Effect of an alternative rearing method on milk production & lamb growth

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BACKGROUND: Separating lambs from their dams, overnight at early stages of lactation, can increase milk yield without compromising health or welfare of the animals

OBJECTIVE

To assess whether an alternative rearing method of lambs affects milk production of dairy ewes and growth of their lambs

MATERIALS AND METHODS

40 Lacaune ewes (1st lactation period)

First 15 days after lambing	>15 days after lambing	
All ewes	**Group C** *(control)*	**Group T** *(test)*
- Milked once/day	*- 20 ewes, 22 lambs*	*- 20 ewes, 22 lambs*
- Kept with their lambs all day	- Lambs kept with their dams constantly	- Lambs separated for 12h (overnight)
		- Ewes reunited with their lambs after the morning milking

- Daily clinical examination
- Lambs at libidum access to feed & water
- Both groups milked once daily
- Lambs weighted at start and weekly
- Milk yield (MY) recording
- Calculation of average daily gain (ADG)

Duration 18 days

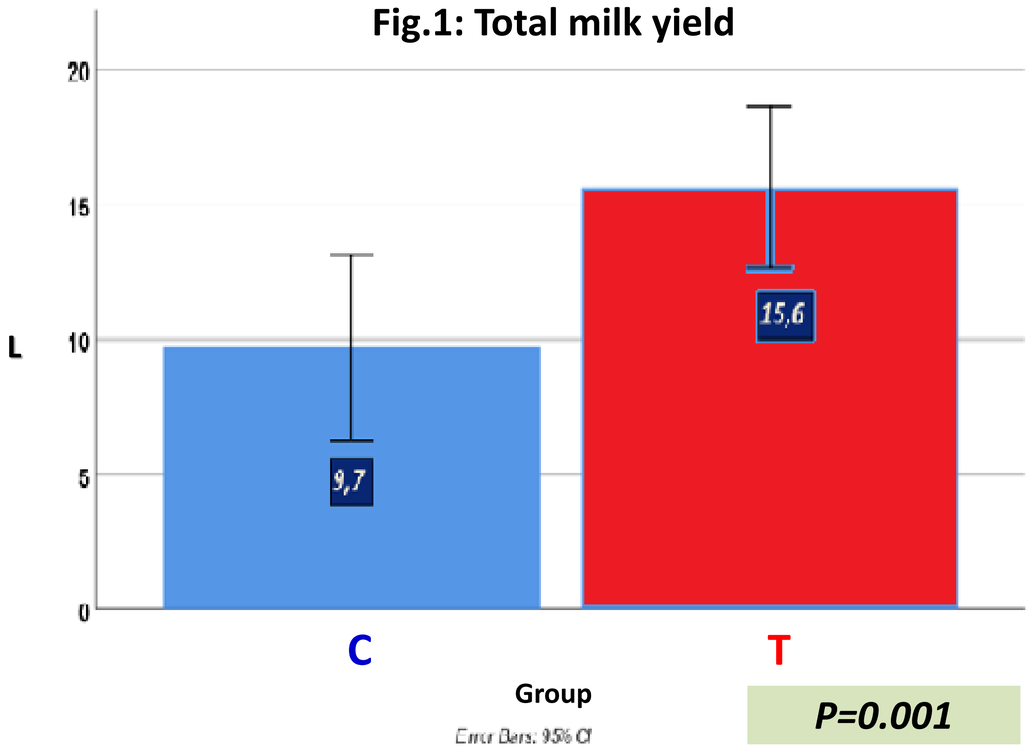
Same housing and feeding management

Comparisons between groups (t-test, Mann-Whitney test)

RESULTS

T ewes produced 61% more milk compared to C

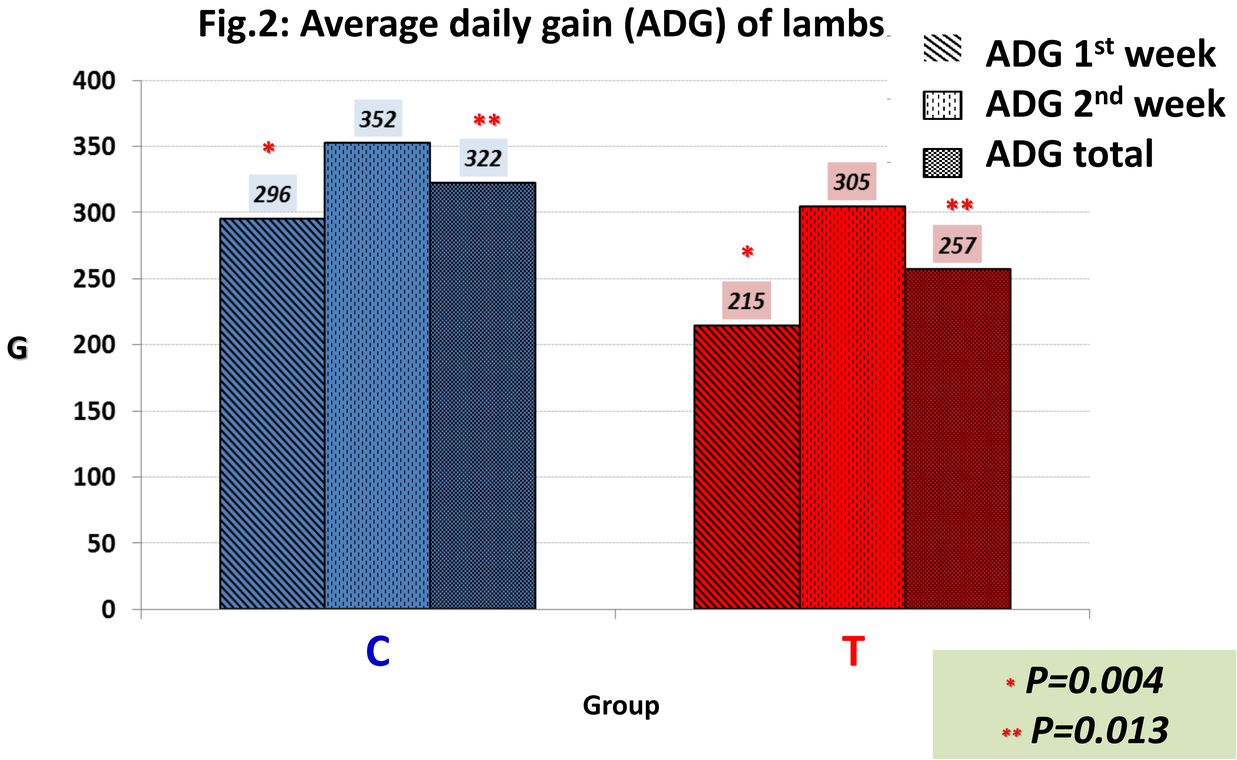
Fig.1: Total milk yield



P=0.001

T lambs had 25,4% lower ADG compared to C

Fig.2: Average daily gain (ADG) of lambs



** P=0.004*

*** P=0.013*

CONCLUSION

When the main source of farmer's income is milk, alternative lamb rearing may be a preferable option to optimise production of saleable milk instead of producing light lamb carcasses

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