



West Virginia University

# News Ewe Can Use

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## Marketing WV Lambs

The West Virginia Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with West Virginia University and the West Virginia Sheep Management Project, received one of 13 matching grants recently awarded by the USDA under the Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program. The competitive grants were awarded to state departments of agriculture to support agricultural market research, improve marketing systems for food and agricultural products, and identify new market opportunities for farm products.

The WVDA/WVU/WVSMP was awarded \$38,500 to develop a comprehensive database for lamb market and lamb marketing information in West Virginia. The database will be used to help characterize lamb production and supply in West Virginia, serve as a central clearinghouse for lamb market information, identify market outlets for WV lambs, and provide a basis for evaluating regional marketing opportunities and for developing effective marketing strategies.

The market for lambs in WV and throughout the Northeastern US can no longer be considered a traditional commodity market. The emergence and growth of specialty and niche markets in the region have created new opportunities

AND new challenges for marketing lambs. The "ethnic" markets in particular are important lamb markets in the Northeast. These markets include the Jewish, Muslim, Greek, Italian, Latino, Caribbean, Pakistani, Indian, and West African communities. Many of these ethnic markets are active throughout the year, with demand intensifying around traditional religious celebrations and other special cultural, national and political observances. The fine dining and "natural foods" markets also show a great deal of growth potential in the region.

In today's marketplace it remains especially true that high quality lambs and well-positioned production in terms of seasonal supply will almost always command premium prices. However, these diverse ethnic and specialty markets tend to differ in their preferences for a particular type of lamb in terms of carcass size/weight, amount of finish, and age of the lamb. Some markets prefer older animals - yearlings (Muslim holiday, Eid al Adha) and aged ewes (BBQ and cuts used in curries, stews and soups). The Halal and Kosher markets may also require "unblemished" lambs. However, different factions have different interpretations of what

constitutes an unblemished animal. The challenge, then, is to define and gain a better understanding of each of these markets, to produce the right lamb for the right market, and to provide a more effective and efficient means of connecting producers with buyers.

A number of lamb buyers and small slaughter operations in the NE region have expressed a preference for regionally produced lambs to supply their markets. Many consider locally produced lambs superior in quality because they are "fresher". However, because current marketing channels in the state and in the region are not well defined, it is often difficult to access uniform lots of a particular type and quality lamb, in sufficient numbers, and on a consistent basis. As a result, lambs must be trucked in from the western states to supply the needs of our smaller regional slaughter operations. Currently, in the Northeastern US, lamb supply poses a much greater challenge than does demand for our product.

As part of the WV Lamb Marketing Information Project, the WV Agricultural Statistics Service will be administering a survey to lamb producers

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## USDA/AMS 201 Lamb Marketing Grants Awarded

As part of the three-year 201 lamb industry assistance package, the US Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service has awarded approximately \$4.85 million in lamb marketing grants. In November, 2000, USDA/AMS awarded 15 lamb marketing grants, totaling \$3.85 million. USDA/AMS awarded eight additional lamb market promotion grants last January totaling approximately \$1 million. These grants include a wide range of lamb marketing and promotion initiatives.

### November 2000 Grant Recipients:

- American Lamb Council - \$1,800,000 for 5 proposals to 1) develop a U.S. lamb seal; 2) conduct targeted retail promotion; 3) conduct culinary outreach; 4) develop a lamb information center; and 5) conduct a consumer positioning campaign.
- Colorado State University/ Mountain States Lamb Cooperative - \$115,000 to design criteria and a grid for value based marketing.
- Cornell University - \$249,488 to 1) develop a small ruminant teleauction; 2) design a kosher/halal kill room; 3) establish a marketing pool; 4) create the Northeast Regional Marketing Association; and, 5) convene two marketing summits.
- Dakota Lamb - \$250,000 for development of value added lamb products and the development of natural and organic lamb markets.
- Iowa Lamb - \$226,500 to conduct lamb retail promotion campaigns in two supermarket chains in the Southeast, and food service promotion in the western US.
- Kansas State University - \$200,186 for research on utilizing lower valued lamb cuts.
- National Meat Association - \$500,000 to conduct media advertising in specific market regions.
- U.S. Meat Export Federation - \$225,500 to conduct an exporter training seminar and to conduct in-country marketing in Mexico.
- Wolverine Packing Company - \$250,000 to conduct Midwest regional supermarket lamb promotion and to develop a pre-printed, full-color, consumer-friendly packaging for retail.

