



West Virginia University

# News Ewe Can Use

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## Highlights of the 2002 WV Lamb Marketing Survey



In January 2002, a lamb marketing survey developed by the West Virginia Sheep management Project and West Virginia University Davis College of Agriculture, Forestry, and Consumer Sciences, Division of Resource Management was administered by the West Virginia Agricultural Statistics Service. The survey was designed to provide baseline information about lamb production and supply in West Virginia, identify current marketing practices and market outlets, and assess producer interest in developing alternative markets and/or marketing programs. The following highlights are excerpted from the survey findings.

**Survey Response** - The survey was distributed to 925 sheep producers throughout West Virginia. A total of 338 surveys were returned for a response rate of 36.5%. Surveys were completed and returned by producers from 47 of the state's 55 counties. WV Agricultural Statistics Service estimated the January 1, 2001 breeding ewe and lamb inventory at 28,000 head. Survey respondents reported a January 1, 2001 breeding ewe inventory of 12,852 head, representing approximately 46% of the state's

2001 breeding ewe population. Size distribution of the ewe flocks ranged from 2 to 375 head - with 77.4% of flocks less than 50 ewes and 92.0% of flocks less than 100 ewes (Figure 1).

Survey respondents reported 30 different purebred breeds of sheep. Suffolk or Suffolk crosses were reported as the predominant breed of the ewe flock on 63.1% of farms. Dorset or Dorset crosses were reported as the predominant breed of the ewe flock on 32.9% of farms, a long- or colored-wool breed on 1.8% of farms, and a hair breed on 2.5% of farms. On the ram side, 49.5% reported Suffolk, 28.7% Dorset, 6.5% a long- or colored-wool breed, and 2.9% a hair breed as the predominant sire breed. This diversity in the genetic base of the state's breeding flock implies significant variation in potential offerings of market lambs. Although the various consumer markets for lamb in the northeastern US, including the ethnic markets, tend to differ in their preferences for a particular type of lamb, lack of uniformity, predictability, and limited numbers have made it difficult to attract buyers.

**Marketing Practices** - When asked to identify market outlets for lambs, 40.9% of operations marketed lambs through a West Virginia livestock auction, 32.6% through an out-of-state livestock auction, 22.0% directly to a livestock dealer, 20.4% marketed lambs as breeding stock, and 16.0% marketed lambs as club lambs. In terms of actual lamb numbers, in 2001 respondents marketed 29.0% of lambs through an out-of-state livestock auction, 28.8% directly to a livestock dealer, and 24.5% through a WV livestock auction.

When asked to what extent various factors influenced choice of marketing outlet and when

*(Continued on page 2)*

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**Ewe Flock Distribution by Size**

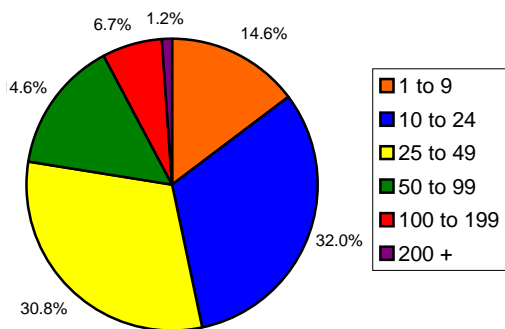


Figure 1

### Address Corrections

Please notify us if your address has changed or if you do not wish to continue receiving "News Ewe Can Use".

lambs are marketed, price expectation ranked number one (57.2% of producers indicating **strong** influence) for outlet choice and number two (49.6% of producers indicating **strong** influence) for when lambs are sold. Mean monthly lamb price patterns reported at WV livestock markets are typical of those reported at other eastern markets. Lamb prices in WV typically peak during May and reach their low point during September (Figure 2).

