



West Virginia University

News Ewe Can Use

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201 Assistance Update

Friday, May 12, 2000, Dr. Isi Siddiqui, USDA's assistant for trade, addressed a gathering of American Sheep Industry Association leadership and others in Washington, D.C. An update of the current status of the 201 Lamb Meat Adjustment Assistance Program was presented and the much anticipated framework for the marketing and productivity payment portions of the Assistance Program were announced.

Of particular interest to producers has been the three-year, \$30 million productivity incentive program. Year one of the program as announced, is retroactive, running July 12, 1999 - September 30, 2000. Year two of the program runs August 1, 2000 - July 31, 2001, and year three August 1, 2000 - July 31, 2002. There will be three types of payments for Year 1: 1) a ram payment, 2) a sheep improvement payment, and 3) a facility improvement payment. For years two and

three, quality payments will be made for feeder and slaughter lambs (see related article on page 2).

Year 1

Ram Payment. Four criteria must be met to qualify for the ram payment:

- Ram purchase made during Year 1
- Ram 90 days or older at time of purchase
- Ram intended for breeding purposes
- Ram owned by the operation for at least 90 days

The payment rate is set at \$100 per ram purchased with a maximum payment of \$2500 per operation.

Sheep Improvement Payment. Sheep must be enrolled in an authorized sheep improvement program, such as the National Sheep Improvement Program (NSIP), to be eligible for the sheep improvement payment. The payment rate is \$0.50 per enrolled sheep with a maxi-

mum payment of \$500 per operation.

Facility Improvement Payment. Facility improvement criteria include:

- Improvement made during Year 1
- Improvement has a life of at least 3 years
- Documentation for cost must be submitted

The payment rate for facility improvement is set at 20% of the total cost with a maximum payment of \$2500 per operation.

Processor and producer loan programs were also discussed at the May 12th meeting, with more information about these programs to be provided later. Contact your local Farm Service Agency office for details concerning the direct payment programs or visit the American Sheep Industry Association website at www.sheepusa.org.



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201 Quality Incentives

During years two and three (August 1, 2000 - July 31, 2002) of the Lamb Meat Adjustment Assistance Program, direct payments will be made to producers in the form of quality incentives. These quality incentives are intended to encourage the production of lambs that will have highly desirable carcasses and thereby improve the U.S. lamb industry's competitiveness in the marketplace. The quality incentives set by the USDA include:

Years 2 and 3

1. A \$3.00 per head payment on thick muscled, large-framed feeder lambs (L-1) that are less than one year of age when sold.
2. A \$5.00 per head payment on slaughter lambs that are Yield Grade 2, USDA Choice or Prime, and have a dressed hot carcass weight of 55-75 lbs.
3. An \$8.00 per head payment on slaughter lambs marketed June 1 - July 31 that meet the above yield grade, quality grade, and weight specifications (YG2, Ch or Pr, 55-75 lbs. HCW.)

1. A \$3.00 per head payment on thick muscled, large-framed feeder lambs (L-1) that are less than one year of age when sold. Feeder lamb grades are used to identify and manage genetic variation and growth patterns for feeder lambs. Relationships among frame size, live weight, and carcass fatness have been identified and can be used as a basis to project live weights at which lambs should be slaughtered to produce carcasses with specific values for external fat thickness. The commonly used system for grading feeder lambs is based on frame size and muscling. Frame size standards used for feeder lambs project expected slaughter weights for lambs with 0.20 inch external fat thickness (YG2 carcass). Muscle scores for feeder

lambs project expected conformation at slaughter which influences the anticipated quality grade of the carcass. An L-1 feeder lamb is a large-framed, very thick-muscled lamb.

Frame Size:

Small - Expected slaughter weight less than 100 pounds.

Medium - Expected slaughter weight 100 to 120 pounds.

Large - Expected slaughter weight greater than 120 pounds.

Muscle Score:

#1 - Very thick-muscled lamb expected to grade prime as a slaughter lamb.

#2 - Moderately thick-muscled lamb expected to grade choice as a slaughter lamb.