### January 2001 Grant Recipients:

- Rancher's Lamb of Texas - \$250,000 to develop a marketing campaign that combines new products and packaging.
- Utah Department of Agriculture - \$44,000 to conduct an organic lamb pilot marketing program.
- Swissland Packing Company - \$225,000 to promote home meal replacement items.
- B. Rosen and Sons - \$237,000 to conduct an American lamb promotion campaign.
- Heartland Lamb - \$50,000 to conduct producer information meetings in conjunction with a grid marketing payment schedule on quality attributes that positively affect value added products
- Dakota Lamb - \$60,000 to conduct new product marketing using natural raising techniques.
- Lewis Ranch - \$100,000 to develop new products and marketing of organic lamb including the use of internet sales.
- Grove Meat Co. - \$35,000 to market Modified Atmosphere Packaged cuts into the retail sector.

## Marketing WV Lambs

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throughout the state. The purpose of this survey is to gather baseline information that will help characterize lamb production and supply (e.g. what types of lambs are available when and where?) The survey will also seek to assess producer marketing

needs and concerns and producer interest in developing alternative marketing opportunities such as lamb marketing pools, transportation pools, special state graded sales, forward contracting, direct marketing, internet marketing, specialty product

development, etc. When you receive your survey later this fall, please take a few minutes to complete and return the survey. Your input is important.

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## Regional Marketing News

### NE Sheep & Goat Marketing Program

The Cornell Northeast Sheep and Goat Marketing Program is being developed through one of the 201 marketing grants awarded by the USDA/AMS. The mission of the NE marketing program is, "to reinvigorate the lamb and goat meat industry in the Northeastern United States by improving producer access to equitable markets while building regional capacity to supply the growing consumer demand for high quality lamb and goat meat."

West Virginia is one of 12 states participating in the program. Other states include: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

The program has five components:

1. Regional marketing conferences
2. Teleauctions
3. Market pooling
4. Design a kosher/halal kill room
5. Create a Northeast Regional Marketing Association

Producer participation in program ac-

tivities is encouraged. *"Given the relatively small size of the sheep and goat industry in the Northeast and the location of most processors close to urban areas, it is in the producers' best interest when marketing to be well informed and work together to assure that consumers have an adequate and continuously available supply of livestock which will meet their needs."*

Activities available to producers include:

1. Producers Data Base
2. Small Ruminant Marketing List Server
3. Marketing Directory
4. Holiday Livestock Listings
5. Cornell Small Ruminant Marketing Group

For more information about the Northeast Sheep and Goat Marketing Program visit their website at:

[www.sheepgoatmarketing.org](http://www.sheepgoatmarketing.org).

### Mountain Pride Coop

Mountain Pride Cooperative, Inc. was established in 1997 through the joint efforts of the University of Maryland and West Virginia University Cooperative Extension. The Co-op currently markets all-natural rabbit and beginning September 1, 2001, will market all-natural hogs to be processed and sold under the Yorkshire Farms label.

Recently, Mountain Pride signed an agreement with USDA/AMS to conduct a cooperative study on niche product marketing. The project will be a case study of how a cooperative can research and effectively market various specialty products to an ethnic group. Specific objectives include:

1. development of a profile of potential Muslim zabiha halal\* meat consumers in the Washington, DC area including information on preferred cuts and meat;
2. development of a reliable and credible system of zabiha halal slaughter for a small cooperative;

3. development of ethically appropriate marketing materials;
4. development, implementation and analysis of a meat buying club for consumers.

The study will compliment other regional marketing efforts, including the WV Lamb Marketing Information Project and the Cornell Northeast Sheep and Goat Marketing Program. The Mountain Pride study focuses on the halal retail market while the later two studies place greater emphasis on describing preferences (defining live animal attributes) and on defining and facilitating marketing channels for halal lambs and goats. The Mountain Pride study will add a great deal to our knowledge base of the retail halal market for lamb and goat meat in the region.