Quarterly lamb marketings in WV during 2001, particularly during the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> quarters, revealed a more consistent

A number of religious and ethnic holidays influence both seasonal and regional demand for lambs (Figure 4). The Muslim

**WV Mean Monthly Lamb Prices (1994-2000)**

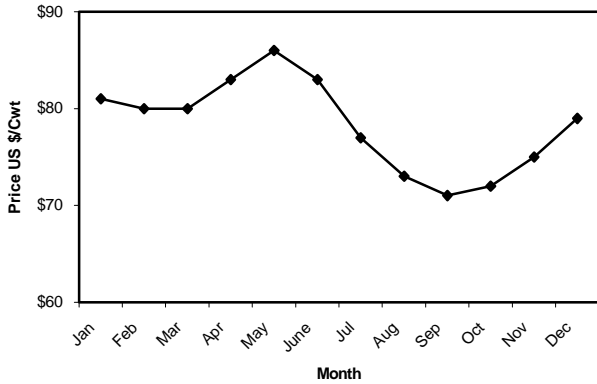


Figure 2

supply of lambs to the market than might have been anticipated based on lambing patterns and historic trends. A comparison of 2001 WV marketings and 2000 national and eastern region marketings as reported by the USDA National Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) in *Part I: Reference of Sheep Management in the United States, 2001*, indicate that more pronounced regional differences in marketing patterns may be emerging - particularly with respect to the northeast (Table 1/Figure 3).

**Table 1. Comparison of percent lambs sold by quarter - WV 2001, NAHMS Eastern Region 2000, NAHMS National 2000.**

	WV '01	East '00	National '00
First Qtr	13.1%	9.3%	4.4%
Second Qtr	28.2%	37.3%	21.5%
Third Qtr	24.8%	31.4%	43.3%
Fourth Qtr	34.0%	22.0%	30.8%

**Percent Lambs Sold by Quarter**

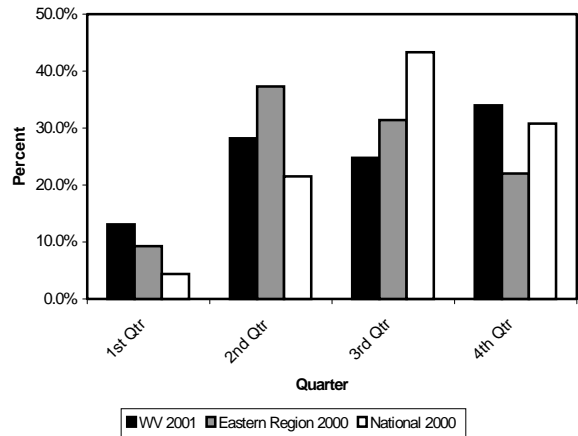


Figure 3

holiday, Eid Al Adha, fell during the first quarter in 2000 and 2001. This particular holiday creates a significant increase in the demand for lambs in the northeast. Passover, Western Easter and Orthodox Easter fell during the first part of the second quarter in both 2000 and 2001. These holidays also increase the demand for lambs. In contrast, however, the Jewish holidays of Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah, decrease demand for 100-125 lb lambs in parts of the northeast as a major Kosher lamb plant in

**Percent WV Lambs Sold by Month (2001)**

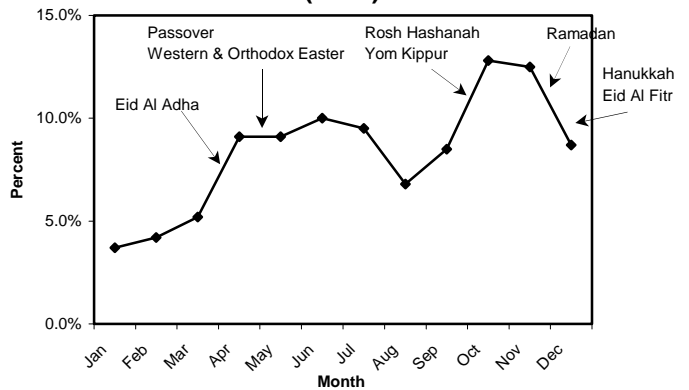


Figure 4

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the region closes 2-3 days per week for a four-week period during these holidays.

The influence of "fall run", or that period when large numbers of western lambs are moving into the market, is evident during the third quarter peak in national lamb marketings. However, marketings in both the eastern region and in WV declined somewhat on a percentage basis during the third quarter period. Although WV lamb numbers are not sufficient to have a significant market impact, the marketing practices of many WV farmers indicate some flexibility in timing marketings in response to seasonal demand and seasonal price fluctuations.

