

PURCHASING AND MANAGING YOUR MARKET LAMB PROJECT FOR THE SHOW RING

SELECTING YOUR LAMB

- ◆ Go to a reputable sheep producer to purchase your lambs. These individuals will be a great resource for assistance in managing your lambs and can save you many problems and headaches down the road.
- ◆ Purchase your lambs at least 120 days prior to your target show and sale. Buy a lamb in the 60-80 pound range. Remember you will want your lamb to weigh approximately 110-140 pounds at his final show depending on frame size.
- ◆ Select lambs in their natural environment if possible. Try to watch them move around with their mother or if at a sale, take them out of the rack, and analyze them for desirable traits.
- ◆ Take time to handle the lambs prior to purchasing. You will want a lamb with a long, wide loin, a full, muscular leg, and firm, tight skin. View the lamb both standing and on the move. You will want a lamb with adequate bone and one that stands and moves correctly on their feet and legs.
- ◆ Select lambs that you like first, then if you know who will be judging the show, select lambs for that particular judge. Selection factors to consider in order of importance are:
 - A. Attractiveness
 - B. Length of body
 - C. Height
 - D. Structural correctness: Legs, feet, neck set, straightness of top, width of pin bones.
 - E. Muscle: Loin eye, depth of twist, shape down the top.
 - F. Width
 - G. Firmness of Muscle
 - H. Depth of body
 - I. Front end
 - J. Shape of loinIf one or more of these factors are not acceptable to your standards, look for another lamb.

MANAGING YOUR LAMB

Sheep are hardy and seldom get sick if managed properly. Several things can help eliminate some health problems and will allow your lamb to develop his maximum potential.

- ◆ Give a shot of Bac-Vac 7 or Covexin 8 for over-eating disease and a booster shot two weeks later. For internal parasites, deworm your lambs with Tramisol, Panacus, or Ivermectin according to the directions on the label. Follow-up with a second dose in 17-21 days. If you should notice a problem with external parasites, use Ectrin. Thereafter, deworm lambs every 30-45 days. Alternate dewormers every third deworming.

- ◆ If your lambs are not already shorn when you purchase them, shear them as soon as possible. Lambs tend to grow better without the extra wool and will be less likely to overheat during the summer months.
- ◆ After each show, give antibiotics to keep lambs from getting a cold or pneumonia. Give 3 cc of penicillin under the skin behind the forearm. If at or near a terminal show, use Naxcel for an antibiotic due to the withdrawal time.
- ◆ To prevent wool fungus (club lamb fungus): mix 1 pint of alcohol, 1 pint of vinegar, with 1/3 can of captain powder and spray the lamb thoroughly after each shearing. If a problem develops, use one the new products now available on the market.
- ◆ To prevent Coccidia, which can be a major problem in lambs less than 110 pounds feed a ration with Decox in the mix. Treatment can be as simple as adding CORID in the water for a minimum of 5 days. Albon or SMZ pills will help with treatment and should be used a minimum of 5 days in a row also. Some symptoms of Coccidia include; unthriftiness, lethargic, or gauntness, and may or may not be associated with scours.
- ◆ Trim feet two months prior to any shows and then again a week before. It normally takes about a week for lambs to adjust to having their hooves trimmed and to walk naturally and comfortably.

EXERCISING YOUR LAMB

All show lambs must be exercised somewhat in order to be very competitive. Everyone who has been very successful for any period of time has some sort of exercise program. There are many different ways to exercise. Treadmills, hurdles or jumps, sheep chariots, sheep walkers or dogs are all different methods used to firm and tone muscle in club lambs. Don't start your exercise program too early. A good rule of thumb is 100# for black faces and 80# on other breeds. Make sure the lamb is fat enough to begin an exercise program. Thin lambs should not be exercised.