*\*"Halal" is an Islamic term meaning allowed or lawful. "Zabiha" is a term used that incorporates the rules and regulations for lawful Islamic slaughter.*

### Sheep Producers Benefit From 201 LMAAP

Sheep producers nationwide, including many WV producers, have benefited from the USDA's Lamb Meat Adjustment Assistance Program (LMAAP). The 3-year, \$30 million LMAAP is part of a \$100 million industry assistance package that was granted as a result of the successful 201 trade action.

Year 1 Producer Payments (7/21/99-9/30/00):

- Ram Payments  
US = \$4,860,283.37  
WV = \$51,843.83
- Facility Improvement Payments  
US = \$7,852,473.49  
WV = \$75,686.89
- Genetic Improvement Payments  
US = \$15,527.50  
WV = \$25.50

Year 2 Payments (8/1/00-4/2/01):

- Feeder Lamb Payments  
US = \$3,493,158  
WV = \$6,027
- Slaughter Lamb Payments  
US = \$1,324,400  
WV = \$160

Year 2&3 feeder and slaughter lamb payments run through July 31, 2002.

### Wool & Mohair Benefits

Wool and mohair producers began receiving \$18.3 million in June for their 2000 clip according to a recent report from the USDA's Farm Service Agency. The USDA's Wool and Mohair Market Loss Assistance Program helps eligible producers who suffered an economic loss due to low wool and mohair prices. Last year the payment rate for the 1999 wool and mohair clip was 20 cents per pound and producers across the US received more than \$10 million in assistance. WV sheep and goat producers received \$23,715.40 in market loss assistance for their 1999 wool and mohair clips. The payment rate for the 2000 clip increased to 40 cents per pound. Although final figures are not available, as of June 26, 2001, \$11,389.20 has been paid to WV wool and mohair producers. A Senate action vote is pending on a \$17 million assistance package for the 2001 clip.

## Holiday Calendar...

## Back By Popular Demand

There have been so many requests for copies of the Holiday Calendar for marketing lambs and goats, that it we decided to reprint an updated version of the calendar that appeared in the Spring 2000 issue of *News Ewe Can Use*. The calendar highlights some of the major Christian, Jewish and Muslim holidays.

The Muslim market is a growing market for both lambs and goats in the region. The 2001 World Almanac estimates there are around 5.8 million Muslims in the United States, close to the size of the American Jewish population. Most Muslims live in urban areas, with New York City, Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, Washington, DC, and Cleveland having the greatest concentrations. Converts of non-Middle Eastern origin are said to be a substantial fraction of the total Muslim population and are thought to be particularly observant of traditional Muslim dietary preferences. There are a number of halal slaughter plants located in the Northeast and surrounding area that service this growing community.

Halal markets remain active throughout the year with demand increasing around

the major Islamic celebrations. The halal market tends to be somewhat price sensitive, except around the major holidays when buyers have displayed a willingness to pay premium prices for specific types of animals. There also appears to be a willingness to substitute goat for lamb and visa versa, depending on price and availability.

The Muslim market in general prefers a 50 to 80 pound lamb. An exception is Eid al Adha, when yearlings are acceptable. Lambs should be lean, but showing a lot of "bloom". Fat, "wasty" animals are discriminated against. Per head prices for ethnic market lambs are often comparable to those received for heavier lambs, especially around the important holidays. Given the lower cost of producing younger, lighter-weight lambs and the risk of additional mortality as lambs get older, producing lambs for the ethnic market can be a profitable alternative for some producers.

The Muslim market often requires an "unblemished" animal, although the definition of unblemished varies among different groups. Broken horns, open wounds, any unsoundness, and sometimes even docked

tails and castration are considered blemishes while disbudding, ear tags and notches usually are not. Appearance is important for lambs selected for ritual sacrifice. Dirty and/or unthrifty lambs do not sell well.

As a general rule of thumb, plan to market lambs and goats 7 to 10 days prior to the targeted holiday. It is always a good idea to contact your buyer or livestock auction manager in advance. They are in the best position to know the needs of their customers. Describe your animals and ask their opinion on the best day to offer your animals for sale.