Producers indicated that live weight has a strong influence both on when lambs are sold and on choice of market outlet. Figure 5 shows the target weight preferences for marketing lambs as indicated by WV producers. Table 2 shows typical market

weight preferences (live weight) for selected eastern markets.

**Marketing Programs** - Interest in participating in an organized marketing program was indicated by 34.7% of survey

**Table 2. Typical market lamb live weight preferences for eastern markets.**

Market	Weight Preference
Italian	35-45 lbs
Greek	45-60 lbs
Muslim	60-90 lbs
Restaurant	80-100 lbs
Freezer Lamb	100-120 lbs
Kosher (forequarters only)	100-125 lbs
Wholesale	120+ lbs

**Target Market Weight Preferences**

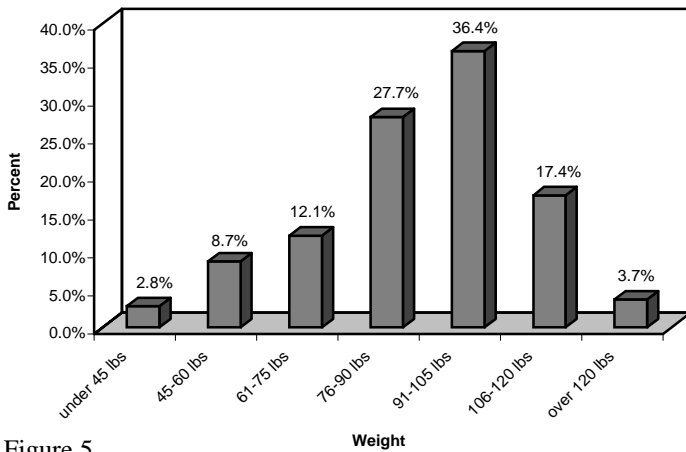


Figure 5

respondents. Local lamb marketing pools was the top ranked potential marketing alternative followed by pooling lambs for transport to a terminal market, and a lamb marketing information service (Figure 6).

**Inventory Expectations** -When asked about flock size expectations over the next three years, 27.7% of respondents planned to increase flock size, 40.2% maintain the same size flock, 11.2% decrease flock size, and 20.9% were unsure.

**Additional Results** - Additional results and analysis of the 2002 WV Lamb Marketing Survey will be available later this fall on the WVSMP website, [www.caf.wvu.edu/avs/sheep](http://www.caf.wvu.edu/avs/sheep). The NAHMS report, Part I: Reference of Sheep Management in the United States, 2001, can be viewed at [www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/caeah/cahm](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/caeah/cahm).

