

Highlights of NAHMS Sheep 2011 “Part II: Reference of Marketing and Death Loss on U.S. Sheep Operations in the United States”

In 2011, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) conducted a study of U.S. sheep operations. The Sheep 2011 study focused on trends in sheep health and management practices, management and biosecurity practices used to control common infectious diseases, estimating the prevalence of gastrointestinal parasites and anthelmintic resistance, estimating the prevalence of *Mycoplasma ovipneumonia* in domestic sheep flocks, collection of information and samples regarding causes of abortion storms in sheep, determining producer awareness of zoonotic diseases, and providing serum to include in the serological bank for future research. Sheep 2011 was conducted in 22 of the Nation’s major sheep-producing States, which were divided into three regions.¹ The States represent 70.1 percent of U.S. sheep operations and 85.5 percent of U.S. ewe inventory (NASS 2007 Census of Agriculture). Following are a few highlights from Part I of the Sheep 2011 study.

Lamb marketing

The largest marketing component of the sheep industry is the sale of lambs.

- Overall, the highest percentage of sheep operations (49.0 percent) sold their lambs at auction markets or sale barns (fig. 1). Large operations (500 or more ewes) were the exception. Marketing on large operations is more diverse compared with other operation sizes. A higher percentage of large operations (29.0 percent) sold lambs directly to buyer/dealers compared with very small (12.5 percent), small (14.9 percent), and medium (19.9 percent) operations.

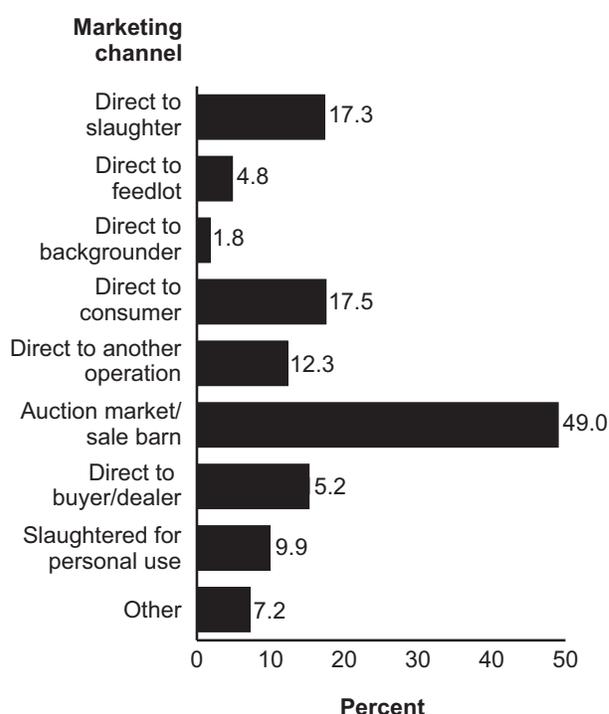
¹ **Regions:**

West: California, Oregon, and Washington

Central: Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, New Mexico, South Dakota, Texas, Utah, and Wyoming

East: Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

Figure 1. Percentage of operations by lamb marketing method



- Marketing characteristics also varied by region. In the Central and East regions the majority of operations sold lambs at auction or sale barns (58.0 and 52.0 percent, respectively), while in the West region similar percentages of operations sold lambs directly to consumers (25.1 percent), directly to another operation (21.3 percent), at auction or sale barn (22.5 percent), and directly to buyer/dealers (23.2 percent)..

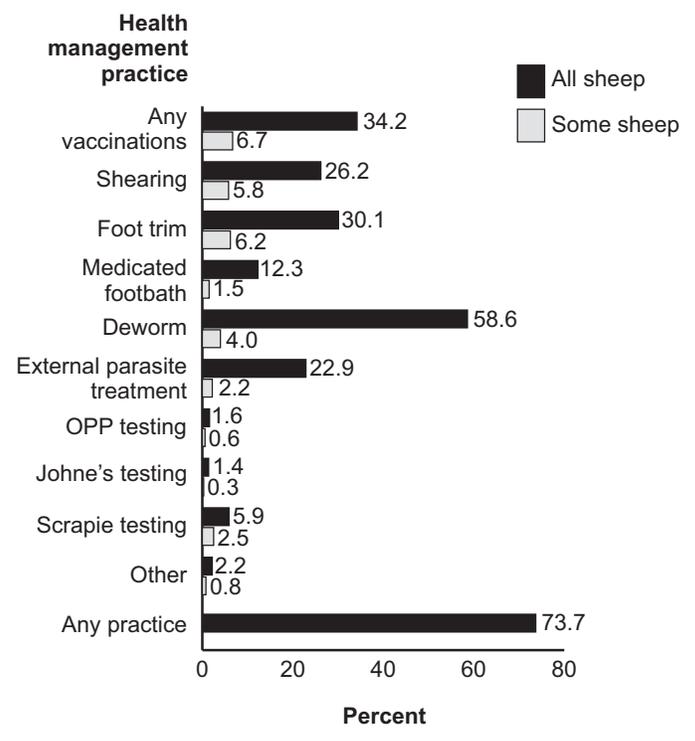
Predator losses

- Predator losses have a substantial economic impact on U.S. sheep operations. Overall, coyotes caused the highest percentage of predator losses (51.8 percent), but predator predominance varies by geographic location, flock size, and flock type. For example, mountain lions, cougars, or pumas were a cause of sheep loss on 26.8 percent of operations in the West region but on only 1.3 percent of operations in the East region. Dogs were a cause of sheep loss on 39.3 percent of very small operations (fewer than 20 ewes), while only 4.1 percent of large operations reported predation due to dogs.

Biosecurity and veterinary use

- Almost one-fourth of operations (23.9 percent) had a private veterinarian visit for any sheep-related reason during 2010. The two most common reasons for consulting a veterinarian were for disease diagnosis and disease prevention (42.8 and 41.9 percent of operations, respectively).
- For the 76.1 percent of operations that did not use a veterinarian during 2010, 68.9 percent indicated they had no health-related problems; 5.1 percent reported there was no veterinarian with sheep experience available; and 11.8 percent claimed veterinarian visits were too expensive.
- Overall, 28.6 percent of operations added new sheep or lambs (other than those born on the operation) to the flock during 2010, with the percentage increasing as flock size increased.
- Over half of operations had all new additions vaccinated and dewormed prior to their arrival (58.4 and 56.0 percent of operations, respectively). About one-third of operations (31.4 percent) had all new additions genotyped for scrapie susceptibility. Overall, 84.4 percent of operations had at least one health-related management practice performed on new additions prior to arrival. (fig. 2).
- The majority of operations did not test any of their new sheep or lambs for ovine progressive pneumonia (OPP) either before they arrived (93.7 percent) or after they arrived (97.8 percent) on the operation. Likewise, the majority of operations also did not test any of their new sheep or lambs for Johne's disease, either before they arrived (93.6 percent) or after they arrived (98.3 percent) on the operation.
- The most commonly performed health management practice was deworming with 58.6 percent of operations deworming their newly added sheep or lambs after arrival at the operation. Over half of operations (56.0 percent) also dewormed the expected new arrivals before they arrived on the operation.

Figure 2. Percentage of operations by health management of new arrivals prior to their arrival on the operation



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