

# Lamb Manual



**The Woodlands College Park FFA  
and**



**The Woodlands FFA**

## **Introduction**

You have made the decision that you want to feed and competitively show a market lamb. This project will entail several months of proper care, feeding and management of a potentially award-winning lamb. This project will teach you many important lessons such as how to be responsible for something, animal husbandry and being committed to a goal (raising a competitive project). Your project will be time consuming and a lot of handwork but hopefully it will be a rewarding experience. Each exhibitor will need the help from family members and friends to be able to have a successful project.

This manual is to be a source of information and is intended for your use throughout the feeding period. It will be able to give you knowledge in many of the different aspects of raising and showing lambs. Please take time to read and study it so that you can learn as much as possible from it.

The Woodlands FFA/College Park FFA expects every student that show an animal project through their program to take this task very seriously. We have high expectation of the students performance at the barn and in the showering. All exhibitors should try their best at all times and take the time to make sure they are doing the best. Lastly, we as members of The Woodlands FFA/College Park FFA need to make sure that we are always working with each other instead of against each other.



## ANIMAL SELECTION

Selection of a lamb project is a major influence on project end result. It is not the only influence though you must have a good feeding program, a good exercise program and be a good showman. Lambs can be purchased by private treaty at a producer's ranch or through sales. You can find sales through magazines such as "The Showbox", "Showtimes" and "The Purple Circle." You need to begin looking for lamb project in Late spring and early Spring. You must make your selection based on many different factors such as:

- A. Which shows you want to show at
  - you need to make sure the age of the lamb will be correct for the show you want to attend
  - lambs must have their milk teeth to be eligible they begin to lose these between 12 to 14 months old.
- B. What size do you want your lamb
  - depending on frame size of a lamb will determine what weight your lamb will need to reach at show time
- C. Classification
  - this is based on color markings, physical structure, skeletal shape, and feel of the pelt (softness)
  - You must choose a lamb that will classify in the class that you would like to show in
  - Four major breeds
    - \*Finewools
    - \*Finewool Crosses
    - \*medium wools
    - \*Southdowns

There are many qualifications for each breed. Your ag teacher can give you a description of each.

#### D. Muscling

- Lamb needs to feel firm and hard muscled
- good expression of muscling from the shoulder to the rump
- Have a long, level, square rump with good width at the pin bones (dock)
- Widest part of the leg when viewed from behind should be through the middle of the leg or stifle area
- A lamb that stands wide or walks wide usually will be heavily muscled

#### E. Structural Correctness

- Hold its head erect and the neck should extend out of the top of the shoulder
- Should be straight on both its front and rear legs and legs should be squarely under the body

#### G. Style and Balance

- This refers to eye appeal
- Lambs should have a clean front, smooth shoulder, level top, level rump, trim middle and straight legs
- They need to have a tight hide and be free of wrinkles

## **Facilities and Equipment**

The main facilities a lamb needs is somewhere they can get away from the cold, wet conditions and a small pen with outside exposure. You need adequate fencing, a feeder, a water container and an exercise area are required.

Your feeders should be hung at the shoulder of the lamb being fed. Feeders need to be cleaned regularly. You also need to have some type of feeder for hay and minerals. Water containers should be small enough to be able to clean on a daily basis. It also should be located in a shaded area. If your exercise area is one that you are using a dog with a track you should have a circular or oval shaped track or a square track with rounded corners. The track path should be 5 to 7 feet wide. The outside fence should be at least 4 ft. high and made of heavy, tightly stretched net wire. The inside fence should be 4 ft. high made of net wire that has some elasticity and is not tightly stretched. Sand, cedar shavings or fresh dirt should be kept in the path. Overall measurement of the run should be no larger than 100ft by 100ft and no smaller than 40ft by 40ft. You can exercise your lamb using a four-wheel, all-terrain vehicle or we have a treadmill you can use. Walking lambs with a halter does not give them enough exercise.

Equipment that you will need:

- stiff brush to clean water troughs
- shovel to clean pens
- trimming table that measures 45 inches long, 20 inches wide and 18 inches tall
- electric clippers
- 20 & 23 tooth comb with cutters
- one small wool card or poodle combination
- syringes and needles
- lamb blanket and/or socks
- rope halters
- hoof trimmers

- hand shears
- bolus gun for giving medication
- drench gun
- portable feed troughs
- muzzles
- fan

Some of these items will be provided by the ag dept.

## **NUTRITION**

There are no magic feeds or rations that make a champion lamb. It is the total feeding program, including the feeding schedule, the exercise program and the careful observation of the lamb during growing and finishing stages. There are five basic nutrients that are required by most livestock. They are water, protein, carbohydrates and fats (or energy), minerals and vitamins.

Water: make sure you clean fresh water twice a day  
If you do not have enough clean water it can limit the amount of feed that your lamb will consume.

Protein: Protein requirements will vary according to age, size and maturity. Young fast growing lambs need rations that contain 16 to 18 percent protein. This will allow them to grow and develop their muscle potential. You can feed lower amounts of protein during the fattening stage and during hotter summer months. Older lambs can be fattened on rations containing 11 to 12 percent protein.

