

What you need to know to raise a Market Lamb



Market lambs are a great livestock project for 4-Hers, it is a very rewarding project but does require a significant amount of work to be successful. This livestock project usually begin in the early Spring, depending on when you get your lambs and continue into fair season. Lambs do require daily care and attention by the exhibitor, as do all livestock projects. This project usually requires some inside housing facilities to obtain the best of this project. They will grow rapidly and make an excellent 4-H project.

Cost of showing a Market Lamb:

- **Purchase of Market Lambs:**

Show lambs are commonly purchased through online sales, breeders, live auctions and other 4-H members. Exhibitors will generally pay cost \$200+ for an initial investment of their show lamb, but the cost can go up from there. For our county fair season, it is ideal for lambs to be born between the months of January – March.

Market lambs can range from 50-90 pounds, it may be helpful to try to match the lamb's size to be proportionate with the child that will be showing it, if your child is smaller in size.

- **Purchasing Feed:**

Most lamb projects will last about four months. During these four months, project animals should average feed intake of 3.0-3.5% of bodyweight. If we use an average of three pounds of feed per day with an average daily cost of \$0.75-\$1 cost per day, which would be approximately \$90 - \$120 basic feed costs per animal without any supplements.

- **Local Feed Dealers:**

- Agfinity Feed; Eaton, Greeley, Brighton
- Ault Feed Mill, Ault
- Country Corner Feed & Tack, Greeley
- Murdock's Ranch & Home Supply, Greeley
- Tractor Supply Company, Greeley

- Northern Feed & Bean, Lucerne
 - Northern Colorado Feeders Supply, Ft. Collins
 - Ranchway Feeds, Ft. Collins
 - JAX Ranch & Farm, Ft. Collins
- **Equipment needed:**
Halters, feeding trough, water buckets, lamb tables, clippers, blow dryers, hoof trimmers, etc.
- **Facilities needed:**
Sheep should be contained in fencing or paneling that is appropriate for size of the animal, at least 6' x 8' pen. **Most importantly, this containment facility must be predator and dog proof.** The area should be well drained and adequately ventilated to maximize health of the animal. Shelter is important to keep animals dry and reduce exposure to the elements. Pasture is not necessary to raise a breeding ewe or market lamb.
- **Animal Health**
It is important to keep your lambs healthy and to do that you need to treat them for internal and external parasites, coccidiosis, hoof related issues and enterotoxemia (over-eating disease) are the most common health related issues. Consult with your veterinarian on proper methods to address these health-related issues. Sheep are susceptible to kidney stones. Observe daily for urination. Some plants and trees can be poisonous to sheep so consult your veterinarian about these things also.
- **Feeding:**
It is important that sheep have clean, fresh water at all times. Lambs should be fed a 15-20% Crude Protein feed. Purchase a good quality commercial feed from a reputable show feed company or dealer. Do not feed the cheapest feed you can find, it must be a high-quality show feed that they eat or they will not gain enough weight to make weight at fair.

Hay/Forage is essential for ruminants. Give each lamb a hand-full size amount of hay daily. As your lamb grows you want to increase its feed to where it is eating 3 - 3.5% of its body weight per day. Sheep may choke while eating – do not feed unattended. Of course, you have to look at the body condition of your lamb and determine if your lamb needs more or less feed to reach its ideal show weight. If you are unsure of this get some help from other sheep exhibitors.

Important Note: Do not feed show lambs commercially available cattle feed or supplement that contain copper. Sheep have a high sensitivity to copper, with small amounts leading to toxicity and death. Make certain you have a veterinary-client relationship so that medicated feeds can be used, consult your veterinarian if you are unsure.

- **Daily Care:**
It is important to exercise sheep daily, start with short times and increase to build endurance. Exercise will help to build muscle in your lamb. Train and practice bracing techniques, that will help when showing your lamb.