- ◆ Halter break your lamb as soon as possible. Never leave lambs unattended while tied or on a halter. Start working with your lamb. Teach the lamb to brace and walk under your direction. This will teach you how to handle the lamb and the lamb will learn what is expected to respond properly in the show ring.
- ◆ Walk your lamb daily. This is when consistency pays off. Proper exercise can help your lamb stay fit and firm, ultimately handling better for the judge. Walking will only tone muscle and make the lamb handle firmer.
- ◆ Jumps will build and tone your lamb's muscles. You can add this to your walking routine or add small jumps to your pen set-up. Jumps should be the same height as the lamb's chest, slightly higher than he can walk over. If used in your pen set-up, place them in high traffic areas, such as between feed and water areas.
- ◆ Treadmills and chariots are intended to build muscle and a sheep walker will tone muscle.
- ◆ Dogs or intense running are both very effective in building muscle and tone.
- ◆ Do not overheat your lamb. Fans are very handy in the summer months or during high humidity and temperature periods. Cooler lambs will better maintain growth.
- ◆ Do not over exercise, pay attention to the amount of fat and bloom the lamb is carrying and don't lose it by over exercising.

FEEDING TIPS

Start out with a good quality 16%-18% ration with at least 13%-15% fiber. Feed lambs all they will eat each day until they reach 100 pounds. After they reach 100 pounds you should feed black face lambs at 1-1 ½ pounds of feed twice per day. All other breeds would get ¾-1 pound per feeding. You should be able to maintain growth and condition at this rate until the end.

- ◆ When feeding your lamb, place feed in an area where the lamb has to stretch to eat. Many people build feeders that allow the lamb to place their front feet on a step to reach the feeding trough. This helps to build more muscle in the rear legs and loin.
- ◆ Most any good lamb ration will work to feed your lamb. Be sure to use a mix that contains ammonium chloride or other source to prevent urinary calculi. A 16-18% protein feed is best for growing lambs and a lower protein, higher energy feed is preferred to finish the lamb. Always remember that high protein grows, high energy finishes.
- ◆ Handle finish at every chance. This provides experience in determining whether the lamb is too fat or too thin. If the lamb is too fat cut the amount of feed down and increase protein. If the lamb is too thin, decrease the amount of protein and increase the amount of fat. Don't increase the amount of feed unless absolutely necessary.
- ◆ Weighing the lambs weekly will tell you how much you are gaining or losing and allow you to calculate your ending weight.
- ◆ Maintain a good source of fresh, clean water for your lambs at all times.
- ◆ Supplement your ration with quality hay as needed. A little hay once or twice a week will help to keep their stomachs working properly. Holding hay prior to a show is recommended, as hay tends to blow out the stomach and gives the appearance of an overfilled lamb.
- ◆ It is very important to feed on a time schedule as close as possible each and every day.

SHOW MANAGEMENT FEEDING SCHEDULE

Leave lambs on full water until you leave for the show, but limit feed and water from this point until after the show. Be sure that any water they receive while at the show contains electrolytes. Following is a feed and water schedule to regulate intake prior to the show:

Show Schedule	While at Home	While at Show	
		Water	Feed
A next day show	½ of normal feed	½ can*	½ can*
2 days from the show	normal feeding	¾ can 1 st day ½ can 2 nd day	¾ can 1 st day ½ can 2 nd day
3 days from the show	normal feeding	normal 1 st day ¾ can 2 nd day ½ can 3 rd day	normal 1 st day ¾ can 2 nd day ½ can 3 rd day

*Can referenced is a 1 pound coffee can.

The morning of the show, if within 4 hours of showing, do not feed or water. If the wait is going to be more than 5 hours, feed ½ can each of water and feed. If you need more fill, feed alfalfa hay approximately 1 hour before the show.

Enjoy your lamb project and use it as a learning experience. There are many lessons to be learned from successfully managing a lamb project. Remember to keep these in mind as you work to be the best you can be in making the best better!

BREEDERS, SENIOR MEMBERS, PARENTS AND EXTENSION AGENTS ARE ALWAYS THERE TO ASSIST YOU. If you have a question or are just not sure about something, contact them. The lamb project is meant to be fun and educational. It lends itself to both self-teaching and sharing of family experiences.

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