Carbohydrates and fats: The most common limiting nutrients in lamb rations are energy producing carbohydrates and fats. Inadequate energy intake will reduce growth and cause weight loss. An adequate supply of energy is necessary for efficient nutrient utilization. Grain and protein supplements are high in energy contains less carbohydrates and fats. In lamb rations, too much energy intake can be just as detrimental as not enough.

Minerals and Vitamins: Important mineral for lamb rations are salt, calcium, and phosphorus. You should have loose salt and loose trace minerals for your lamb at all times. Calcium and phosphorus are necessary for proper growth and development. They should be fed in a ration of approximately 2.5 parts calcium to 1 part phosphorus. If you feed too much phosphorus in relation to calcium could lead to your lamb getting urinary calculi.

High energy lamb rations usually need calcium supplements, such as calcium carbonate.

Lambs require small amounts of vitamins. Vitamin A is the only vitamin that would usually be deficient. If you feed alfalfa hay in rations it should not be a problem. You can add Vit B complex to enhance the well being of the lamb.

## Health

To have a healthy lamb you must develop a preventive health program. When you first receive your lamb you need to vaccinate and treat the lamb as if it has not had any treatment. These are things you need to treat for:

1. Enterotoxemia (overeating disease)

This is one of the main causes of death in club lambs. The disease is caused by a clostridial organism normally present in the intestine of most sheep. Lambs that experience abrupt changes to their feeding schedules or that consume large amounts of grain are subject to enterotoxemia. These changes cause the clostridial organism to grow rapidly and produce a powerful toxin that causes death in a few hours. There is a combination vaccine for types C and D enterotoxemia. All club lambs should be vaccinated with the combination vaccine, and a booster vaccine should be administered 2 to 3 weeks later. Additional boosters can be given at 2-3 month intervals.

2. Internal parasites

New lambs should be drenched for internal parasites immediately. A second drenching should follow about 3 weeks later. Consult your vet for recommended practices and information on the most effective drenches.

3. Soremouth

Soremouth is a contagious disease that causes the formation of scabs on the lips and around the mouths of lambs. It is caused by a virus that can affect humans, so use caution when working with lambs with soremouth. Iodine can be rubbed into lesions after the scabs are removed and this will help dry up the area and reduce the infection.

4. Ringworm

Ringworm can be a problem because it is contagious and can be transmitted from lamb to lamb, from lamb to human, or from infected equipment to lamb. A good prevention program is necessary. The following products have been used with varying results:

- Fulvicin powder- as a bolus or used to top dress feed
- Novasan – 3 ounces per gallon of water sprayed on lambs, equipment, and premises;
- bleach- 10 percent solution sprayed on lambs, equipment and premises.

5. Rectal prolapse

Rectal prolapse, or protrusion of the rectum, is believed to be inherited. It also is associated with concentrate feeding, short docking of the tail or excessive coughing induced by dusty conditions. Prompt treatment by a vet is recommended.

There are other things that you can do to make sure your lamb project is healthy. You need to trim its hooves every 4 to 6 weeks. Always trim hooves 1 to 2 weeks before a show in case you accidentally cut into the quick and temporarily cripple the lamb.

Daily observation is always an important way to prevent in major problems. Lambs that do not feel well generally do not eat as quickly and may not clean up their feed. It is a good idea to check the manure of the lambs in the pen. Lambs with diarrhea generally have had their feed changed to quickly, have consumed too much high-energy feed, or may have an internal parasite problem. Check the lams to see how they walk and get a good impression of their overall thriftiness.

Daily observation also will help you detect urinary calculi or water belly. An affected animal will stand with its back arched and will strain to pass urine, may kick at its belly and show extreme discomfort. It is normal for most lambs to urinate after they stand up and move about for a few minutes.

Heat stress also can be a problem for lambs. Heat stressed lambs ten to stand very straight on their hing legs and appear to have the shakes or tremors in their rear quarters. To reduce strss, shear the lamb and provide a quiet, cool place to rest.

## **Management and Feeding**

When you first receive your lamb they might not know how to eat feed from a feeder. These lambs should be started on good, leafy alfalfa hay that is top dressed with a preconditioning pellet. After 2 or 3 days, slowly change these lambs to the concentrate that you have chosen. Hay can be fed during the first part of the feeding program, but should be eliminated at the later stages to prevent lambs from getting a large stomach.

Lambs should be feed individually. This allows you to know how much each lamb eats each day. You need to make sure you monitor your lamb and watch for fat deposition and progress on your feeding program. Rations that are not producing enough finish can be bolstered by adding a high energy feed duing the late stages of the feeding program. This will reduce the overall protein content of the ration and provide the extra energy needed during cold weather.

Never make an abrupt change in the feeding program. Gradual changes are more desirable so lambs stay on feed and continue to develop.

Feeding is a daily responsibility and the program should be changed as needed to maximize results. To be able to monitor results you must weigh you lambs on a regular basis.

