
AGRICULTURAL ALTERNATIVES

Feeder Lamb Production

Feeder lamb production is a livestock enterprise adaptable to small-scale and part-time farms in Pennsylvania. Feeder lambs are purchased as premarket-weight lambs, fed to a desirable market weight, and then sold. When purchased, lambs can weigh as little as 35 pounds or less and as much as 60 pounds. These lambs are usually marketed at 110 pounds through local auctions, slaughterhouses, brokers, and individuals. In recent years, direct markets, niche markets, tel-a-auctions, and marketing cooperatives have become popular for selling lambs. The wool is sold through local and national markets, brokers, and wool cooperatives.

Feeder lamb production is a good option for the small-scale or part-time farmer because of the following:

- No investment in ewes or rams is required.
- The investment for buildings and equipment is minimal, especially if existing facilities are available.
- Labor requirements are minimal.
- The feeder lamb business is relatively easy to enter or exit.
- Feeder lambs can use forages or crop residue that otherwise might not be utilized.
- Death loss is very low because the lambs are purchased close to weaning weight.

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Two disadvantages of feeder lamb production in the northeastern portion of the United States are:

- Availability of feeder lambs is limited.
- Traditional markets are limited.

The best way for Pennsylvania farmers to compete in this market is to buy local feeder lambs, utilize cheap feed sources (home-grown forages or crop residue), and, most importantly, develop local markets (niche or direct).

Getting Started

Before starting production of feeder lambs, you must consider two points: operation size and market. The number and size of lambs you purchase is determined by your capital, the amount and quality of acreage available for pasture or aftermath grazing, available facilities, amount of labor, and the markets you sell in.

Fencing and Housing

Housing and equipment for feeder lambs do not have to be expensive. In many cases existing housing and fencing can be used. Electric or wooden fences are the best choices.

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Health Program

A thorough preventive health program, rather than a treatment plan, is strongly recommended in a feeder lamb production system. This requires working with your local veterinarian, who can help you develop a health program.

Sample Budgets

The sample budget included in this publication gives an example of the costs and returns of feeder lamb production. It should help ensure that all costs and receipts are included in your calculations. Costs and returns are often difficult to estimate in budget preparation, because they are numerous

and variable. Therefore, you should think of these budgets as an approximation, and then make appropriate adjustments using the “Your Estimate” column to reflect your specific situation.

Other sheep titles in the *Agricultural Alternatives* series which may be of interest to you are *Spring Lamb Production, Off-season and Holiday Lamb Production, Accelerated Lamb Production, and Milking Sheep Production.*

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Sample Feeder Lamb Budget

Lambs are bought at 65 pounds and fattened to 110 pounds.

Item	Quantity	Unit	Price	Amount	Your estimate
Receipts					
Lambs	110	lb	\$0.70	\$77.00	_____
Wool and hides				\$10.00	_____
<i>Total receipts</i>				\$87.00	_____
Variable costs					
Value of feed fed				\$14.00	_____
Feeder lambs	45	lb	\$0.65	\$29.25	_____
Marketing	1	head	\$2.50	\$2.88	_____
Health care	1	head	\$1.50	\$1.50	_____
Misc., utilities, supplies				\$2.00	_____
Interest on investment	2	month	10%	\$1.00	_____
<i>Total variable costs</i>				\$50.63	_____
Fixed costs					
Labor charge	1	hrs	\$5.00	\$5.00	_____
Equipment charge	\$1.75		20%	\$0.35	_____
Building charge	\$13.50		17%	\$2.30	_____
<i>Total fixed costs</i>				\$7.65	_____
Total costs				\$58.27	_____
Returns					
Returns over variable costs				\$36.38	_____
Net returns				\$28.27	_____

Initial resource requirements

- Land: 1 acre
- Labor (per head):
1 hour x 100 lambs = 100 hours
- Capital
Livestock (per head): \$29.25 x 100 lambs = \$2,925
Existing buildings, improvements, fencing: \$1,350

For More Information

Agronomy Guide. AGRS-26, Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences, University Park, PA 16802.

Engle, Clair. *Body Condition Scoring of Sheep*. Fact Sheet No. DA594-09, IVD3g. Department of Dairy and Animal Science, Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences, University Park, PA 16802.

Gates, Norman. *Practical Guide to Sheep Disease Management*. News-Review Publishing Co., Moscow, ID.

Livestock Feeding on Pasture. A.M. Nichol, Ed. Chapters 2, 5, 7. New Zealand Society of Animal Production, Publ. No. 10, Ruakura Agricultural Research Center, Hamilton, NZ.

Sheep Housing and Equipment Handbook. Midwest Plan Service. MWPS-3, Ames, IA.

Murphy, Bill. *Greener Pastures on Your Side of the Fence*. 2nd Edition, Arriba Publishing, Colchester, VT.

Penn State Sheep Budgets. Section in *Farm Management Handbook*, AGRS-10, Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences, University Park, PA 16802.

Pennsylvania Forage Handbook. Department of Agronomy, Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences, University Park, PA 16802.

Ross, C. V. *Sheep Production and Management*. Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632.

Sheep Production Handbook. American Sheep Industry Association. Paper Systems, Inc. Denver, CO 80112.

Associations and Periodicals

Sheep Breed Associations

American and Delaine-Merino Record Assn.