#3 - Thin-muscled lamb expected to grade less than choice as a slaughter lamb.

2. A \$5.00 per head payment on slaughter lambs that are Yield Grade 2, USDA Choice or Prime, and have a dressed hot carcass weight of 55-75 lbs.

Hot Carcass Weight (HCW) is the weight of the lamb carcass taken immediately after slaughter with the kidney and pelvic fat removed. The USDA reports prices for lamb carcasses in the following weight ranges: less than 45 lb., 45-55 lb., 55-65 lb., 65-75 lb., 75-85 lb., and over 85 lb.

Dressing percentage is the ratio of carcass weight to slaughter weight, expressed as a percentage. Dressing percentage is the proportion of the lamb's live weight that results in carcass weight. The amount of gut fill has the greatest influence on dressing percentage. The weight of the pelt, including fleece length, the degree of muscling, and the degree of fatness also influence dressing percentage. For shorn

lambs, dressing percentage will average around 53%. For woolled lambs, dressing percentage will average 2 to 3 percent lower. As a general rule of thumb, to determine whether your lambs will likely meet the incentive criteria for carcass weight, estimate carcass weight as approximately 50% of the live weight.

Yield Grade (YG) reflects the differences in yield or "quantity" of boneless, closely trimmed (0.1 inch) retail cuts from the leg, loin, rack and shoulder. These four major primal cuts represent approximately 80% of carcass weight and approximately 90% of carcass value. A USDA yield grade is based primarily on the thickness of the fat over the ribeye. Yield grades range from one to five - with one having the highest expected yield of retail cuts (very lean carcass) and five having the lowest (extremely fat carcass). Most U.S. lamb carcasses fall into the middle three yield grades - YG2, YG3, and YG4. Currently, 92% of U.S. lambs grade YG1, YG2, and YG3.

Quality Grade reflects expected differences in palatability and eating satisfaction (tenderness, juiciness, and favor). Quality grade is based on a composite evaluation of maturity, lean quality, and conformation. There are four quality grades for lamb - Prime, Choice, Good, and Utility. Quality grades can be further subdivided into Pr⁺, Pr⁰, Pr⁻, Ch⁺, Ch⁰, etc. For a lamb to grade USDA Choice, it must be slightly thick-muscled throughout and be slightly wide and thick in relation to its length and height. It should also be slightly wide over the back, loin, and rump. The lamb's

(Continued on page 5)

Yield Grade	External Fat Thickness	% Retail Cuts
1	0.00 - 0.15 inch	51.0
2	0.16 - 0.25 inch	49.7
3	0.26 - 0.35 inch	48.4
4	0.36 - 0.45 inch	47.1
5	0.46 inch & greater	45.8

Plan Ahead for Seasonal Markets

Lamb is a traditional and integral part of a number of ethnic and religious celebrations. These ethnic/religious holidays create seasonal increases in the demand for certain types of lambs. When using our Western calendar (January – December), the date(s) on which many of these holidays are observed can vary from year-to-year. Farmers supplying lambs for these holiday celebrations must plan breeding programs, including out-of-season breeding, well in advance to target these special markets (See Page 4).

Christian Holidays

Easter – Easter is the Christian celebration of the resurrection of Christ. Western Easter is observed on the first Sunday following the first full moon after the Spring Equinox (March 20) and can fall on any date from March 22 to April 25. Eastern or Orthodox Easter Sunday ("Pascha"), is observed according to the Old Testament or lunar calendar. Orthodox Easter can occur before, after, or the same Sunday as Western Easter. In most years, Orthodox Easter follows Western Easter by one or more weeks.

Christmas – Christmas is the Christian celebration of the birth of Christ. Although the exact date of Christ's birth is not known, most Christians observe Christmas on December 25. The earliest known reference to December 25 as the birth date of Christ is from a Roman calendar dated A.D. 336.

Islamic Holidays

Ramadan – The Muslim holy month of Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar and marks a period of reflection and fasting.

