

MARKETING OF LAMBS AND EWES

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Objectives

- Evaluate specifications of the UK lamb market.
- Explain how to select lambs for the market through regular handling and assessment of conformation and fat class.

The Lamb Market

- England produces 8 000 000 lambs each year for home and export consumption
- Export market currently stands at 22%
- Home market – Supermarket (34%), Catering (27%), Butchers (10%), and Other retail (7%).
- The lamb market is worth some £343 million

UK Sheep Trade

- Exports are predominantly to France and Belgium mainly as chilled carcasses.
- The weak value of sterling has benefitted UK sheep meat exporters.
- UK imports are from New Zealand, Australia, Ireland and Argentina.

Activity 1

- In groups of 3, use the internet to find out the 7 key steps required for marketing lambs.

Key Steps for Marketing Lambs

1. Identify your market (s)
2. Understand what the market needs
3. Assess your sheep against market needs
4. Monitor prices
5. Regularly assess sheep
6. Market when conditions matches specification
7. Monitor returns

England Market

- Broadly all markets require lambs:
 - with the right weight
 - with good conformation and
 - not over fat
- Currently half the England lamb crop is failing to meet these requirements
- 59% E/U/R 2/3L
- 18% Poor Conformation
- 23% Too Fat

Carcase Classification

- Carcase assessment addresses conformation and fat
- Fat cover is scored on a 1-5 scale
- Conformation is assessed from E to P
- Combining scores for conformation and fat determines the markets which lambs suit best.

Activity 2

- In pairs draw a chart showing the EUROP carcass grading system for lambs.
- On your chart indicate areas of highest demand and areas of low demand.

Carcase Classification

		Lean					Fat	
		1	2	3L	3H	4L	4H	5
Good Muscling	E			+8p				
	U			+4p				
	R							
Poor Muscling	O			-4p				
	P			-8p				

Activity 3

- In your groups, use the internet and flip chart to identify the lamb **specifications** for UK supermarkets, local butchers and export markets

Typical Specifications

- **Supermarkets**

- Weight: 16-21kg

- Conformation: E, U, R

- Fat Class: 2, 3L, 3H

NB: Most dead weight markets pay up to 21kg

Typical Specifications

- **Local Butcher**
 - Weight: 16-22kg
 - Conformation: E, U, R, O
 - Fat Class: 2, 3L, 3H, 4L

Typical Specifications

- **Exporter**

- Weight: 12-19kg

- Conformation: E, U, R

- Fat Class: 2, 3L

Warning!

- Conformation *P* and Fat Class *4H* and *5* are traded at discount prices.

- No Demand

Activity 4

Lamb Prices Analysis

- Using the internet find out the current prices for the following lambs deadweight as of 03/05/2019. R3L, U2, E3L, O2, P2, R4H and P1.

Websites: www.eblex.org.uk or
www.fwi.co.uk

Handling and Assessing Lambs

- Regular handling and weighing, flock monitoring and managing feed maximises profit
- Information gained provides valuable feedback on the progress of the lamb crop
- It allows nutrition to be adjusted and markets to be targeted
- Avoids sending stock with poor conformation or excess fat to market.

Video Activity 5

1. Watch video below and list down areas you are handling on a lamb for both conformation and fat assessment.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fehGs8LMgZ0>

2. What are spinous processes?
3. What are transverse processes?

Assessing Conformation

- **Shoulder and Loin**

- E Spinous processes undetectable, flesh creating a very convex profile, very broad shoulder area
- U Spinous processes just detectable, flesh beginning to create a convex profile
- R Spinous processes less prominent, with flesh creating a straight profile under the hand
- O Spinous processes still prominent, less concave with some evidence of flesh beginning to fill the hand
- P Very prominent spinous processes evident, very concave profile to centre of hand

Assessing Fat Class

- **Dock**
 - 1 Individual bones very easy to detect
 - 2 Individual bones easy to detect with light pressure
 - 3 Moderate pressure to detect individual bones
 - 4 Firm pressure to detect individual bones
 - 5 Individual bones cannot be detected

Assessing Fat Class

- **Loin**
 - 1 Very easy to fill between processes which are very prominent
 - 2 Prominent spinous and transverse processes felt easily
 - 3 Tips of processes rounded. Individual bones felt as corrugations with light pressure
 - 4 Spinous processes felt with moderate pressure. Transverse with firm pressure
 - 5 Individual processes cannot be felt.

Assessing Fat Class

- **Rib**

- 1 Individual ribs feel very bare and easy to detect
- 2 Individual ribs show slight cover but still easy to detect
- 3 Individual ribs have softer feel, with fat cover becoming more evident and over ribs, which are now less easy to detect
- 4 Individual ribs only detectable with firm pressure
- 5 Individual ribs undetectable, soft, rolling, spongy feel.