To learn more about the ethnic markets, come hear Dr. Robert Herr, a livestock consultant and order buyer at New Holland Sales Stables, Inc., and George Jones, a buyer supplying sheep and goats to a number of different specialty and ethnic markets throughout the region. Both will be among the featured speakers at this fall's WV Shepherd's Special Marketing Conference. Watch your mail for details about the upcoming conference to be held November 8 & 9 in Morgantown.

**Holiday Calendar for Lamb and Goat Marketing**

Holiday	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Eid al Adha	March 6	February 23	February 12	February 2	January 21
Islamic New Year	March 26	March 15	February 22	February 10	January 31
Start of Passover	April 8	March 28	April 17	April 6	April 24
Christian Easter	April 15	March 31	April 20	March 27	April 16
Orthodox Easter	April 15	May 5	April 27	April 11	May 1
Start of Rosh Hashanah	September 18	September 7	September 27	September 16	October 4
Ramadan Begins	November 17	November 6	October 27	October 15	October 4
Eid al Fitr Ramadan Ends	December 17	December 6	November 26	November 14	November 3
Start of Hanukkah	December 10	November 30	December 20	December 9	December 26
Christmas	December 25	December 25	December 25	December 25	December 25



## Editorial: Lambs Need Their Tails and We Do Too

Keith Inskeep, Professor, WVU

Over the last century, the show ring has had major influences on sheep production - both on selection and on management practices. Some of these influences have been good and some not. One particular relatively recent show ring influence has a negative impact on the well being of some show lambs and on the economic well being of their owners. The practice of ultra-short docking of lambs' tails increases incidence of rectal prolapse, especially in lambs on finishing rations.

I was first shown evidence of the effects of short tail docking on rectal prolapse between 15 and 20 years ago, at the veterinary school at Purdue University. While many individuals have accepted that the effect was negative, few data have been published from studies that specifically examined the practice. In the meantime there has been an increasing use of docking at the attachment to the body in show lambs. In recent studies, there is now clear evidence of increased risk to the lamb.

Let's look at data collected in 2000 from five university experiment stations (Iowa, Ohio-Columbus, Ohio-Wooster, Texas, and Wisconsin). These studies, coordinated by Dr. David Thomas of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, involved several breeds and crosses, and significant differences were observed.

Lambs docked at the terminus of the caudal tail fold, as recommended by the American Veterinary Medical Association and the US Animal Health Association (n = 216 at three of the stations), had only a 1.9% incidence of rectal prolapse. Lambs docked midway between that point and attachment of the tail to the body (n = 300 at three stations) had an incidence of prolapse of 4.7%. Lambs docked at the attachment of the tail to the body (n = 416 at five stations) had an incidence of 9.1%. Most of these lambs were finished on high energy diets, typical of those for show ring lambs. In contrast, in one group of about 100 lambs finished on pasture, no prolapses were observed, regardless of tail length.

In an earlier study conducted by Harvey Windels and presented at the 1990 Minnesota Sheep and Lamb Feeders' Day, short (1/2 inch) vs long (3 inch) docks were compared in 3/4 Suffolk, 1/8 Finn, 1/8 Targhee lambs on a high energy completely mixed diet. Over a two-year period, rectal prolapse was observed in 23/288 short-docked lambs (8%), compared to 0/288 long-docked lambs. Year-to-year differences were observed; in 1988, only 2 lambs prolapsed, but in 1989, 21 lambs prolapsed.

Sheep producers and youth show officials in three states, California, Wyoming and Washington, have already taken action

to limit how short a show lamb's tail can be. The Maryland 4-H program is set to adopt the California rule that the lamb must have enough tail that it can be lifted (I believe that means a minimum of two vertebrae beyond the attachment to the body) for lambs born in 2002.

Dr. Bob Pitts, WVU Veterinarian, and I have studied the issue carefully. The data clearly support a change in show and sale rules in West Virginia for 2002. We recommend that the following statement be adopted for all fairs and shows in West Virginia. **"Lambs born after January 1, 2002 will be accepted for exhibition only if tails are not docked shorter than the level of the distal end of the caudal tail fold."**

If action is taken before October 1, 2001, there will be adequate time to inform all youth participants, purebred breeders and club lamb producers in the State and region. Efforts are underway to bring about the same action in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. This is a chance to lead that West Virginians cannot afford to ignore. Let's get it done!