Eid Al Fitr - "Eid" means recurring happiness or festivity. The first Eid of the Islamic year is Eid Al Fitr, the festival of the breaking of the fast of Ramadan. Eid Al Fitr is celebrated on the first day of Shawaal, the tenth month of the Islamic calendar.

Eid Al-Adha - The second important Islamic Eid celebration is Eid Al-Adha, the "Festival of Sacrifice". Eid Al-Adha is celebrated on the 10th day of Dhul-Hijah, the last month of the Islamic calendar. One of the main rituals of Eid Al-Adha is the sacrifice of a lamb or sheep. The festival occurs on the same day every year on the Muslim calendar, but not on the Western or Gregorian calendar.

Jewish Holidays

Passover – The Jewish celebration of Passover commemorates the deliverance of the Jewish people from Egyptian bondage. Lamb is one of the seven symbolic foods of Passover. The Passover celebration lasts for eight days, beginning on the 15th day of the Hebrew month of Nissan.

Rosh Hashanah – Rosh Hashanah marks the start of the Jewish New Year. The Ten Days of Penitence begin on Rosh Hashanah and end on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. During this period, foods with symbolic significance are consumed, including: apples, fish, carrots, cabbage, pomegranate, and lamb.

Hanukkah – Hanukkah is the Jewish celebration of the "Festival of Lights". The Hanukkah celebration lasts eight days. Hanukkah begins on the 25th day of the Hebrew month of Kislev and lasts through the 2nd day of the Hebrew month of Tevet.

Ethnic Holidays Calendar

Holiday	2000	2001	2002	2003
Western Easter	April 23	April 15	March 31	April 20
Orthodox Easter	April 30	April 15	March 31	April 27
Start of Ramadan	November 27	November 17	November 6	October 27
Eid Al Fitr	December 27	December 16	December 6	November 25
Eid Al-Adha	March 16	March 5	February 22	February 11
Start of Passover	April 20	April 8	March 28	April 17
Start of Rosh Hashanah	September 30	September 18	September 7	September 27
Start of Hanukkah	December 22	December 10	November 30	December 20

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Sheep Gestation Table

January		February		March		April		May		June	
Bred	Due	Bred	Due	Bred	Due	Bred	Due	Bred	Due	Bred	Due
1/1	5/26	2/1	6/26	3/1	7/24	4/1	8/24	5/1	9/23	6/1	10/24
1/2	5/27	2/2	6/27	3/2	7/25	4/2	8/25	5/2	9/24	6/2	10/25
1/3	5/28	2/3	6/28	3/3	7/26	4/3	8/26	5/3	9/25	6/3	10/26
1/4	5/29	2/4	6/29	3/4	7/27	4/4	8/27	5/4	9/26	6/4	10/27
1/5	5/30	2/5	6/30	3/5	7/28	4/5	8/28	5/5	9/27	6/5	10/28
1/6	5/31	2/6	7/1	3/6	7/29	4/6	8/29	5/6	9/28	6/6	10/29
1/7	6/1	2/7	7/2	3/7	7/30	4/7	8/30	5/7	9/29	6/7	10/30
1/8	6/2	2/8	7/3	3/8	7/31	4/8	8/31	5/8	9/30	6/8	10/31
1/9	6/3	2/9	7/4	3/9	8/1	4/9	9/1	5/9	10/1	6/9	11/1
1/10	6/4	2/10	7/5	3/10	8/2	4/10	9/2	5/10	10/2	6/10	11/2
1/11	6/5	2/11	7/6	3/11	8/3	4/11	9/3	5/11	10/3	6/11	11/3
1/12	6/6	2/12	7/7	3/12	8/4	4/12	9/4	5/12	10/4	6/12	11/4
1/13	6/7	2/13	7/8	3/13	8/5	4/13	9/5	5/13	10/5	6/13	11/5
1/14	6/8	2/14	7/9	3/14	8/6	4/14	9/6	5/14	10/6	6/14	11/6
1/15	6/9	2/15	7/10	3/15	8/7	4/15	9/7	5/15	10/7	6/15	11/7
1/16	6/10	2/16	7/11	3/16	8/8	4/16	9/8	5/16	10/8	6/16	11/8
1/17	6/11	2/17	7/12	3/17	8/9	4/17	9/9	5/17	10/9	6/17	11/9
1/18	6/12	2/18	7/13	3/18	8/10	4/18	9/10	5/18	10/10	6/18	11/10
1/19	6/13	2/19	7/14	3/19	8/11	4/19	9/11	5/19	10/11	6/19	11/11
1/20	6/14	2/20	7/15	3/20	8/12	4/20	9/12	5/20	10/12	6/20	11/12
1/21	6/15	2/21	7/16	3/21	8/13	4/21	9/13	5/21	10/13	6/21	11/13
1/22	6/16	2/22	7/17	3/22	8/14	4/22	9/14	5/22	10/14	6/22	11/14
1/23	6/17	2/23	7/18	3/23	8/15	4/23	9/15	5/23	10/15	6/23	11/15
1/24	6/18	2/24	7/19	3/24	8/16	4/24	9/16	5/24	10/16	6/24	11/16
1/25	6/19	2/25	7/20	3/25	8/17	4/25	9/17	5/25	10/17	6/25	11/17
1/26	6/20	2/26	7/21	3/26	8/18	4/26	9/18	5/26	10/18	6/26	11/18
1/27	6/21	2/27	7/22	3/27	8/19	4/27	9/19	5/27	10/19	6/27	11/19
1/28	6/22	2/28	7/23	3/28	8/20	4/28	9/20	5/28	10/20	6/28	11/20
1/29	6/23			3/29	8/21	4/29	9/21	5/29	10/21	6/29	11/21
1/30	6/24			3/30	8/22	4/30	9/22	5/30	10/22	6/30	11/22
1/31	6/25			3/31	8/23			5/31	10/23		

