

Agriculture Department Completes Successful Ram Performance Test, Sale

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Helping to keep Pennsylvania's sheep industry at the forefront of excellence, the Department of Agriculture offered 133 rams and ewes at its Annual Performance Test Ram Sale at the Livestock Evaluation Center, State College, Aug. 4.

"It is not possible to conduct a performance test without the involvement of many persons including the sheep breeders of Pennsylvania, department staff, the livestock technical committee, sale committee, and staff professionals at Penn State University," said Pennsylvania Agriculture Secretary Sam Hayes.

"Also, I appreciate the buyers who attended the sale. This is a team effort."

Of the high quality rams entered into the performance test, several rams rose to the top of their breed at its conclusion. In the Hampshire division, Clyde Brubaker of Robesonia owned the highest scoring ram. The Ken Staver Family of Palmyra ram entry topped the Dorset Breed. Leading the Suffolk breed test was the ram owned by Anne Rich of Jersey Shore.

At the sale, 65 rams were offered for sale by breeders looking for rams to help improve the genetic quality of their flocks. The

top selling ram was a Dorset owned by Justin Smith of Dorcas, W. Va. and was purchased for \$800 by Dean Wehry of Hershey.

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture sponsors the annual ram performance test and sale, helping Pennsylvania's sheep industry achieve its mission of remaining a leader. The Department's annual performance test evaluates the quality of rams to stay on the progressive edge of agriculture.

Over the course of the 84-day test, genetics and feedlot performance are evaluated in a controlled facility to determine the

types of sires to be used in maintaining a solid genetic foundation in flocks. Through the Department of Agriculture's testing programs, Pennsylvania's sheep growers are able to identify preferred characteristics.

At the conclusion of the test, only the highest-ranking rams are offered at the annual ram sale, allowing for farmers to purchase affordable high quality genetics to take home to their farms.

Excitement continues to build in anticipation of the new Livestock Evaluation Center to be constructed at the Ag Research Center, Rockspring. With the

construction of the new center, the Department of Agriculture will be able to further its mission of conducting 21st century livestock test programs.

Hayes said "We should enter the construction phase for the new Livestock Evaluation Center in the near future. It is my hope to have a Livestock Evaluation Center that serves as a model for the nation. It is important for livestock producers and consumers. In addition to the performance test, the new facility will also be available for instruction, research, and as a professional conference center for livestock producers."

USDA Announces New Guidelines For Reporting Program

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The U.S. Department of Agriculture today announced new confidentiality guidelines for the Livestock Mandatory Reporting Program which will increase the number of reports available while protecting the identity of market participants.

These changes will become effective Aug. 20.

The new A3/70/20@ confidentiality guideline will require the following three conditions:

- At least three reporting entities need to provide data at least 50 percent of the time over the most recent 60-day time period.

- No single reporting entity may provide more than 70 percent of the data for a report over the most recent 60-day time period.

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- No single reporting entity may be the sole reporting entity for an individual report more than 20 percent of the time over the most recent 60-day time period.

These changes will enable USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service to issue more frequent and more complete reports on livestock and meat, providing all segments of the livestock and meat industries with information on which to base market decisions, while preserving the confidentiality of proprietary business transactions.

The Livestock Mandatory Reporting Act of 1999 required USDA to publish mandatory data on livestock and meat price trends, contracting arrangements, and supply and demand conditions in a manner that protects the identity of reporting entities and preserves the confidentiality of proprietary transactions.

Since initiating the livestock mandatory reporting program on April 2, USDA has attempted to preserve confidentiality by following a A3/60@ reporting guideline. Data was only published in a report if at least three reporting

entities had supplied the data, and no single entity was responsible for reporting 60 percent or more of the data.

For additional information, contact John Van Dyke, Chief, Livestock and Grain Market News, AMS Livestock and Seed Program, USDA Stop 2619, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20090-2619; telephone (202) 720-6231; fax (202) 690-3732; or e-mail john.vandyke@usda.gov.

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