



2024 RAM LAMB TESTING PROGRAM

(nominations accepted between February 15 and March 15, 2024)

PENNSYLVANIA'S LIVESTOCK EVALUATION CENTER

1494 W. Pine Grove Road, PA Furnace, PA 16865

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PURPOSE :

1. Provide a sound testing program that allows both large and small sheep producers to participate.
2. Promote the value of performance testing of sheep in Pennsylvania.
3. Provide a common test for evaluating rate of gain, structural soundness, and estimated carcass merit.
4. Provide an opportunity for purebred breeders and commercial producers to purchase performance-tested rams that have been evaluated in part under similar environmental conditions.

SPONSOR :

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with Penn State's Department of Animal Sciences, the Pennsylvania Sheep and Wool Grower's Association, and state breed associations.

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE :

Representation on this committee will include Penn State animal science faculty members involved in small ruminant teaching, research, and/or extension, the attending veterinarian (**Rep.- Centre Herd Health**), a representative of The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, the station manager of the Livestock Evaluation Center (Mr. Greg Hubbard), and three sheep producers selected for three-year terms:

Members of the Technical Advisory Committee will be participants of the previous year's testing program

SALE COMMITTEE :

The combined Species and Technical Committees will make up the basic Sale Committee. A smaller group consisting of two or three individuals from the technical committee and five or six test participants

appointed by the co-chairmen of the Executive Committee will be responsible for making and carrying out the final decisions on all sale details.

APPROXIMATE TESTING TIMETABLE

<i>Nomination Period</i>	<i>February 15 – March 15</i>
Delivery dates.....	April 8, 9
Official start.....	April 16
14-day weighing.....	April 30
28-day weighing	May 14
42-day weighing	May 28
56-day weighing.....	June 11
70-day weighing.....	June 25
77-day weighing.....	July 2
Tentative sale date.....	August 15
Pre-Test Technical Comm. Mtg.....	To be scheduled
Post-Test Technical Comm. Mtg.....	To be scheduled

REQUIREMENTS FOR ENTRY :

1. All rams must be out of a sire and dam that is registered with their national breed association(s).
2. FALL rams must be born between September 1, 2023, and November 30, 2023.
WINTER rams must be born between December 1, 2023, and February 28, 2024.
Rams will be penned according to breed, age, and size as uniformly as possible.
Animals must be identified to meet Current Federal Scrapie Regulations.
3. For the purpose of establishing realistic standards, breeds will be divided into six groups:
GROUP #1 – Cheviot, Southdown, Tunis, Texel
GROUP #2 – Dorset, Montadale, Oxford, Shropshire, Polypay

GROUP #3 – Hampshire, Suffolk

GROUP #4 – (wool breeds) Columbia, Corriedale, Merino, Rambouillet

GROUP #5 – Hair sheep

GROUP #6 – F1 Crosses

4. It is strongly suggested that anyone planning to enter a ram for test, should be prepared to weigh 10 or more lambs by one sire, between the ages of 30 and 60 days. To be eligible for test, a ram should have an adjusted 50-day weight ratio of 100 (average) or higher.

MINIMUM WT/DAY OF AGE FOR RAMS AT DELIVERY		
	<i>Group ratio of 100 or more</i>	<i>Group ratio of less than 100 or no ratio</i>
1, 4 & 5	.50 lb/day	.55 lb/day
2	.60 lb/day	.65 lb/day
3 & 6	.70 lb/day	.75 lb/day

5. In the event rams have to be sent home due to insufficient pen space, rams from breeders who did not use the ratio system will be considered in the same category as rams not shorn, underweight, off type, etc.
6. All rams must meet acceptable standards for conformation at time of delivery. This is a combination of structural correctness, mouth, feet and legs, testicular development and scrotal circumference, frame, type, natural muscling, breed type, and wool quality. Shoulder height and height ratios will be used at the end of the test.
7. **Rams must arrive at the Center with feet recently trimmed and no evidence of any foot disease.**
8. All rams must be accompanied by a veterinarian's statement that required vaccinations and/or tests have been done within the designated time, that the ram is in good health and apparently free of infectious and contagious diseases, and that it *originates from a flock from which no infectious and/or contagious diseases including Scrapie, OPP and Johne's has been diagnosed within the past 12 months.*