Feeding and exercise go hand in hand. Exercise is an excellent way to condition and tone your lambs, and help control fat deposition. Lambs should be exercised extremely hard and fast for short distances of 350 to 450 yards. Your goal is to run the lamb just long enough to get adrenalin running through their bodies. If you exercise too long, you will pass this point and start to tear down muscle rather than develop it.

Exercise programs should begin 2 to 3 months before the show, depending upon the ration fed and the condition of the lamb. Do not make the mistake of exercising lambs before they are properly conditioned.

## **Fitting**

Fitting lambs is more than just shearing them. You must wash them to be able to shear them. Wash and shear your lamb as close to the show day as possible. You will not be able to shear the lamb at most shows. You can use any livestock soap or liquid dish washing soap to wash your lamb. Make sure you rinse your lamb really well. If your lamb has not been sheared you can use a blow dryer to help with the drying time. If your lamb has short fleece then a bath towel will be adequate to dry your lamb. Lambs that have a tendency to wrinkle should not be dried with a blow dryer.

Lambs should be sheared smooth. While shearing, the clippers should run parallel to the length of the body rather than vertically. This will make the lamb appear balanced and longer bodied. Wool below the knees and hocks should not be shorn. This "boot" can be carded out and blended in with hand shears or electric clippers. Immediately after shearing, cover each lamb with a lamb sock or blanket and hood. A clean, well-blended pen should be provided to keep lambs clean and dry.

## **Showing**

### **Preshow Preparation**

The amount of time required to train a lamb for show depends on the lamb, the physical size and experience of the exhibitor, and the intensity of training. Some lambs are easy to gentle and train for show, while other lambs are difficult and nearly impossible to train. Most lambs can be trained if enough time and effort are spent.

Halter breaking is an excellent way to begin the gentling process, especially if you have several lambs. Lambs should be caught, haltered with a rope halter, and tied to a fence. Do not tie lambs where they can hurt themselves and do not leave tied lambs unattended. While a lamb is tied, you can place the lamb's feet properly and get it accustomed to setting up.

Once you have achieved the settling down part you can begin teaching the lamb how to lead. This is done with one hand under its chin and the other hand on the back of its head. Have someone assist you by patting the lamb on its dock whenever it stops.

Once you become comfortable with leading the lamb you can start positioning your hands in a way that hold the lamb's ears forward. This will give the judge the impression that the lamb is long necked and very stylish. Lead with your arm extended and with your body 1 to 2 feet from the lamb.

The next step in the training process is to lead the lamb without the halter and properly set it up. Set the hind legs first, then place the front legs, keeping the body and neck straight and the head in a high, proud position with ears up and forward. You should remain standing at all times.

After a lamb is trained to lead, set up and remain set up while you move around it, the lamb is ready to be taught to brace or push when pressure is applied to its neck or chest. A lamb must push or brace itself when the judge is handling it. A constant, steady pressure is desirable because it helps the judge better evaluate the lamb. Keep the lamb's front feet on the ground when bracing. A lamb can be taught to brace by backing it off a blocking table or by lightly tapping it on the rear when it moves backward. Do not overpower a lamb when teaching it to brace, or it may develop bad habits such as over driving or kicking its back legs to far back.

After training is complete, you must with to practice showing the lamb. You can set up your lamb and show it while someone else handles it, making sure the lamb responds. If the lamb responds properly, return it to the pen and do not overwork it. If it fails to respond, more training is necessary.

Realize that you may have only 5 seconds to actually show a lamb in a major show. If your lamb does not stand and push properly when the judge handles it, you may get overlooked.

## **Showring**

Showmanship can be the difference between winning and losing. The first thing for showmanship is you should be confident in yours and your lamb's ability to show. You should be neat in your appearance but not overdressed. Before the show begins you need to become familiar with the showring. If the show begins and you are able to watch pay attention to how the judge works the lambs in the showring. When your class is called bring your lamb to the showring. Avoid corners in a showring and leave plenty of space between your lamb and the others. Set up your lamb, making sure the legs are set properly, and keep the body, neck and head in a straight line. Keep the lamb's head up and alert. Do not cover your lamb with your body or block the judge's view of your lamb. Have your lamb bracing when the judge begins to handle it. After a judge handles your lamb he will usually step back and look at it. Be sure to keep pressure on the lamb and keep its head up and body, neck and head in a straight line. Keep one eye on the judge and one eye on your lamb. It is your responsibility to watch the judge and not miss a decision.

Remain calm and concentrate on showing. In large classes, it may take a long time for the judge to handle your lamb. Be patient and let your lamb relax. To keep your lamb calm, circle it, scratch it on the ear or rub its stomach.

If your lamb is pulled make sure to move your lamb forward and keep the lamb between you and the judge. If you do not get pulled keep your lamb set up and keep showing. You need to make sure to always have a pleasant facial expression and be a good sport.

## **Record of Expenses**

Adequate records should be maintained for all expenses incurred during the period of your lamb project. Examples of expenses can be, but are not limited to, the following feed, supplements, tack, medications, health services, entry fees, facility usage, etc. You should also keep all receipts for merchandise and services that you received. This record of expenses can be transferred into an official FFA record book at a later time.

Date	Expense Item	Quantity and Unit	Price per Unit	Total Cost