**Level of Interest in Potential Marketing Alternatives**

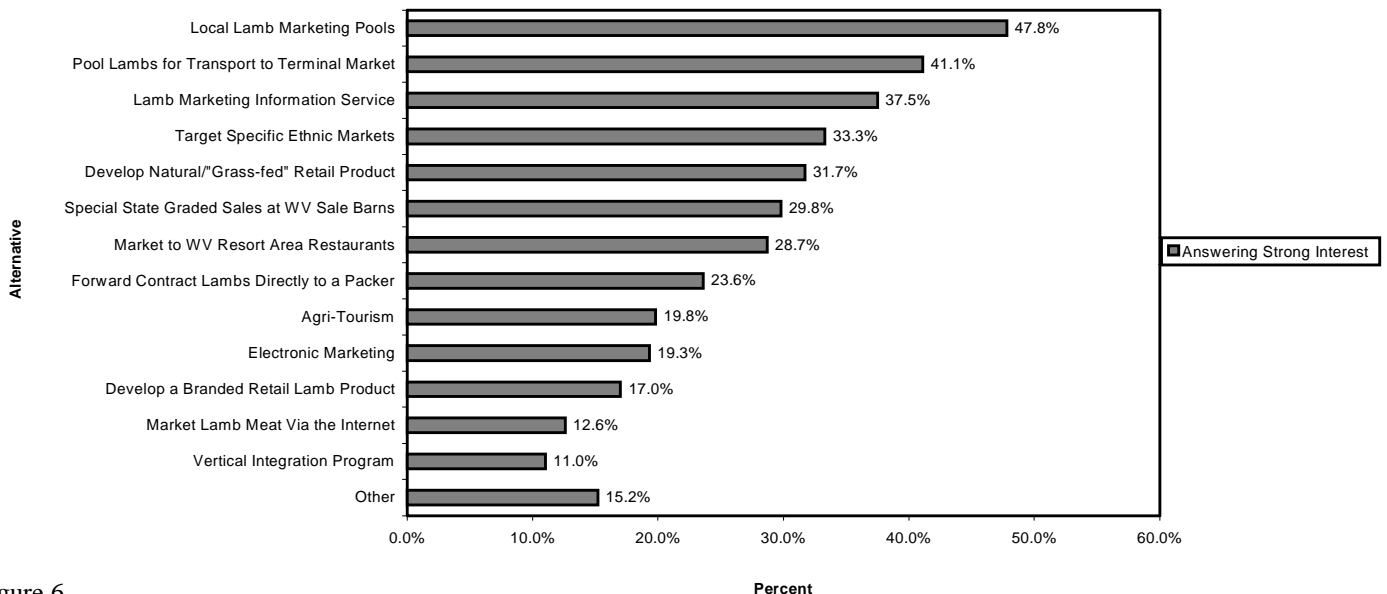


Figure 6

## Do You Work For Your Sheep, or Do Your Sheep Work For You?

*Do you work for your sheep, or do your sheep work for you?* That's one of the questions featured speaker Alan Culham will address at the upcoming fall workshop sponsored by the WV Sheep Management Project. Alan has a different kind of labor agreement with his sheep - he lets the sheep decide who stays and who gets culled!

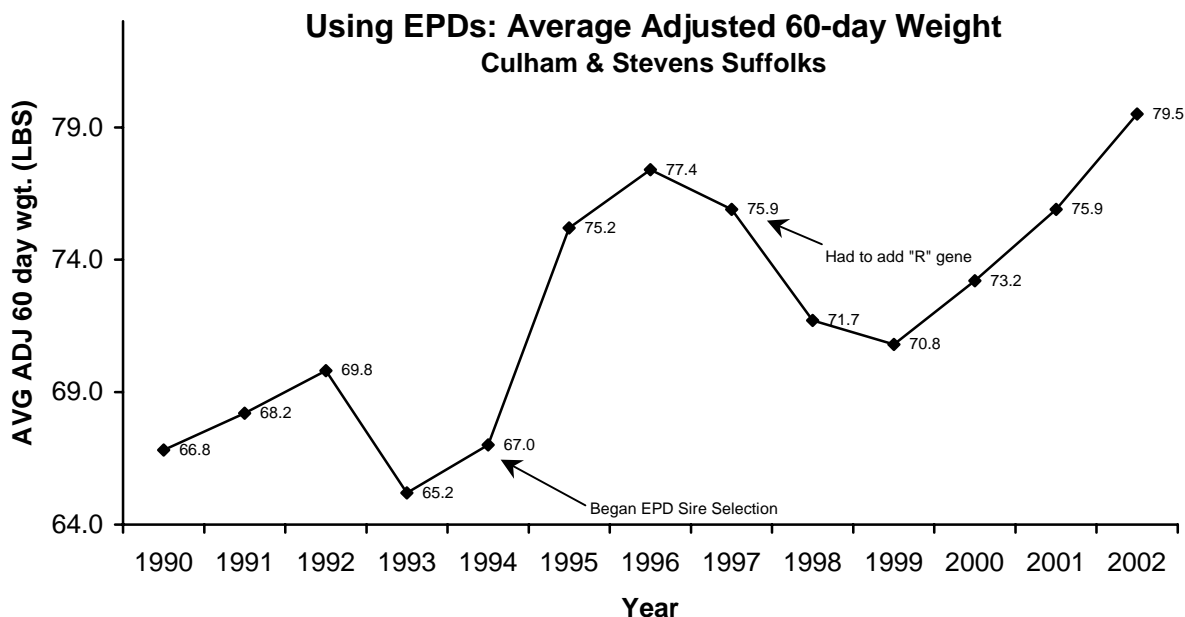
Alan Culham is the managing partner of Culham & Stevens Suffolk & Dorset Sheep, a 100-ewe flock located outside of Webberville, MI. This flock is recognized as one of the premier performance flocks in the country - producing top performers for both the show ring and commercial production. The flock once numbered 450 commercial ewes and later 400 purebred Suffolk ewes. While running a small number of Dorset ewes along with the Suffolks, Alan noticed that the Dorsets required much less labor at lambing time. The Dorset lambs were also more vigorous and seemed to have fewer problems with pneumonia and hypothermia than did the Suffolks. Through selection and management, Alan has sought to reestablish those characteristics back into the Suffolk breed. Today, the flock has been "right-sized" to include a very select group of highly productive breeding ewes that compliment streamlined management and labor inputs.

