


## Livestock Ledger

by  
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### SOW NUTRITION

It is important that brood sows and gilts get the proper levels of nutrients for successful reproduction. Feeding in excess is not only wasteful and costly but may increase embryonic mortality. A limited-feeding system using balanced, fortified diets is recommended. Individual feeding insures that each sow gets her daily requirements of nutrients without consuming excess energy.

As a rule of thumb, four pounds of a balanced diet per day usually will provide adequate protein and energy. During cold weather, additional feed may be required, depending on the type of housing. Heavy milking breeds or females that are still growing will require more total nutrients. With limit-feeding, it is extremely important that each sow gets her level of feed and no more. One of the following systems may be used to restrict energy intake of gestating females: daily individual limit feeding or interval feeding.

The daily feeding of a limited amount of each individual is the most popular system, and its success is based on having an adequate number of feeding stalls or space for individual animals. Group feeding on a daily basis is less desirable. The individual stall is best because it prevents the "boss sows" from taking feed from slower-eating or timid sows. However, individual feeding takes more labor if it is not mechanized. Self-feeding for given intervals (one day every third day) takes less labor but is the least acceptable method for two reasons: 1) it costs more to maintain sows, and 2) it is very difficult to control feed intake.

All animals are territorial and therefore like to have some space identifiable as their own. Use of individual stalls or maintaining small groups, especially during

early gestation (through day 30), provides for this need. If gestating

females are group housed, keep them in as small a group as possible (15 to 20 maximum) and separate gilts and first-litter sows from older and fat sows. Comfort and contentment of bred females is important to achieve maximum productivity from the breeding herd.

### Feed Lamb Production

Feeder lamb production is a livestock enterprise adaptable to small-scale and part-time farms in Pennsylvania. Feeder lambs are purchased as premarket-weight lambs, fed to a desirable market weight, and then sold. The lambs can be purchased at less than 35

pounds and as high as 60 pounds. These lambs are usually marketed at 110 pounds through local auctions, slaughterhouses, brokers, and individuals. In recent years, direct markets, niche markets, tele-auctions, and marketing cooperatives have become popular for selling lambs. The wool is sold through local and national markets, brokers, and wool cooperatives.

Feeder lamb production is a good option for the small scale or part-time farmer because:

- No investment in ewes or rams is required.
- The investment for buildings

and equipment is minimal, especially if existing facilities are available.

- Labor requirements are minimal.
  - The feeder lamb business is relatively easy to enter or exit.
  - Feeder lambs can use forages or crop residue that otherwise might not be utilized.
  - Death loss is very low because the lambs are purchased close to weaning weight.
- Two disadvantages to feeder lamb production in the northeastern portion of the United States are:

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