N O M I N A T I O N P R O C E D U R E :

1. **Nomination forms must be received at the LEC according to the timetable. A minimum of 25 ram lambs must be nominated to conduct the test.**
2. Anyone whose rams are accepted for test agrees to abide by all rules, regulations, terms and conditions of the entire program now in existence, or any that might be adopted by the LEC Executive Committee for that particular test. Not doing so will jeopardize eligibility for future tests.

N O M I N A T I O N A C C E P T A N C E P R O C E D U R E :

1. Nominations will be accepted from February 15 through March 15, 2024. The postmark will determine eligibility.
2. First choice will be given to Pennsylvania breeders with eligible rams, who have participated in the past.
3. In the event all pen space is not utilized by past test participants, nominations will be accepted from Pennsylvania breeders who have not previously tested at the LEC.
4. In the event all pen space is not utilized by Pennsylvania breeders, out-of-state nominations will be accepted, with first choice going to breeders who have tested in recent Pennsylvania tests.
5. After nominations are accepted, there will be no further differentiation between Pennsylvania breeders and out-of-state breeders.

H E A L T H A N D V E T E R I N A R Y C A R E :

1. Health of the rams will be under the supervision of the Attending Veterinarian..
2. During the adjustment period, all rams will be administered products to control internal and external parasites and vaccinated for enterotoxemia and tetanus (2 doses), contagious ecthyma (sore mouth), and rabies. During the test rams will receive a product for control of foot scald. Contagious foot rot immunization products will not be used.
3. **All rams will have their feet trimmed at the end of the test. Additional foot trimming on individual rams will be performed if necessary.**
4. Any ram deemed clinically unsound during the test will be removed from the test at the owner's expense. This decision will be made by the LEC station manager and the Attending Veterinarian (or designee).
5. All rams will receive a physical examination for breeding soundness at the end of the test.
6. Consignors will pay for all incurred veterinary and foot trimming costs.
7. **Genotyping:**
 - a. **All rams will be genotyped for scrapie susceptibility at codon 171 immediately after delivery of the entire test group. Breeders will be notified of the results as soon as they are available. Breeders may request genotyping at additional codons.**
 - b. **The breeder may elect to remove any ram from the test that is determined to be susceptible to Scrapie, provided the station manager is notified of the decision prior to the 14 day test report. This is the only time period during which a breeder may elect to remove a ram from the test based on scrapie genotype.**
 - c. **A breeder who elects to remove a Scrapie susceptible ram from the test before the 14 day test report may elect to permit the ram to finish the testing procedure as a private test and this animal(s) will not be eligible for sale.**

- d. If a breed association does not permit registration of animals that genotype QQ at codon 171, no QQ rams of that breed will be eligible for the performance tested sale.
- e. Genotyping of rams for Spider Lamb syndrome will be available to breeders on an elective basis. Breeders will have the option to remove rams that test NS or SS for Spider Syndrome from the sale.
- f. Genotyping results for scrapie susceptibility and spider lamb syndrome will be available to potential buyers for animals that are offered for sale. Test results for animals voluntarily removed from the test for either scrapie susceptibility or spider syndrome will be held in confidence and will not be available to potential buyers or the general public.
- g. No genetic testing results will be reported unless acquired while animals are on the premises of the Livestock Evaluation Center.

S H E A R I N G :

Rams will be shorn at a time determined by the LEC station management.

