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Effect of the year season on dairy performance of milked sheep

S u m m a r y

The effect of ewes' milking at the spring-summer or summer-autumn season on dairy performance of milked sheep was investigated. The study was conducted in 2006 and 2007 at the Koluda Experimental Station of the National Research Institute of Animal Production using 304 Koluda ewes. Each year there were two groups: the sheep from group I were mated during autumn months (September-October), and those from group II during winter months (January-February). After weaning of lambs at 2 months of age, sheep were milked until natural drying off but for no longer than 112 days. Milking period was from 26 April to 17 August in group I and from 2 August to 22 November in group II. The amount of milk produced in the milking period was determined by the Fleischmann method based on test milkings carried out at 2-week intervals. Milk composition was determined using a Milkoscan apparatus at the first test milking and then at every second test milking. It was found that sheep from group I were characterized by more favourable dairy performance than sheep from group II. Daily and total milk yield of ewes from group I was higher by 22.7 and 24.2% (0.556 vs. 0.453 kg and 61.17 vs. 49.25 kg) compared to sheep from group II. However, the milk of sheep from group I contained less solids, protein and fat (by 1.26; 0.96 and 0.42 percentage units, respectively), although total production of these components during the milk period was higher by 18.4, 11.8 and 18.4% compared to sheep from group II.