## 51st WVPBSBA Sale a Success

The 51<sup>st</sup> annual West Virginia Purebred Sheep Breeder's Stud Ram, Ewe and Club Lamb Sale was held June 2 at the Tri-County Fairgrounds in Petersburg, WV. This year's event included the show which was judged by Robert Dinsmore, Jr., a youth skillathon and junior judging contest, the annual lamb barbecue, spinning demonstrations and woolen crafts sale. A total of 170 head of breeding sheep and club lambs were offered for sale. The West Virginia Purebred Sheep Breeders Association (WVPSBA) dedicated this year's event to the memory of Robert "Bob" McNabb, who passed away in December after a short battle with cancer.

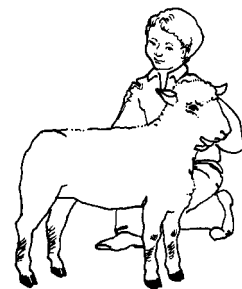
Seventy-three youth from WV, VA, PA, and NY participated in the Sheep Skillathon and Junior Judging Event. Tro-

phies were awarded to the top ten individuals and the top three teams in each of the junior and senior divisions.

The WVPSBA featured American lamb at the annual lamb barbeque - preparing over 300 lbs. of boneless leg of lamb. The Lahmansville CEOS club served lamb sandwiches and the meal was enjoyed not only by those involved with the show and sale but, also by others from the community.

The purebred sale included 54 registered ewes averaging \$254.81, 70 rams averaging \$258.64, and 46 club lambs averaging \$179.24. The top-selling animal was the Champion Club Lamb, an 82 lb. wether consigned by William Walther, which sold for \$750 to Steve Burgess of Mt. Crawford, VA. The total sale of breeding sheep and club lambs grossed \$40,110.00.

Members of the WVPSBA have begun planning for the 52<sup>nd</sup> Annual Event which will be held Saturday, June 1 2002. For information on consigning sheep, obtaining a sale catalog, or entering youth in the youth activities, please contact WVPSBA Secretary / Treasurer Sandy Smith at 304-257-4372 or Brad Smith at the WVU Grant County Extension Office, 304-257-4688.



## *News Ewe Can Use*

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### News Ewe Can Use

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## Mark Your Calendars!!!

### **State Fair of West Virginia Schedule of Sheep & wool events**

Saturday, August 11  
5 p.m. Junior & Professional Sheep Shearing Contest

Sunday, August 12  
4 p.m. Shepherd's Lead Sheep Class

Monday, August 13  
8 a.m. Judging of Fleece Contest  
9 a.m. Judging of Open Dorset, Southdown, & Hampshire Sheep

Tuesday, August 14  
9 a.m. Judging of Open Suffolk & Border Cheviot Sheep  
3 p.m. Judging of Junior Purebred Sheep

Wednesday, August 15  
5 p.m. Senior Sheep Skill-a-thon Contest (Skill-a-thon Tent)  
6 p.m. Junior Sheep Skill-a-thon Contest (Skill-a-thon Tent)

Thursday, August 16  
1 p.m. Sheep Showmanship

Friday, August 17  
8 a.m. Judging of Market Lambs

**All classes, except the Skill-a-thon, are held in the Small Stock Arena**

### **2001 make it yourself with wool contest**

The 2001 WV *Make-It-Yourself with Wool* Contest will be held at the Marriott in Charleston, December 8. This year's contest will be featured with the WV Wool Crafter's Christmas Show & Sale. For more information, contact Tom McConnell at (304) 293-5539, ext. 4237.

### **Predator Workshop**

Riverton Community Bldg, Riverton, WV  
October 27, 2001  
Sponsored by WVSMP & USDA Wildlife Services

### **Appalachian Shepherd's Conference**

Morgantown, WV  
November 8-9, 2001  
Sponsored by the WVSMP & WVU Extension Service

### **WV/OH Sheep & Wool Festival**

Jackson Co. Fairgrounds, Cottageville, WV  
August 25, 2001  
Contact Ralph Blair, (304) 863-5409