R E T U R N O F R A M S :

Rams may be returned at any time to the owner, at the owner's expense, for any reason deemed necessary by the technical or species committee. However, no ram will be removed from test and/or LEC without first having approval from the LEC Station Manager and Attending Veterinarian. Some reasons for return might be:

1. Health (including chronic bloaters)
2. Disposition
3. Lack of valid identification
4. Ram classified as potential non-breeder
5. No sale
6. Any reason deemed necessary by the LEC Station Manager and/or the Attending Veterinarian (or designee)

L I A B I L I T Y :

The breeder retains ownership of his ram(s) while on test at the LEC. However, the breeder waives any right to press claims of any type against LEC supervisors and employees, and will sign a testing agreement stating that he assumes full responsibility. The cost of insurance is included in the testing charges to be paid by the owner. Owners who lose rams during the testing period will be paid an amount equal to the market value of a 110-pound market lamb as quoted at New Holland the week the loss occurred, minus testing costs incurred to that date.

R A T I O N :

Rations vary considerably among test stations, particularly in level of energy. This variation causes some differences in the average daily gains of different tests. Differences caused by feed are not heritable.

The present ration used for sheep has at least 16.0% protein and 73% T.D.N. In addition, grass-mixed hay is fed free choice.

Additional protein may be added to the starter ration in an effort to get the lambs off to a good start. Medication may be either added and/or changed at the discretion of the veterinarian.

Also, the Technical Committee and the veterinarian may, from time-to-time, make other adjustments to the ration which they feel is in the best interest of the test.

Ration analysis will be done as changes occur in the ration. Feed Batches will be balanced to ensure that the feed contains less than 15ppm of copper and/or a copper molybdenum ratio of less than 10:1 for safe feeding of sheep.

P R O G R E S S R E P O R T :

1. Rams will be weighed every 14 days, and a progress report will be sent to the owner and other interested persons at least every other period.
2. A final report covering the performance of all rams will be made available as soon as possible following the conclusion of the test.

P E R F O R M A N C E T E S T S A L E :

1. Sale date is August 15, 2024, and will include an Invitational Ewe Sale.
2. An index ratio will be used to rank rams at the conclusion of the test to determine the sale order for rams within their respective breed or breed groups. Breeds with six or more animals on test will sell first, with last year's sale averages determining which breed sells first. All rams eligible for sale must be offered for sale.
3. **A copy of registration papers must be provided to the LEC station manager no later than July 1, 2024, in order to be eligible to sell. Transfers of animals will be the responsibility of the consignor.**
4. **All Rams and Ewes offered for sale will be assessed a Sales Commission based upon the actual sales production costs and calculated by the final sale price. An additional 1% Commission will be added on to the total sales percentage, to be paid directly to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Rams and Ewes offered for Sale which do not receive a bid will be assessed a Commission on the Minimum Bid Price. Rams and Ewes offered for sale which do not receive a bid will remain the possession of the breeder.**

RATING RAMS FOR SALE :

1. All rams will be inspected by the LEC Station Manager, attending veterinarian, and Sale Committee for breed character, breed type, soundness of mouth, breeding soundness, structural correctness, black fiber content, etc. Depending on the severity of the fault, a ram may be eliminated from the sale regardless of performance. The Sale Committee's decision on all sale details will be final, including which rams sell, minimum sale price, minimum index, etc.
2. Scrotal circumference must measure 30 cm for all rams 8 months or older and at least 28 cm for all rams under 8 months of age.
3. All rams eligible for sale will be ranked by an index ratio within breeds and/or breed groups. The following index will be used on the meat breeds.

$$.35 \times \text{average daily gain ratio} + .35 \times \text{final weight per day of age ratio} + .15 \times \text{adjusted fat thickness value} + .15 \times \text{adjusted loin muscle area value} = \text{ram index}$$

$$\frac{\text{individual ram index}}{\text{average breed and/or breed group index}} = \text{INDEX RATIO}$$

FECAL EGG COUNT TESTING FOR PARASITE RESISTANCE :

Parasitic worms are a significant problem to the small ruminant industry. Certain genetics have higher resistance to parasitic infection. To test this resistance, small ruminants can be infected with a specific parasite (*Haemonchus contortus*- bred specifically for trial research with susceptibility to multiple class of anthelmintics). Following infection, test animals will be monitored through FAMANCHA scoring and fecal egg count (FEC) samples collected to develop a comparable number to assess susceptibility to parasitic infection.

