- Dairy sheep is an emerging industry in New Zealand.
- Early weaning applies to artificially-reared lambs is attractive to reduce costs.

  - After weaning:
    - Reductions in growth rates
    - Increased mortality
Objective

• To investigate the impact of early weaning of artificially-reared lambs on rumen development and fermentation profiles.

Results

➢ Similar proportions of rumen SCFA.
➢ Few differences in rumen morphology
Conclusion

- This study illustrates that early weaning, using a step down weaning process, initiates early functional rumen development and does not limit post-natal growth rates or live weights at 16 weeks of age in artificially-reared lambs.

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