July		August		September		October		November		December	
Bred	Due	Bred	Due	Bred	Due	Bred	Due	Bred	Due	Bred	Due
7/1	11/23	8/1	12/24	9/1	1/24	10/1	2/23	11/1	3/26	12/1	4/25
7/2	11/24	8/2	12/25	9/2	1/25	10/2	2/24	11/2	3/27	12/2	4/26
7/3	11/25	8/3	12/26	9/3	1/26	10/3	2/25	11/3	3/28	12/3	4/27
7/4	11/26	8/4	12/27	9/4	1/27	10/4	2/26	11/4	3/29	12/4	4/28
7/5	11/27	8/5	12/28	9/5	1/28	10/5	2/27	11/5	3/30	12/5	4/29
7/6	11/28	8/6	12/29	9/6	1/29	10/6	2/28	11/6	3/31	12/6	4/30
7/7	11/29	8/7	12/30	9/7	1/30	10/7	3/1	11/7	4/1	12/7	5/1
7/8	11/30	8/8	12/31	9/8	1/31	10/8	3/2	11/8	4/2	12/8	5/2
7/9	12/1	8/9	1/1	9/9	2/1	10/9	3/3	11/9	4/3	12/9	5/3
7/10	12/2	8/10	1/2	9/10	2/2	10/10	3/4	11/10	4/4	12/10	5/4
7/11	12/3	8/11	1/3	9/11	2/3	10/11	3/5	11/11	4/5	12/11	5/5
7/12	12/4	8/12	1/4	9/12	2/4	10/12	3/6	11/12	4/6	12/12	5/6
7/13	12/5	8/13	1/5	9/13	2/5	10/13	3/7	11/13	4/7	12/13	5/7
7/14	12/6	8/14	1/6	9/14	2/6	10/14	3/8	11/14	4/8	12/14	5/8
7/15	12/7	8/15	1/7	9/15	2/7	10/15	3/9	11/15	4/9	12/15	5/9
7/16	12/8	8/16	1/8	9/16	2/8	10/16	3/10	11/16	4/10	12/16	5/10
7/17	12/9	8/17	1/9	9/17	2/9	10/17	3/11	11/17	4/11	12/17	5/11
7/18	12/10	8/18	1/10	9/18	2/10	10/18	3/12	11/18	4/12	12/18	5/12
7/19	12/11	8/19	1/11	9/19	2/11	10/19	3/13	11/19	4/13	12/19	5/13
7/20	12/12	8/20	1/12	9/20	2/12	10/20	3/14	11/20	4/14	12/20	5/14
7/21	12/13	8/21	1/13	9/21	2/13	10/21	3/15	11/21	4/15	12/21	5/15
7/22	12/14	8/22	1/14	9/22	2/14	10/22	3/16	11/22	4/16	12/22	5/16
7/23	12/15	8/23	1/15	9/23	2/15	10/23	3/17	11/23	4/17	12/23	5/17
7/24	12/16	8/24	1/16	9/24	2/16	10/24	3/18	11/24	4/18	12/24	5/18
7/25	12/17	8/25	1/17	9/25	2/17	10/25	3/19	11/25	4/19	12/25	5/19
7/26	12/18	8/26	1/18	9/26	2/18	10/26	3/20	11/26	4/20	12/26	5/20
7/27	12/19	8/27	1/19	9/27	2/19	10/27	3/21	11/27	4/21	12/27	5/21
7/28	12/20	8/28	1/20	9/28	2/20	10/28	3/22	11/28	4/22	12/28	5/22
7/29	12/21	8/29	1/21	9/29	2/21	10/29	3/23	11/29	4/23	12/29	5/23
7/30	12/22	8/30	1/22	9/30	2/22	10/30	3/24	11/30	4/24	12/30	5/24
7/31	12/23	8/31	1/23			10/31	3/25			12/31	5/25

