

Highlights of NAHMS Sheep 2001: Part IV Baseline Reference of 2001 Sheep Feedlot Health and Management

The USDA's National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) collected data on sheep health and management practices from a stratified random sample of sheep production sites in 22 States¹ as part of the Sheep 2001 study. These States represented 87.4 percent of the January 1, 2001, U.S. sheep inventory and 72.3 percent of U.S. sheep producers in 2000. Overall, 3,210 operations participated in the first interview from December 29, 2000, to January 26, 2001.

Data for Sheep 2001 Part IV were collected from 32 feedlots in 11² of the initial 22 participating States. Veterinary medical officers (VMOs) and animal health technicians (AHTs) contacted producers to collect data for this report through responses to a questionnaire administered on-site between September 4 and November 16, 2001. Producers were primarily feedlot operators who had an inventory of 500 or more market lambs on a high-energy diet for the purpose of reaching acceptable slaughter weight.

The following highlights were excerpted from the report released in January 2004: Part IV: Baseline Reference of 2001 Sheep Feedlot Health and Management. Data in this report represent only those feedlots reporting and should not be used as inferences to a larger population of feedlots.

General Management

Just over one-half of participating feedlots fed fewer than 5,000 sheep and lambs between August 1, 2000, and July 31, 2001. However, over 95 percent of market lambs were fed on large feedlots (5,000 or more sheep and lambs) during that time period (Table 1).

¹ Arkansas, California, Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Montana, Minnesota, Nevada, New Mexico, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming

² Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Montana, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Utah, Wisconsin, Wyoming

Table 1. Percentage of Feedlots (and Percentage of Market Lambs on July 1, 2001) by Feedlot Size:*

Feedlot Size (Number of Sheep and Lambs)	Percent Feedlots	Percent Market Lambs
Less than 5,000	59.4	4.6
5,000 or more	40.6	95.4
Total	100.0	100.0

*Feedlot size is based on the number of head placed on feed from August 1, 2000, through July 31, 2001.

Nearly all (98.3 percent) sheep and lambs on small feedlots (fewer than 5,000 sheep) were owned by the operation. This was not true for large operations, where a significant percentage of animals (27.8 percent) were consigned to the feedlot with ownership being retained by the producer; even more (30 percent) had retained ownership by a lamb buyer. However, the majority of sheep and lambs on large operations were owned by the operation.

Just over 90 percent of feedlots fed sheep and lambs from November 2000 through January 2001. The lowest percentage of feedlots (59.4 percent) fed during June and July 2001.



Prearrival Information

Some processing of lambs prior to arrival at the feedlot is thought to reduce sickness or death in lambs after arrival. The most important prearrival processing procedures identified by feedlot operators were: introduction to a feed bunk (58.1 percent of feedlots); treating lambs for internal parasites (58.0 percent of feedlots); and weaning lambs 2 or more weeks prior to shipping (54.8 percent of feedlots). Although these procedures were thought important by the feedlot operators, few feedlots placed lambs that had received prearrival processing. Overall, the most common prearrival processing procedures received by the last group of lambs placed on the feedlot were: introduction to a feed bunk (24.1 percent of feedlots); weaning 2 or more weeks prior to shipping (17.2 percent of feedlots); clostridial vaccinations given prior to arrival (13.8 percent of feedlots); and treatment for internal parasites (10.3 percent of feedlots). In general, a higher percentage of small feedlots than large feedlots placed lambs that had received prearrival processing (Table 2).

Table 2. Percentage of Feedlots by Prearrival Processing Procedures Performed on the Last Group of Lambs Placed at the Feedlot, by Feedlot Size:

Procedure	Percent Feedlots		
	Feedlot Size (Number Sheep and Lambs)		
	Less Than 5,000	5,000 or More	All Feedlots
	Percent	Percent	Percent
Introduction to feed bunk	29.4	16.7	24.1
Clostridial vaccinations given prior to arrival	17.6	8.3	13.8
Lambs weaned 2 or more weeks prior to shipping	23.5	8.3	17.2
Lambs treated for internal parasites prior to arrival	11.8	8.3	10.3
Lambs treated for external parasites prior to arrival	5.9	8.3	6.9
Other	0.0	0.0	0.0

Causes of Death in Feedlots

The three most common causes of death in feedlots from August 1, 2000, through July 31, 2001, were: respiratory disorders (other than shipping fever pneumonia) (29.0 percent of lambs that died); enterotoxemia (28.7 percent of lambs that died); and shipping fever pneumonia (12.8 percent of lambs that died). Shipping fever pneumonia caused a higher percentage of lamb deaths in small feedlots (34.1 percent of lambs that died) than in large feedlots (10.8 percent of lambs that died). Respiratory disorders (other than shipping fever) and enterotoxemia accounted for the highest percentage of lamb deaths on large operations (61.2 percent of lambs that died).

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