In 1988, the flock was enrolled in the National Sheep Improvement Program (NSIP), incorporating EPDs and carcass evaluation into the selection process. The results? You be the judge! The following comments by Alan Culham appeared in The Katahdin Hairald, Spring 2002 newsletter: (Yes, that's The Katahdin Hairald not The Suffolk News!)

*Too often breeders embrace EPDs for the wrong reasons. Many see it as solely a merchandising tool. I have had several breeders comment to me that they had enrolled in NSIP, got EPDs on their sheep for 1 or 2 years but discontinued the practice because "no one asked for the numbers". While EPDs have been a very effective merchandising tool in our flock, we would continue to use them even if "no one asked for the numbers".*

*We have found the use of EPDs to be essential to us in making accurate selection decisions. In the five years prior to the use of sires selected by growth EPDs, our average adjusted 60 day weaning weight only changed from 66.8 to 67.9 lbs., an average increase of only 0.025 lbs. per year. After selecting rams for growth using EPDs we increased our average adjusted 60 day weaning weight from 67.0 to 79.5 lbs. over an eight year period. This is 62 times the previous annual rate of improvement! I believe it could have been even greater had we not had to decrease our selection pressure for growth rate in order to add the "R" gene for scrapie resistance at codon 171.*

*Breeders who have purchased our rams have commented on how well they have worked for them! They all seem to breed better than they looked! - AC*



You are invited to hear Alan share his experiences with EPDs vs visual selection, feeding & fitting vs genetics, the economics of EPD growth values on terminal and maternal sire selection, as well as his philosophy on value-based pricing and experience as an independent meat quality consultant. See flyer insert for more information about the October 26<sup>th</sup> WV Sheep Management Project fall program. For more information about NSIP, visit the NSIP web site at [www.nsip.org](http://www.nsip.org).

# Fall Grazing Forage Brassica for Profit and Nutrition

by Pam West

Early Fall planting of forage brassica to use in a late season grazing program can greatly enhance the health of the sheep flock going into the winter season by providing better nutrition. Not only are brassica high in protein and energy, but they are also very palatable and highly digestible by livestock. An added bonus for the producer is the ease of establishment, and low cost.

**What are forage brassica?** Forage brassica include turnips and related species, improved for grazing by livestock. There are four classifications of these brassica - forage turnips, rape, swede and kale. Turnips and rape are 90-day crops. Both tops and tubers of turnips are consumed. Only the tops of rape are grazed since rape lacks a tuber. Swede and kale reach maturity in 150 days, making them a better choice for spring grazing.

Garden-variety turnips are not recommended for grazing as they greatly lack in yield. Forage turnips are meant to be grazed. They have a huge amount of leaf mass and the tuber grows partially exposed above ground. Many feed/seed stores sell purple top turnips for forage turnips. Purple top turnips grow like radishes. *Not the same!*

**Why consider forage brassica?** Turnips and rape can be used to extend the grazing season well into December, or used as a supplement with access to free-choice hay. Because cultivation of these crops is not until late August/early September, they fit well into a field renovation program. Turnips and rape are easy to establish, cost effective, highly nutritious, and, once sheep have been introduced, very palatable.