1. Parasite resistance testing information will not used in criteria for final index or sale
2. Rams will be acclimated to the ration, wormed prior to parasite infection and reviewed for health
3. Rams will be infected with a set amount of *Haemonchus contortus* at the beginning of the trial and fecal egg counts and FAMANCHA scoring will be done throughout the test to obtain data to calculate resistance. Rams will only be infected one time during this test.
4. Rams will be dewormed and reevaluated following the trial. **Parasite infections carry higher risk to animal health. Specific health protocol will be followed to reduce any negative impacts of parasite infections.**
5. Information from FEC data will be compiled and available for review.

TESTING COSTS :

1. A \$60 fee, per ram is due at time of delivery.
2. If a ram dies or must be removed from test, the owner will pay all expenses incurred to that time.
3. Grain costs for each ram will be calculated by multiplying the average pen feed conversion, times the actual gain (in pounds) of each ram in the pen, times actual grain costs.
4. Other testing costs (hay, straw, veterinary products and services, scanning, parasite testing, etc.) will be divided on a per ram basis.
5. A facility usage charge, prorated for all species on test, will be assessed for all animals completing test.
6. A yardage fee of \$.08/day/ram will be charged to help offset miscellaneous testing costs such as postage, telephone, and office supplies.
7. Estimated costs for parasite testing will be available to consignors at delivery (costs will vary annually)
8. Out-of-state participants will also be charged a fee for labor and facilities which will be (approximately \$15.00/ram). Total testing costs commensurate will be determined by the LEC station manager.
9. Sales expenses will be determined as a percentage of the sale gross and this will be deducted from the sale receipts. **An additional 1% Commission will be added on to the total sales percentage, to be paid directly to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. All Consignments offered for sale will be assessed a Sales Commission on the final sale price. Consignments offered for Sale which do not receive a bid will be assessed a Sales Commission based on the Minimum Bid Price. Consignments offered for sale which do not receive a bid will remain the possession of the breeder.**
10. *No ram will be removed from the LEC until all incurred expenses are paid unless approved by the LEC Station Manager. Anyone not paying expenses will jeopardize the opportunity for future testing until accounts are paid in full.*
11. Final test payment or billing will be made to all test participants within 30 days of the sale, providing all testing bills have been received.

RAM LAMB TEST NOMINATION FORM
PENNSYLVANIA LIVESTOCK EVALUATION CENTER

PLEASE PRINT

Owner's name _____ Telephone _____

Farm Name _____ ***E-Mail** _____

Address _____

Town _____ State _____ Zip _____

County _____ Breed _____

Number of rams you want to test _____

TESTING AGREEMENT

Upon acceptance of any of my animals for testing at the Pennsylvania Livestock Evaluation Center, I, the owner, do hereby accept full and complete responsibility and liability for my animals during all phases of the program, including pretest, official test, post-test, and sale. I have read and agree to abide by the rules, regulations, terms, and conditions of the program, both now in existence or hereafter adopted by the LEC Executive Committee for this test.

I further authorize employees of The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, The Pennsylvania State University, Pennsylvania Sheep and Wool Growers Association and any other person or organization connected with the management of the program to act as my agent in connection with the program, including any sale of the animals—provided, however, that the above-mentioned employees or organizations shall not be liable for any loss, claims, or suit by me arising out of participation in the program, including, but not limited to, the sale of the animals.

(owner's signature) (date)

Nomination Date: February 15 through March 15, 2023

Send nomination form to: PA Department of Agriculture
Livestock Evaluation Center
1494 W. Pine Grove Road
PA Furnace, PA 16865