

## Pa. sheep industry likely for expansion, profits

**UNIVERSITY PARK** — The possibility of an expanding sheep industry in Pennsylvania is very real, participants in a sheep producers conference at the University Park Campus of Penn State were told recently.

"A choice is to look at our own problems and do something about them," Clair Engle, Extension animal scientist at Penn State, told the group.

"The sheep industry will expand when producers set forth to become personally involved and also establish a basic game plan.

"It's important to involve people indirectly in your industry. And this means government, ag-related businesses, financial and educational institutions.

"Efforts should be made by the state association of sheep producers to meet and establish some financial dialogue with the state bankers association. This is most critical to young producers wanting to expand," Engle said.

He emphasized the need to establish a basic game plan. Such a basic plan was created in 1975 by the leaders of the American sheep industry. It calls for action to halt the decline in numbers and to gradually increase growth over a 10-year period. The plan is ambitious. It seeks to increase the live market weight of lambs from current 100-105 pounds to an average of 125 pounds.

The price discrimination due to carcass weight at best appears to reflect the inequities in buying, packing, grading and marketing lambs rather than the preferences of the ultimate consumer.

It also calls for doubling our lamb production over the next 10-year period. Pennsylvania is now producing about 297 million head.

—Increase the weaned lamb crop by 25 percent. To be profitable the lamb weaning percentage must be greater than 150 percent.

—Increase ewe numbers by 50 percent. Presently, it is 12 to 18 million.

—Increase wool production by 50 percent, from current average fleece weight of 7 pounds to 9 pounds or greater.

And all these goals are achievable, urged Engle.

A committee of 40 members are currently working on a blueprint for the expansion of Pennsylvania's sheep industry which will be presented to the Pennsylvania Lamb and Wool Growers Association for adoption. This expansion program will include both short-term and long-term tasks.

Some favorable factors cited by Engle to increase sheep production in Pennsylvania and the Northeast include:

—Large acreages of unprofitable land which is of little or no use for most agricultural production but could be used for raising sheep.

—A greater emphasis on expanding demand for and use of wool.

—In clothing, we can adjust with wool, not the thermostat.

—We can produce a more tender product with sheep on roughage than with beef cattle and do it within one season.

—In the U.S., 2 out of every 3 slaughtered lambs are marketed in Northeastern states.

Producers and potential lamb producers in Pennsylvania have the advantage of supporting the few existing lamb processing plants in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and New York.

Some problems are that many people who don't eat lamb have never tried it. This means Americans would eat more lamb if they tried some of the many delicious ways it can be prepared for eating.

Currently, about 5 million lambs are being slaughtered yearly in the U.S. Those numbers could be doubled without any reduction in market value to the producer. Presently, only 85 percent of the domestic demand for lamb is being produced in the United States.

There are too many self-styled breeders without accurate knowledge of the end results of their products. Performance records are important as a tool for merchandising. We should have larger flocks, 100-head commercial ewe flocks or larger, believes Engle.

Other problems are skimpy funding for research; predation; producer financing facilities and fencing costs; and generally sheep producers have been reticent to accept new ideas.

New management techniques are available to

any sheep producer wanting to expand his operation, and the sheep industry needs to produce a commercial volume to survive, added Engle.

## Cattle on feed down 8 percent

**HARRISBURG** — Pennsylvania cattle feeders had 79,000 cattle and calves on feed January 1, 1980 for slaughter market, down eight percent from last year according to the Pennsylvania Crop Reporting Service.

Marketings of fed cattle during the October-December quarter at 19,000 were unchanged from the same quarter a year earlier.

Placements of cattle and calves on feed during the October-December quarter totaled 50,000, also unchanged from the same period a year ago.

Expected marketings during the January-March 1980 quarter, if realized at 25,000, would be four percent less than were marketed during the same period a year ago.

In the 23 major cattle on feed states, the total number of cattle and calves on feed

was 11.7 million head. This number was down seven percent from January 19, 1979 and eight percent below January 1, 1978.

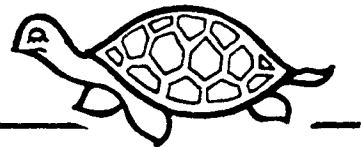
Placements during the October-December 1979 quarter were 8.10 million, seven percent below 1978 and 15 percent lower than the 1977 fourth quarter. Other disappearances of 571,000 leaves a net placement of 7.53 million.

Marketings of fed cattle

for slaughter during the October-December 1979 quarter were 5.73 million, 15 percent below 1978 and six percent below 1977.

Cattle feeders intend to market 6.38 million during the January-March quarter of 1980. If this total is realized, the first quarter marketings would be five percent below 1979 and six percent below the same period of 1978.

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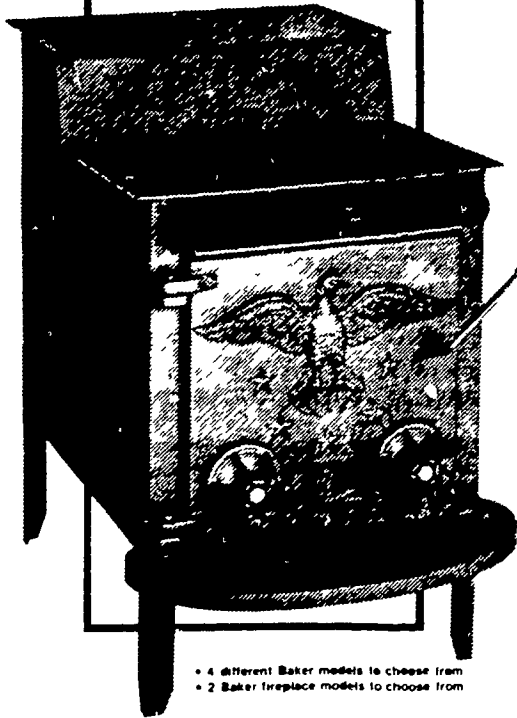


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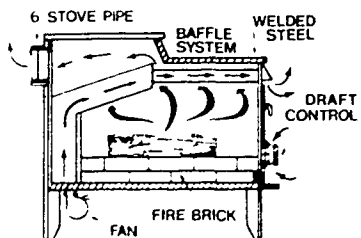
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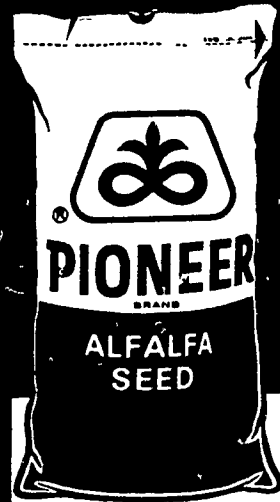
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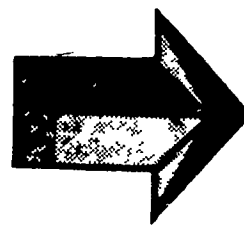
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