**How are turnips and rape cultivated?** Conventional tillage is the best method for producing a great stand of late season brassica. Weed suppression through chemical means, or plowing, then disking to prepare a good seed bed is recommended. Broadcast seed, then cultipack to ensure good soil contact. Four pounds of total brassica seed per acre is all that is needed. Turnips and rape can be planted with rye or annual rye grass as a cover crop.

Soil fertility of pH 6-6.5, P & K in the medium to high levels is adequate. Nitrogen application of 50 lbs/acre at planting, followed by a top dress of the same at the six-inch growth stage, produced the greatest yield in a recent field trial on a Greenbrier county, WV farm.

Forage turnips and rape, planted in late August, are mature to graze by mid-November with other stock-piled grass. Because forage brassica is high in protein and energy, this crop should not be used as the sole feed source. Brassica should be treated as a concentrate, not a roughage. Control access to a pure stand, or time graze, allowing sheep to graze the turnips along with stock-piled grass, or hay.

**How are brassica for forage production cost effective?** Consider the following case study:

- Location: Greenbrier County, WV
- Flock size: 90 Dorset x Suffolk ewes
- Average ewe weight: 150 lbs
- DM requirement: 154 lb ewe, early gestation = 3.1 lbs DM/day (NRC)
- Flock DM requirement: 90 ewes = 279 lbs DM/day
- Establishment cost (including seed & fertilizer): 3 acres brassica @ \$25.00/acre = \$75.00
- DM production (stems, leaves & tubers): 3 acres @ 9075 lbs DM/acre = 27225 lbs DM
- Forage analysis: 24% CP (leaves & tubers), 67% TDN (tops), 85% TDN (tubers)
- Grazing potential: approx. one month per acre for 90 ewes
- Management: time-limited grazing, 2-3 hours/day
- Hay equivalent: @ 85% DM, 12.5% CP, 54% TDN = 318 lbs of hay per day = 15900 lbs
- Feed cost savings: 23 bales, average weight 700 lbs @ \$30.00/bale = \$690.00
- Total feed savings: \$690.00 - \$75.00 = \$615.00
- Caution: not recommended as sole source of feed - dilute with hay or grass
- Result: ewes maintained excellent body condition and produced a 185% lamb crop.



*Pam West is a sheep producer in Greenbrier county, where she also owns and operates a growing fresh-cut and dried flower business from her farm. Pam has also served as a WVSCA Grasslands Technician. Pam will be a featured speaker at the West Virginia Sheep Management Project fall program.*

## 8th Great Lakes Dairy Sheep Symposium

ITHACA, N.Y. — The eighth Great Lakes Dairy Sheep Symposium will be held on Cornell University campus Nov. 7-9. The charter meeting of the Dairy Sheep Association of North America (DSANA) will be held concurrently.

As demand for sheep milk and cheeses increases, dairy sheep breeds are becoming better established in North America, improving rural economies. “The Great Lakes Dairy Sheep Symposium is the unique annual event for transmitting information among dairy sheep farmers and sheep-cheese makers,” says Michael Thonney, Cornell professor of animal science. “Because there are many other avenues to learn about general sheep management, we’re keeping the focus on information about sheep dairying.”

The U.S. imports about 38 thousand tons of sheep-milk cheese annually, representing half of the world trade in the cheese. This amount has more than doubled in the past 15 years, says Thonney. Less than 100 tons of sheep-milk cheese are produced in the U.S. each year, and he believes there is a large potential market for this product.

On the morning of Nov. 7, there will be a pre-symposium introduction to dairy sheep farming. The charter meeting of DSANA, a new organization devoted to educating, supporting and encouraging new and established sheep milk dairies,

farmstead and artisanal sheep milk cheese-makers, will begin late in the afternoon with election of officers. Initial benefits of membership will include a newsletter and membership directory.

The opening session of the symposium will start with Antonello Canas of the Università degli Studi di Sassari, Italy, speaking on nutritional strategies to improve lactation persistency in dairy ewes. Other presentations will include information on nutritional strategies, flock health, genetics and economics. Sheep cheeses provided by some of the symposium participants who already milk sheep will be sampled at session breaks and dinners. Additional sessions will focus on milk quality and cheese evaluation. Nathan Rudgers, commissioner of the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, will speak on the future of state specialty agriculture after the banquet on Friday evening.