The "Ram Effect"

When undertaking a spring breeding program most of the attention is generally focused on the ewe – on “getting her to cycle”. But don’t forget the ram. The ram contributes more to the spring breeding program than merely delivering semen. The ram is also instrumental in stimulating ovulation in anestrus (noncycling) ewes.

The phenomenon known as the “ram effect” was first described in 1944 when it was reported that the sudden introduction of rams to anestrus ewes could induce ovulation. Early studies indicated that smell was the most important sensory cue associated with the ram effect. Since ram odor alone is sufficient to obtain a response in ewes, it has been hypothesized that the effect is mediated by pheromones. Nonetheless, visual and physical contacts with the ram are necessary for full expression of the phenomenon (more ewes respond to the presence of the ram than to ram odor alone). To increase the effectiveness of ram introduction as a means of inducing ovulation in anestrus ewes, *ewes should be isolated from all contact with rams, including sight, smell, and sound, for a minimum of 30 days prior to ram introduction.*

Typically, ewes responding to the sudden introduction of rams will ovulate within 40-60 hours. However, this initial ovulation is generally not accompanied by behav-

ioral estrus. (Ovulation in the absence of behavioral estrus is commonly referred to as "silent" heat.) Following ovulation, a CL (corpora lutea) is formed on the ovary. In some ewes, the initial ovulation results in a CL with a normal life span followed by behavioral estrus (commonly referred to as "standing" heat). In other ewes, the CL regresses prematurely followed by a second silent heat. The life span of the newly formed CL is then generally of normal duration, and the subsequent ovulation is accompanied by behavioral estrus. As a result, the breeding activity in the flock is spread over approximately 10 days, with two characteristic peaks - the first around day 18, and the second around day 24 following ram introduction.

Ewe response to the ram effect alone (no additional hormone treatments) is variable. Based on data from a number of out-of-season breeding studies conducted by West Virginia University, utilizing the ram effect alone, WV farmers can anticipate that around 45% of the ewes exposed for a 25-day breeding period during the spring and summer months will fall lamb. The number of ewes fall lambing can be increased by about 20 percent when the ewes are “primed” with progesterone prior to ram introduction. The data also indicates that the success of progesterone treatments is

enhanced when care is taken to completely isolate ewes and rams prior to ram introduction.

