

## Premium Lamb Prices In Niche Markets

**Editor's Note:** Larry Yager, Adams County Extension wrote the following information for sheep producers.

As most of you know, lamb prices dropped to the high 30s about two years ago. At that time your Pennsylvania Sheep and Lamb Marketing Program decided something had to be done as lamb producers just could not survive at those prices. The Board approved a Plan of Action to address this challenge. John Shoemaker of Allensville was appointed to oversee this project.

The first item in the plan was to investigate the potential of a producer-owned cooperative for improving returns to sheep producers. A random survey of Pen-

sylvania sheep producers was conducted to determine the production practices, number of lambs sold and interest in being involved in a lamb marketing venture. The results of this survey showed sufficient interest to proceed with a study to identify premium marketing opportunities.

Lynda Brushett, a consultant in "Niche Marketing" and who did the research for Yankee Shepherd Lamb Cooperative in New England, was hired to assist the steering committee with this study. Funding was a joint effort of the Sheep and Lamb Marketing Program, Federal-State Market Improvement Program and Penn State.

The steering committee is

focusing on two premium markets that provide an outlet for 60-80 pound, unfinished lambs and 100+ pounders under a "Natural" lamb label. The protocol has been developed and is awaiting USDA approval for the label.

So, are you interested in getting the most for your lambs and being a part of a cooperative solution to lamb marketing? If you are, then you should attend the statewide organizational meeting for Green Valley Lamb to be held in Room 324 ASI Building on the Penn State College of Agriculture campus on May 21, 1994 starting at 10:00 a.m. Please register soon with Lora Zimmerman in the Cooperative and Business Prog-

ram office in 206 Armsby Building, University Park, PA 16802 or call 814-863-0644. She needs the

numbers for reserving your lamb barbeque. There will be a \$10 registration fee.

## Scholarship Available

DEFOREST, Wis. — American Breeders Service (ABS) encourages Jersey youth to apply for the ABS-sponsored Morris B. Ewing/ABS scholarship. Conducted in conjunction with the American Jersey Cattle Club, the essay contest is open to all Jersey youth who plan to continue with post-secondary education.

The winning student will receive a \$500 scholarship to be presented in November at the North American International

Livestock Exposition Junior Awards Banquet held in Louisville, Kentucky.

This year's essay topic is, "What is likely to be the biggest challenge Jersey breeders will face in the near future, and how can they confront this challenge?"

Essay applications should be sent to Gayle Starkey at the American Jersey Cattle Club, 6486 East Main Street, Reynoldsburg, Ohio 43068.

The application deadline is July 1, 1994.

## Penn State Researcher Revises Holstein Measurement Standards

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — A researcher in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences has revised growth standards used to estimate the weight of Holstein calves and heifers from heart girth measurements.

Dr. Jud Heinrichs, associate professor of dairy science, has developed new, more accurate growth charts for height and weight of heifers at a given age from two to 24 months. "The new standards are helping dairy producers chart animal growth, provide balanced diets and determine when heifers should breed," he said.

Using data about Holstein weight and growth collected from across the United States, Heinrichs developed a new equation that makes girth measurement a more accurate estimate of weight and growth. Heinrichs already has revised growth charts for Ayrshire, Brown Swiss, Guernsey, Jersey and Milking Shorthorn cattle.

Farmers use these growth charts to compare their animals to a breed average for weight and height. Weight and growth usually are estimated by measuring an animal's heart girth.

"Girth-measuring tapes are marked in inches on one side, with each inch correlated for the average weight of that breed on the other side," Heinrichs said.

Heinrichs recently evaluated heart girth tapes for Holsteins and found serious problems. "The Holstein standards were based on a 1936 U.S. Department of Agriculture study of a single herd," he said.

"I analyzed more recent data that measured cows and calves using both tapes and scales. The tapes consistently made animals seem heavier than they really were."

Inaccuracy is a problem because body weights of animals are used to make various management decisions, such as ration balancing. "The average milk cow's productive life last only a few years, so a dairy farmer replaces about 30 percent of the herd each year," he said. "Replacing culled cows with superior heifers improves the herd, but getting good heifers takes good nutrition."

Genetic improvement in the Holstein breed over the decades may have altered the 1936 correlations between girth and weight, Heinrichs said. "But many tapes don't even match each other. If you pick a girth measurement and compare the weights given by two different tapes, they may differ by up to 40 pounds for a single inch measurement of heart girth."

Exclusive rights to the new standards developed by Heinrichs have been purchased by the Coburn Company, Inc., the nation's leading manufacturer of girth tapes. Heart girth tapes based on the revised standards should soon reach the market.

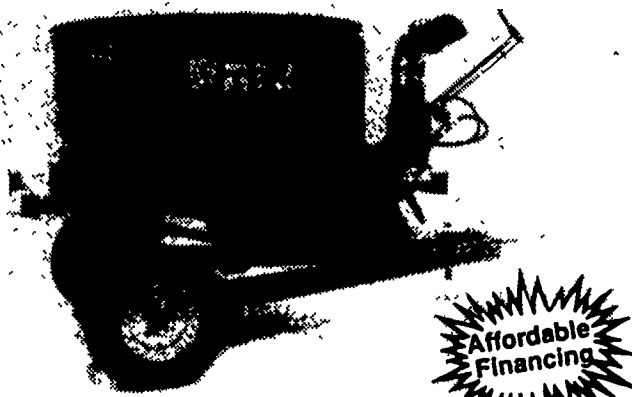
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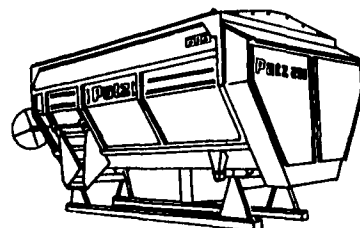
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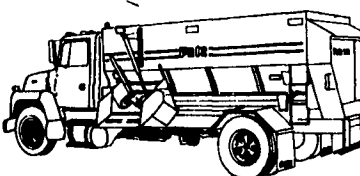
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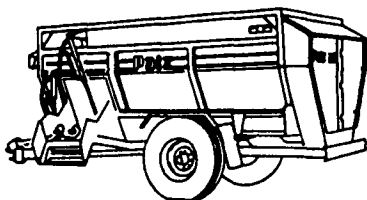
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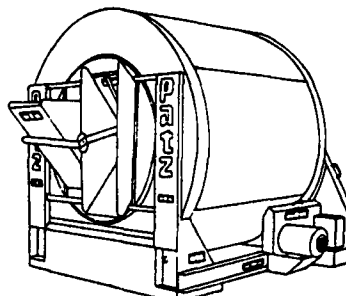
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