The registration fee for the three-day symposium is \$100, with a reduction to \$75 for those joining DSANA (\$50 annual dues for charter membership). Additional family or farm members will pay a reduced registration fee of \$60. Registration includes lunches on Thursday and Saturday, the lamb barbecue on Thursday evening, the cost of transportation for the tour on Saturday and refreshments during the breaks. The banquet on Friday evening is \$25 per person.

The symposium is sponsored by the Ani-

mal Science and Food Science departments in Cornell’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and College of Veterinary Medicine and the Babcock Institute for International Dairy Research and Development at the University of Wisconsin. Cornell has a long history of supporting research and extension activities in sheep management. Results from projects on out-of-season lambing and nutrition have been utilized directly by dairy sheep farmers in New York and Vermont.

New York is home to the Old Chatham Shepherding Company, the largest sheep dairy in the United States, with several smaller sheep dairies located throughout the state. Two of these will be featured on the symposium tour on Saturday, November 9th.

Complete information about the symposium, including a brochure and registration form, is available at the Cornell Dairy Sheep web site at: [www.sheep.cornell.edu/sheep/dairysheep](http://www.sheep.cornell.edu/sheep/dairysheep) or by contacting Mike Thonney, 114 Morrison Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853-4801. For more information call (607) 255-2851, or e-mail [mlt2@cornell.edu](mailto:mlt2@cornell.edu). Or contact Michelle Cole, 130 Morrison Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y., 14853-4801, (607) 255-7712, [mlc44@cornell.edu](mailto:mlc44@cornell.edu).



Milking dairy sheep at Old Chatham Sheep Herding Company, N.Y.



Milking dairy sheep at Northland Sheep Dairy, N.Y

## ASI Fast Fact Sheet: Lamb Checkoff

As of July 1, 2002, all members of the sheep industry began participation in a new lamb checkoff created by the Lamb Promotion, Research & Information Order. Assessments will be used for American lamb programs. Funds and programs will be managed by a Board of Directors, which will be appointed this fall by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). This information is being provided by the American Sheep Industry Association (ASI). This information does not constitute an official legal document, but rather serves as a guide to help explain the checkoff collection and remittance system. The official Federal Register notice of the regulation published June 7, 2002, can be found at [www.ams.usda.gov/lsg/mpb/rp-lamb.htm](http://www.ams.usda.gov/lsg/mpb/rp-lamb.htm), or by contacting the Marketing Programs Branch, AMS/USDA at 202/720-1115.

All sheep are subject to the assessment (all feeder and market lambs and all breeding stock and cull animals) when sold. General operation of this checkoff is to have the purchaser collect the assessment with a deduction from the sales proceeds of the seller and carry the funds forward to point of slaughter or export at which time the checkoff is collected and sent to the Board.

### Who Will Be Assessed

- Producers
- Seedstock producers
- Exporters
- Feeders
- Packing plants

**Rate of Assessment** - One-half cent (\$.005) per pound of live lambs (ovine animals of any age) sold by producers, seedstock producers, exporters & feeders. Thirty cents (\$.30) per head of lambs purchased for slaughter by first handlers. A first handler is defined as an entity that takes possession of the lambs for slaughter (including custom slaughter) or sale directly to the consumer. First handlers will usually be packing plants, but possibly producers and feeders.

Marketing agencies (sale barns) will not be assessed but will be required to collect assessments from the producer, feeder or seedstock producer and pass it on to the subsequent purchaser.

### Assessments for Direct Marketers -

Persons who are both producer and first handler (one who processes lamb or lamb products of their own production and markets the products) will be assessed one-half cent per pound on the live weight at the time of slaughter and will be required to pay an additional assessment of \$.30 per head.

