

Abstract: No. 543: Session L4.15

Reproductive, survival and growth traits of the crossbreeding Belgian Texel x Moroccan local breeds of sheep

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An experiment was carried by INRA_Morocco in order to evaluate the performances of Belgian Texel (BT) rams and their progeny when mated to Moroccan local breed ewes. Three BT rams were mated to Timahdite (T=30) and D'man x Timahdite (DT=30) ewes and compared to purebred ewes D'man (D=22) and (T=30) for ewe and lamb pre-weaning traits. Results indicated that ewes mated to BT rams showed higher fertility (91%) and productivity at weaning (25.40 kg). Corresponding values for productivity were 20.78 and 17.12 kg for purebred T and D ewes. Lambs born from ewes mated to BT have higher survival rates at birth (93%) and at weaning (86%). Furthermore, lambs sired by the BT rams had superior weaning weight (+3 kg), ADG10-30 (+42g/d) and ADG30-90 (+25 g/d) when compared to purebred lambs. Crossed lambs had higher fattening ADG (225 g/d), less DM intake (1.06 kg) and better conversion feed rate (5.20). Corresponding values were: 207 and 211 g/d and 1.17 and 1.14 kg and 6.42 and 5.31 for purebred lambs D and T. These results indicate that Belgian Texel rams and their progeny have well performed under Moroccan management conditions. Since Belgian Texel is known for its ability to produce higher meat quality, this breed can be considered in crossbreeding to improve sheep meat quality in Morocco.