



Highlights of NAHMS Sheep 2001: Part I

In 2001, the USDA's National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) conducted a study designed to provide study participants and the industry with information on the U.S. sheep flock (operations with 1 or more sheep). The study addressed specific information gaps identified through meetings with industry representatives and a producer survey.

From December 29, 2000, to January 26, 2001, data were collected on sheep management practices via personal interviews from a representative sample of sheep operations in 22 states¹. These 22 states include the major sheep producing states, accounting for 87.4 percent of the January 1, 2001, U.S. sheep inventory and 72.3 percent of U.S. sheep producers.

The following highlights were excerpted from a report released in July 2002: *Sheep 2001 Part I: Reference of Sheep Management in the United States, 2001*.

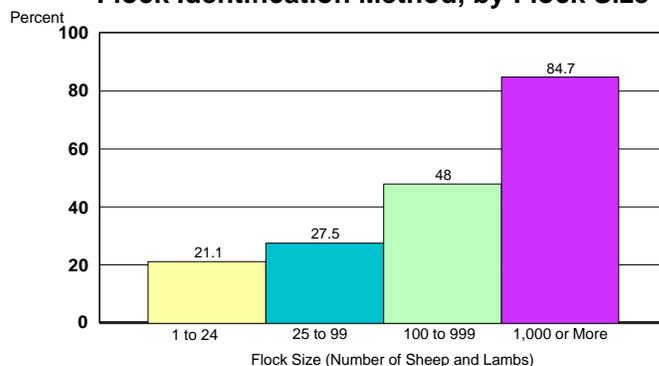
Demographics and management

- Nearly three-quarters (73.6 percent) of operations expected to have either the same amount or more sheep in 2006. This expectation was similar across all regions¹ (ranging from 66.7 percent to 78.3 percent); all flock types (ranging from 70.6 percent to 80.2 percent); and all operation sizes (ranging from 70.3 percent to 79.5 percent).

- Overall, 27.4 percent of operations used some form of flock identification. The use of flock identification declined as the size of flock decreased. The majority (84.7 percent) of operations with 1,000 or more sheep used at least one flock identification method, compared to 21.1 percent of operations with 1 to 24 sheep (Figure 1).

Figure 1.

Percent of Operations that Used at Least One Flock Identification Method, by Flock Size



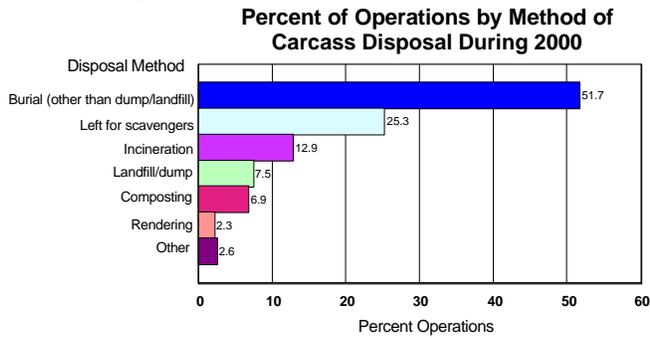
- Burial was the most common method of carcass disposal in the Pacific (52.2 percent), Central (60.2 percent), and Eastern (64.7 percent) regions. Operations in the West Central region left carcasses for scavengers most commonly (47.1 percent). See Figure 2 for an overall operational view of carcass disposal methods.

Reproduction and outcomes

- Overall, 92.4 percent of operations that bred ewes in 2000 used natural breeding methods by utilizing rams present on the operation. Only 1.3 percent used artificial insemination (AI). Of those operations using AI, 99.0 percent used frozen semen, and 82.5 percent used semen collected from rams belonging to a different operation.

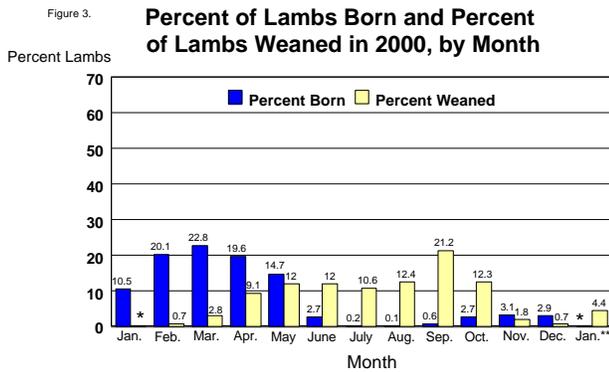
¹ States/Regions: **Pacific:** California, Oregon, Washington; **West Central:** Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, Texas, Wyoming; **Central:** Arkansas, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Minnesota, South Dakota, Wisconsin; **Eastern:** Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia.

Figure 2.



- Overall, 77.2 percent of lambs born during 2000 were born in February, March, April, and May. Only 8.7 percent of all lambs were born during October through December. September showed the highest percentage (21.2 percent) of lambs weaned (Figure 3).

Figure 3.



* Data not available

**Lambs weaned January 2001 or later

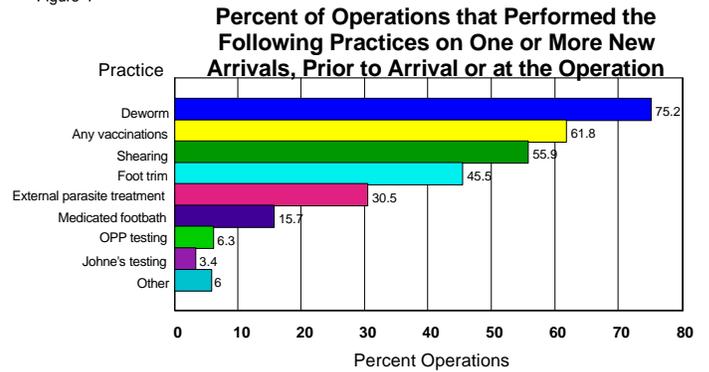
- Few operations (5.3 percent) reported using 1 ram with 40 or more ewes, although such ratios were reported in 28.0 percent of operations with 1,000 or more sheep.

Health management

- The top-3 information sources rated 'very important' by producers were: veterinarians, private practitioners, or consultants (39.1 percent); other sheep producers (30.7 percent); and shearers (29.3 percent).
- Only 33.9 percent of range and farm flock operations that added sheep or lambs in 2000 quarantined any new arrivals. Overall, only 16.4 percent of new arrivals were quarantined.

- The following were performed on added sheep or lambs prior to arrival or at the operation: deworming (75.2 percent); vaccination (61.8 percent); and shearing (55.9 percent). Few operations performed Ovine Progressive Pneumonia (OPP) testing (6.3 percent) or Johne's testing (3.4 percent) either before or after the animals arrived at the operations. A larger percentage of operations performed medicated footbaths, deworming, and external parasite treatments after the animals arrived at the operation (Figure 4).

Figure 4



- Nearly half (46.1 percent) of all operations consulted a veterinarian during 2000. Disease diagnosis, disease prevention, and lambing problems were the top reasons given for veterinary consultation.
- Only 2.3 percent of operations reported shearing the youngest sheep first, while 4.1 percent reported shearing purposely from the oldest to the youngest sheep. More than half the operations (59.7 percent) reported that shears were never disinfected between sheep.

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