Several other factors have been shown to influence ewe response to the ram effect. The breed of both the ewe and of the ram has been shown to influence ewe response. The depth of anestrus in ewes has an impact. Aggressive rams have been shown to elicit a greater response than rams with poor libido.

In addition, it is important to remember that both semen quality and output are generally lower for rams during the spring and summer months. A semen evaluation should be conducted prior to the start of any breeding program and the ratio of rams to ewes should be increased for out-of-season and synchronized breeding programs. It is also important to be aware that progressively higher ambient temperatures during the spring and summer months may be associated with a higher incidence of embryonic mortality than is normally experienced following the natural breeding season. In ewes carrying multiple embryos or fetuses, high ambient temperatures may contribute to the selective loss of some embryos or fetuses without the total loss of the pregnancy.

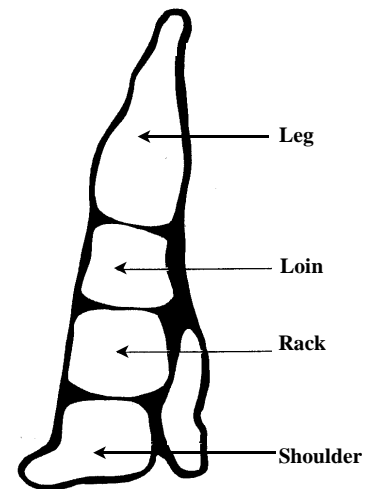
Quality Incentives

(Continued from page 2)

shoulders and hips should be slightly smooth. Its twist must be slightly deep and full and its legs should be slightly thick and plump. Over 90 percent of USDA graded lambs qualify for the Choice grade. 3. *An \$8.00 per head payment on slaughter lambs marketed June 1 - July 31 that meet the above yield grade, quality grade, and weight specifications (YG2, Ch or Pr, 55-75 lbs. HCW.)* Seasonal supplies of lamb are said to contribute to the displacement of domestic lamb with foreign product. Working toward more consistent year round production and marketing cycles should increase the competitiveness of the U.S. industry and help fend off product displacement due to seasonal supply.

The West Virginia Department of Agriculture has available trained graders to help determine anticipated grades for feeder and slaughter lambs. This service should be of benefit to producers targeting any of the above quality incentives as part of their marketing program.

The direct payment portion of the 201 Lamb Meat Adjustment Assistance Program will be administered through the USDA Farm Service Agency. Final details concerning the program, eligibility, and application requirements should be available soon. Contact your local FSA office or visit the American Sheep Industry Association website at www.sheepusa.org for information updates.



**Lamb Carcass:
Four Major Primal Cuts**

Mark Your Calendars!!!

50th West Virginia Purebred Sheep Breeder's Show and Sale

Saturday, June 3, 2000

Tri-County Fairgrounds in Petersburg, WV

Schedule of Events:

9:00 a.m. Market Lamb Show and Purebred Show
2:00 p.m. Junior Judging Contest and Skill-a-Thon Competition
6:45 p.m. Announcement of Winners
7:00 p.m. 50th Anniversary Sale*

For Information About the **Junior Judging Contest** or the **Skill-a-Thon Competition**, Contact: Brad Smith (304) 257-4688.
For Sale Information or to Request a Sale Catalog,
Contact: **Linger Arnold (304) 765-2413**

*See page 1 for ram payment eligibility under the 201 Assistance Program.

Sheep Field Day

The WVU Preston County Extension Service will host a sheep field day on Thursday, May 25, 2000. The field day will be held on the David Moran farm located near Eglon, WV (Preston County) and will run from 10:00 am - 3:00 p.m. Talks and demonstrations will include ultrasound/carcass quality, ram BSE, pasture management/drought recovery, record keeping, and more. For additional information contact Preston County Extension Agent Bill Shockey (304) 329-1391 or the WV Sheep Management Project (304) 358-3660.

Pasture Walk With Dr. Woody Lane

The West Virginia Sheep Management Project will sponsor a pasture walk workshop with Dr. Woody Lane Saturday, July 29, 2000. Watch your mail for details, location, and time.