1026 Country Rd. 1175, Rt 3
Ashland, OH 44805

American Black Sheep Registry
4714 Glade Rd.
Loveland, CO 80538

American Border Leicester Assn.
Rt 4 Box 138
Taylorsville, NC 28681

American Cheviot Sheep Soc., Inc.
RR 1 Box 100
Clarks Hill, IN 47930

American Cormo Sheep Assn.
P.O. Box 696
Ramah, NM 87321

American Corriedale Assn., Inc.
Box 290
Seneca, IL 61360

American Cotswold Record Assn.
18 Elm St.
P.O. Box 59
Plympton, MA 02367

American Hampshire Sheep Assn.
P.O. Box 277
Whiteland, IN 46184

American Karakul Sheep Registry
3026 Thomas Rd.
Rice, WA 99167

American Oxford Down Record Assn.
Rt 1 Box 75
Stonington, IL 62567

American Polypay Sheep Assn.
609 S. Central, Ste. 9
Sidney, MT 59270

American Rambouillet Sheep Breeders Assn.
2709 Sherwood Way
San Angelo, TX 76901

American Romney Breeders Assn.
29515 N.E. Weslinn Dr.
Corvallis, OR 97333

American Shropshire Registry Assn., Inc.
P.O. Box 250
Hebron, IL 60034

American Southdown Breeder's Assn.
HCR 13 Box 220
Fredonia, TX 76842

American Suffolk Sheep Soc.
P.O. Box 256
17 West Main
Newton, UT 84327

Black-Top Delaine-Merino Sheep Soc.
1775 Damman Rd.
Fowlerville, MI 48836

Columbia Sheep Breeders Assn. of America
P.O. Box 272E
Upper Sandusky, OH 43351

Continental Dorset Club
P.O. Box 506
Hudson, IA 50643

Coopworth Soc. of North America
1335 West U Ave.
Schoolcraft, MI 49087

Finnsheep Breeders Assn.
P.O. Box 512
Zionsville, IN 46077-0512

Jacob Sheep Breeders Assn.
6350 East County Rd. 56
Fort Collins, CO 80524

Jacob Sheep Conservancy Registry and Breed Assn.
9241 Eureka Rd.
Girard, PA 16417

Katahdin Hair Sheep Int'l.
Rt 2 Box 33
Perryville, AR 72126

Montadale Sheep Breeders Assn.
P.O. Box 603
Plainfield, IN 46168

National Lincoln Sheep Breeders' Assn.
RD 6 Box 24
Decatur, IL 62521

National Tunis Sheep Registry
Tunis Shepherd
Route 1 Box 192
Gouverneur, NY 13642

Natural Colored Wool Growers Assn.
P.O. Box 487
Willits, CA 95490

Navajo Churro Sheep Assn.
Box 94
Caliente, NM 87549

North American Clun Forest Assn.
W5855 Mahlum Rd.
Holmen, WI 54636

North American Romanov Sheep Assn.
P.O. Box 1296
Pataskala, OH 43062-1296

North American Shetland Sheep
Registry
1240 North 22nd St.
Allegan, MI 49010

North American Texel Sheep Assn.
Lower Myrick Rd.
Lurrel, MS 39440

Scottish Blackface Sheep
Breeders' Assn.
39282 River Dr.
Lebanon, OR 97355

St. Croix Breeders Assn.
UMC 4815
Utah State University
Logan, UT 84322

U.S. Targhee Sheep Assn.
P.O. Box 15
Jasper, MN 56144

Sheep and Wool Industry Associations

American Lamb Council
c/o American Sheep Industry Assn.
44 No. Michigan Ave.
Chicago, IL 60611

American Sheep Industry Assn.
6911 S. Yosemite St.
Englewood, CO 80112-1414

American Sheep Industry Women
1323 Elkhorn
Belle Fourche, SD 57717

Lamb Committee
c/o National Livestock and Meat Bldg.
44 No. Michigan Ave.
Chicago, IL 60611

National Lamb Feeders Assn.
P.O. Box 238
Bristol, IL 60512-0238

National Wool Marketing Corp.
P.O. Box 32445
3900 Groves Rd.
Columbus, OH 43232

Pennsylvania Sheep and Wool
RD 1 Box 188
Kempton, PA 19529

Sheep Industry Development Program
c/o American Sheep Industry Assn.
6911 S. Yosemite St.
Englewood, CO 80112-1414

Sheep Periodicals

Black Sheep Newsletter
RD 1 Box 288
Scappoose, OR 97056

Lamb Producers' Journal
P.O. Box 384
Monticello, IN 47960

Lamb and Wool Market News
6911 S. Yosemite St.
Englewood, CO 80112-1414

Maryland Sheep News
6184 Aryshire Dr.
Salisbury, MD 21801

National Wool Grower
6911 S. Yosemite St.
Englewood, CO 80112

Sheep!
Box 329
Jefferson, WI 53549

Sheep Breeder and Sheepman
P.O. Box 796
Columbia, MO 65205

Sheep Canada
Box 777
Airdrie, Alberta TOM OBO
Canada

Shepherd Magazine
5696 Johnston Road
New Washington, OH 44854

Sheep Producer
HCR 71 Box 550
Orbisonia, PA 17243

Sheep Research Journal
American Sheep Industry Assn.
6911 S. Yosemite St.
Englewood, CO 80112

The Stockman Grass Farmer
P.O. Box 96075
Jackson, MS 39286

The Wool Page
P.O. Box 218
Boston, MA 02124

Sheepdog Associations

Great Pyrenees Club of America
8218 Finister Court Ct.
Fair Oaks, CA 95628

Int'l. Livestock Guarding Dog Assn.
Box FC
Hampshire College
Amherst, MA 01002

Maremma Sheepdog Club of America
P.O. Box 546
Lake Odessa, MI 48849

Sheepdog Periodicals

National Stock Dog
P.O. Box 402
Butler, IN 46721

Ranch Dog Trainer
RD 2 Box 333
West Plains, MO 65775

Working Border Collie
14933 Kirkwood Rd.
Sidney, OH 45365

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