

# Sheep producers seek uniform grading standards

By Laurie Dobrosky  
**STATE COLLEGE** — A recommendation to have the United States Department of Agriculture develop a set of uniform grading standards for the Eastern Seaboard was approved at the recent Eastern Lamb and Wool Marketing Conference at the Penn State Sheraton Hotel.

Speakers informed the more than 150 conference participants, including sheep producers from 10 states, about new and different methods to market both lamb and wool. Marketing was defined by opening speaker and chairman of the event, Clair Engle, as "creating value or performing a

service for which someone is willing to pay."

A resolution was passed to initiate a uniform grading system for market lambs, based on the Virginia-West Virginia system. This resolution was approved after lamb packer, Fred L.C. Stapf, of Stapf Packing Company, commented that he will not buy Pennsylvania lambs due to the lack of a uniform grading system.

In addition to grading systems, producers learned various methods to market both lamb and wool, including cooperatives, wool pools, and direct marketing of wool to handspinners and craftsmen.

Systems of lamb marketing were

a major part of the conference. Auction markets, were discussed by Abe Diffenbach, manager of New Holland Sales Stables, New Holland.

James Diamond, Penn State professor of ag education, discussed his personal experience with the direct marketing of lamb to the consumer, relying on local media advertising and word-of-mouth to spread the word about his freezer lambs.

The final methods of lamb marketing discussed is a relatively new and highly advanced system, called a teleauction. This method involves allowing the sheep on the farm until the buyer has purchased the pre-graded lambs — through the use of a computer and the telephone. Buyers call in to the auction and the computer keeps track of the bidding. After the lambs have been purchased buyer and seller arrange for delivery.

Another one of the main problems discussed during the conference was product uniformity. This is particularly involved with trying to keep a uniform supply of lambs on the market all year long.

Packer Douglas Conti, Conti Packing, New York, stated that "seasonal lamb supplies are the most important problem facing the sheep industry."

Uniform size on lamb carcasses is another factor. Packers have the best — market for carcasses weighing from 50-60 pounds. Most lamb feeders, however, have not been supplying these lambs.

The final topic of major concern was lamb and wool promotion. Various employees of the American Sheep Producers Council (ASPC) spoke on the programs initiated to do the job of promoting lamb and wool. Such programs include supermarket features and tours promoting the sheep industry — employed to increase the demand for lamb and wool.

Having supermarket chains feature lamb as their weekly special has been the most promising promotion of all, according to Walter Streightiff, manager of the regional lamb promotion for the ASPC. This helps to save on money and promotes lamb where consumers will be more likely to notice the advertisement, he said.

Streightiff was honored at the



Robert Hoy, president of Woolknot Associates, addresses 150 participants in the Eastern Lamb and Wool Marketing Conference at Penn State recently.



Walter Streightiff, regional manager for lamb promotion and sales for the American Sheep Producers Council, was honored for his 25 years of service at recent Eastern Lamb and Wool Marketing Conference.

banquet for 25 years of service to the sheep industry in the East.

"It's time to say we will wear sweaters and they will be wool," stated Robert Hoy, featured speaker and president of Woolknot Associates. Hoy's speech, interlaced with humor, dealt with topics ranging from the Pitt-Penn State game, to the economy and wool promotion.

"We haven't taken advantage of exporting," Hoy said in his efforts

to stress the promotion of the sheep industry.

"Neither have we as sheep producers put pressure on the market or been talking about our product."

The conference was sponsored by American Sheep Producers Council/National Blueprint Program; Pennsylvania State University, College of Agriculture; and the Pennsylvania Sheep and Wool Growers Association.

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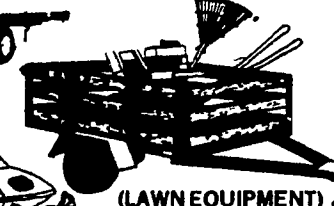
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