



4-H Parent Guide

4-H Sheep Project

A Guide for Raising Sheep

Selecting a Sheep Project:

- **Market Lamb.** This project lasts four to five months. Market lambs are shown by weight and are evaluated on their muscle, soundness and structural correctness, degree of finish, volume, balance, style and freshness.
- **Breeding Sheep.** These sheep can be shown as a registered lamb or a commercial doe. Breeding sheep are evaluated on structural soundness, skeletal dimension, muscle and eye appeal.

General Care and Management

Health Care

Sanitation

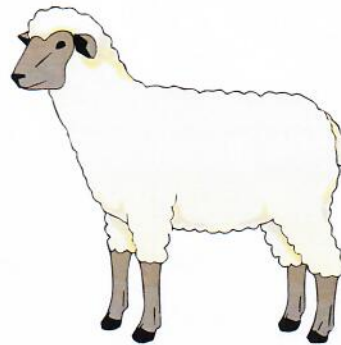
- Clean and disinfect housing and feeder regularly.
- Remove and replace wet bedding.

Internal Parasites

- Good sanitation prevents and controls worms.
- Deworm upon arrival and one month later until one year of age.

External Parasites

- Watch for lice, flies, mites, fleas and ticks.
- Treat with appropriate insecticide.



When raising sheep, it is a good idea to have open communication with your breeder and a veterinarian for proper health management protocols.

Sheep Facts

- Female sheep are called ewes.
- Male sheep are called rams.
- Young sheep less than 14 months are called lambs.
- Market sheep show at a minimum weight of 80 pounds.
- Sheep meat is lower in fat and cholesterol than beef, pork or poultry.

Exercise

Exercise for show sheep improves muscle development and condition. It stimulates the sheep's appetite and helps with proper finish. Never allow a sheep to get overheated. Begin 45-60 days prior to livestock shows. Walking also helps with training.



Feeding Facts:

- Always keep clean fresh water available.
- Provide fresh food daily.
- Keep a routine schedule (same time every day).
- Use elevated feeders, which are cleaner to use and help build leg and loin muscle.
- Feed 3% of the goat's body weight.
- Introduce grain in small amounts.
- Feed roughage daily to keep rumen and microbes working.
- Avoid feeding copper in rations.

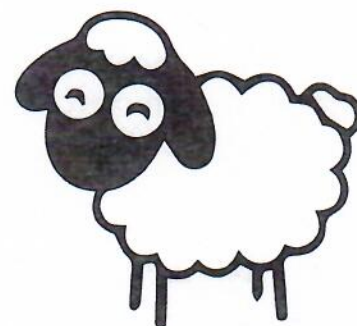
Project Costs

Create a budget and stick to it!

- 1. Lamb Cost.** Lambs can be purchased from local breeders or at sales. Sheep can be bought for as little as \$100, but can get more expensive. A competitive lamb usually costs \$250. Medication and deworming costs are about \$50 per lamb project.
- 2. Feed Cost.** Each lamb will eat approximately 3-4 pounds of feed per day. This will average about \$35 per lamb per month. Additional supplements can be added to the lamb's diet, which increases overall feed cost.
- 3. Shelter.** Shelter must be provided when raising sheep. It must consist of a cover and floor protection (such as shavings) from whipping rain, sun and wind.
- 4. Animal Health.** Maintaining good health is an important part of an overall management plan. 4-H'ers should develop a relationship with their local veterinarian for advice on a health management program that includes recommended vaccinations for the area and protocols for managing external and internal parasites.

Housing

- Sheep need to be protected from the weather.
- Housing does not need to be expensive or elaborate, just comfortable.
- Each lamb needs barn space of 15 square feet.
- Each lamb needs 40 square feet of pen space.
- The barn needs lighting and plumbing.
- Area should be fenced in to keep predators out.



Selection

- Set goals for the project, and choose an animal to achieve those goals.
- Be familiar with the different sheep breeds and their purposes.
- Select sheep that are heavy-boned, level-topped and level in the hip.
- Look for width and depth of leg muscle and loin, plus a large forearm muscle.
- Market and breeding sheep will have different degrees of muscle. Keep project goals in mind when studying muscle.
- Search for the best lamb for your budget. The most expensive lambs are not always the best. You will not go out and buy a guaranteed champion. Develop your champion with hard work at home.



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Reference: 2013 LSU AgCenter Livestock Handbook; LSU Livestock Specialist; 4h.tennessee.edu; www.okstate.edu; www.thejudgingconnection.com



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Louisiana 4-H is an educational program of the LSU AgCenter.