**How It Works: Collection and Remittance** - Each producer, feeder or seedstock producer is obligated to pay that portion of the assessment that is its share and pass it on to the subsequent purchaser – ultimately reaching the first handler or exporter, who will remit the total assessment. If a person is both producer and first handler, they will be responsible for remittance. Assessments MUST be remitted to: Lamb Promotion, Research & Information Program, c/o the Secretary at USDA, 23029 Network Place, Chicago, IL 60673-1230. The USDA is receiving assessments until the Board becomes functional. Assessments must be sent with Form LS-81, Monthly Remittance Report, found at [www.ams.usda.gov/lsg/mpb/lamb/lambforms.htm](http://www.ams.usda.gov/lsg/mpb/lamb/lambforms.htm). Remittances are due no later than the 15th day of the following month in which lambs or lamb products were purchased for slaughter or export. Late payment charges will be assessed by increasing unpaid assessments by 2% each month. Each person collecting an assessment must give the person from whom the assessment was collected a receipt. This receipt should include: 1. Name and address of the person collecting the assessment; 2. Name of the person who paid the assessment; 3. Number of head of lambs sold; 4. Total weight in pounds of lamb sold; 5. Total assessments paid by the producer, seedstock producer or feeder; Date of sale.

**Reporting Requirements and Records** - Books and records must be made available for inspection to verify any required reports. Records must be retained for three years.

**Refunds** - The order calls for a delayed referendum to be conducted no later than three years after assessments begin. It also provides the right for any producer, seedstock producer, feeder, first handler or exporter to receive a refund, or pro rata share thereof, of their assessments paid during the pre-referendum period. The refund is available whether the referendum passes or not. Refunds will be made within 90 days after the results of the referendum are an-

nounced. Refund requests require a refund application, Form LS-85, Application for Refund, found at [www.ams.usda.gov/lsg/mpb/lamb/lambforms.htm](http://www.ams.usda.gov/lsg/mpb/lamb/lambforms.htm). The form must be accompanied by proof of payment of assessments and is due no later than 60 days from the date the assessments were paid.

### EXAMPLES

1) Packer purchases a 130-pound lamb. (.005 x 130 pounds = \$0.65) will be deducted from the seller's proceeds and remitted to the checkoff by the packer. The packer must also remit an additional 30 cents at slaughter to the checkoff.

2) Producer sells 80-pound feeder lamb. (.005 x 80 pounds = \$0.40) is deducted from his/her proceeds by the feeder. The feeder carries that 40 cents forward as his sale proceeds will be deducted for the final live weight of the lamb at slaughter. The lamb weighs 130 pounds at slaughter. The feeder forwards the assessment on the weight gain (.005 x 50 pounds = \$0.25) as well as the prior assessment of 40 cents (\$.40 = \$.25 = \$.65) to the packer. Since it is the point of slaughter, the packer will remit the 65 cents to the checkoff plus his 30-cent assessment.

3) Producer sells 200-pound cull ewe. (.005 x 200 pounds = \$1) is deducted from his proceeds by the auction barn and the purchaser carries that assessment forward to the point of slaughter or export, at which time the final weight is assessed and funds are remitted to the checkoff. The auction barn completes the non-producer status form to show it is exempt from the checkoff.

4) Producer has a 65-pound lamb custom slaughtered for sale to the consumer. Producer remits (.005 x 65 pounds = 32.5 cents) plus 30 cents first handler assessment to the checkoff.

*From Sheep Industry News, August 2002, a publication of the American Sheep Industry Association, [www.sheepusa.org](http://www.sheepusa.org).*



## *News Ewe Can Use*

**WV Sheep Management Project  
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### News Ewe Can Use

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## Mark Your Calendars!!!



### WV Sheep Management Project Fall Workshop

Saturday, October 26, 2002  
9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Gus R. Douglass Annex of the WV Building  
WV State Fair Grounds  
Lewisburg, WV

Performance



Selection



Economics

Nutrition



See Flyer Insert



Flock Health

Labor Management



Marketing



Research Updates



### 2002 West Virginia "Make It Yourself With Wool" Contest

Friday, November 1, 2002  
6 p.m.

WVU Mountainlair, Main Ballrooms  
Morgantown, WV

For more information and contest  
rules, contact Tom McConnell at  
(304) 293-6131 x4237,  
[TRMcConnell@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:TRMcConnell@mail.wvu.edu) or Barb  
Long at (304) 293-6131 x4204.

