BLOOD CONSTITUENTS IN MERINO SHEEP IN NORTH-WEST QUEENSLAND

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Summary

A number of blood constituents were determined in samples obtained from 28 Merino sheep every two months from the age of eight weeks to two years. Mean values for the two years were: haemoglobin 11.7 g/100 ml, red cell count 10.35 x 10^9/mm³, packed cell volume 41.1%, mean corpuscular volume 39.9 µ₃, total white cell count 5.78 x 10^9/mm³, lymphocytes 3.17 x 10^9/mm³, neutrophils 2.44 x 10^9/mm³, other cells 0.17 x 10^9/mm³, serum albumin 4.2 g/100 ml, serum globulin 2.1 g/100 ml, total serum protein 6.3 g/100 ml, serum magnesium 2.5 mg/100 ml, serum calcium 11.1 mg/100 ml, blood inorganic phosphorus 4.5 mg/100 ml, plasma chloride 115 mEq/l, plasma sodium 151.5 mEq/l, erythrocyte sodium 85.4 mEq/l, plasma potassium 4.7 mEq/l, and erythrocyte potassium 12.0 mEq/l.

Changes were found during the experimental period for haemoglobin, red cell count, mean corpuscular volume, total white cell count, lymphocytes, blood inorganic phosphorus, serum globulin and total protein.

I. INTRODUCTION

There are few reports of the simultaneous determination of the main blood constituents in sheep and no reports in which these determinations were made at frequent intervals in the same animals from birth to two years of age.

In addition, the values available could be of limited use when applied to sheep in North-West Queensland because this involves extrapolation of data obtained in temperate regions to areas where temperatures are high and nutritional stress is severe, and from sheep on improved pastures or hand fed to sheep grazing native pasture. The purpose of this paper is to report interim data on a number of blood constituents of Merino sheep grazing in this environment, from eight weeks to two years of age. Analyses of the effects of age, season and sex and the relationship and repeatability of the determinations will be reported later when the three year study is completed.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

(a) Environment

Blood was obtained from sheep grazing Mitchell grass downs on the Toorak Sheep Field Research Station situated 35 miles S of Julia Creek, Queensland, at latitude of 21°S. Climatological data are shown in Figure 1 together with the body-weight of the sheep.

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In all figures, vertical lines show 95% confidence limits for each point, thus:

Mean values are given for sheep in the age ranges of: (a) 2-12 months; (b) 14-24 months; (c) 2-12 months.
On the other hand, values for BIP in sheep are variable. This is mainly
due to the relative nutritional status of animals, but is also partly due to methods
of sampling and analysis and to diurnal variation in some sheep as pointed-out in
an early reference (Watson 1933 a). Our levels were comparable with those
from animals grazing in open areas of low rainfall (Beeson et al. 1944; March
and Swingle 1955) and to some sheep in South Australia (Watson 1933 b) but
not to others (Norris and Chamberlin 1929). They were appreciably lower
than values found in sheep which were predominantly hand fed (Becker and
Smith 1950; Hackett, Gaylor and Bustad 1957; Mehrrot and Mullick 1959;
Long et al. 1965). The changes in BIP levels with age agree with the findings of
Becker and Smith (1950) and Hackett, Gaylor and Bustad (1957).

The concentration of plasma Na was higher than values reported by Clark
(1959) and Long et al. (1965). Values for plasma K were equivalent to those
of Clark (1959), but lower than those of Long et al. (1965). Four distinct groups
of sheep exist depending on the concentration of Na and K in the erythrocyte
and Merino sheep are predominantly Keα (Evans 1957). All our sheep were in
this group.

V. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The data were derived from part of a project supported by the Wool Re-
search Trust Fund and the Department of Primary Industries, Queensland.

Thanks are due to staff at the Animal Research Institute, Yeerongpilly, and
at the Toorak Sheep Field Research Station, Julia Creek, for technical assistance.

VI. REFERENCES