Update on the Northeast Sheep and Goat Marketing Program

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The Northeast Sheep & Goat Marketing Program at Cornell University was established in January 2001 to improve the marketing infrastructure for sheep and goats in the twelve northeastern states: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and West Virginia. The program is funded by the Lamb Meat Adjustment Assistance Program, which resulted from legal actions taken by the American Sheep Industry Association to limit cheap lamb imports to the U.S.

Bob Melchoir was highly effective in the marketing coordinator position for the program until his unexpected death in early August. To continue to serve producers in the Northeast and fulfill the obligations of the grant, Cornell University elected to fill the marketing coordinator position. Susan Schoenian, a University of Maryland (small ruminant) Extension Agent and sheep and goat producer assumed 50% of the responsibilities of the position and concentrates her efforts in the southern half of the twelve state region. Chris Parsons, a goat producer and custom processor from Pine City, New York, performs 50% of the duties and focuses his efforts on the northern half of the region. Susan can be reached at (301) 432-2767 ext. 343 or ss80@umail.umd.edu. Chris can be reached at (607) 732-4987 or CGP@starband.net.

The Northeast Sheep & Goat Marketing Program has accomplished many of its stated objectives. Regional Marketing Summits were held in the northern, middle, and southern parts of the region at the beginning of the granting period to publicize the program and get feedback on methods to improve marketing infrastructure in our region. Program staff and an advisory board with representatives from each of the twelve states have implemented several pilot marketing projects. Graded tele-auctions have been organized at various locations in New York State. A successful marketing pool has been established whereby a group of a half dozen producers, representing 1,200 ewes on accelerated lambing programs, is supplying 10 to 20 "premium quality" lambs per week to a retail market in New York City. A marketing pool to sell animals direct to New York City live animal markets will undergo its trial run for the Thanksgiving holiday season. Development of a kosher/halal kill floor for small and medium sized plants has also been a goal. A safer slaughter knife for Halal slaughter successfully underwent testing at several sites and a "humane" restraining system for ritual slaughter (Kosher and Halal) was also successfully tested at a plant in southeastern Pennsylvania.

One of the primary accomplishments of the Northeast Sheep & Goat Marketing Program is the establishment of a sheep and goat marketing web site at www.sheepgoatmarketing.org. The site includes program information, news, links, calendar of events, links to regional auction prices, an ethnic calendar, articles on marketing, and a directory of producers, feeders, dealers, buyers, sellers, auction houses, retailers, wholesalers,
and processors. It is a one-stop resource for marketing information for sheep and goat producers in the Northeast. One of its latest additions is a slide show featuring the humane restraining system.

Thus far, the NESGM program has focused on sheep and goat producers in the twelve northeastern states, but it could easily (and should) be expanded to other production areas. The Northeast focus of the program is more related to market demand than production area. There is a tremendous demand for sheep and goat meat in the Northeast, and the region does not produce enough animals to meet this demand, so production often flows in from other parts of the country. Many states outside of the 12-state northeast region are interested in targeting the lamb and goat markets in NY, NJ, and PA. In addition, New York City, while still the best market for sheep and goat meat in the U.S., is a pilot project area. Much of what is learned in the New York City market can be applied to other U.S. cities where there exists an ethnic demand for sheep and goat meat.

The grant providing funding for the Northeast Sheep and Goat Marketing Program will expire on January 21, 2002. Regional Marketing Summits are planned in Fall’02/Winter’03 to determine how the program can continue to serve producers in the Northeast region and discuss the formation of a Northeast Sheep and Goat Marketing Association. Establishment of a regional sheep and goat marketing organization is a key objective of the original project proposal to USDA. Additional funding is being sought to continue funding for a marketing coordinator. Producers can help extend the efforts of the program by participating in the Regional Marketing Summits, by adding their names to the program mailing list, and by providing input to Cornell University, Susan and Chris, and/or the advisory board, all of which have contacts on the web site.

The dates and locations for the Regional Marketing Summits are (were) as follows:

- **Saturday 14 December 2002** from 10 am to 2 pm at the Chichester, New Hampshire, Town Hall.

- **Friday 10 January 2003** at Harrisonburg, Virginia in conjunction with the Virginia – North Carolina (Mid Atlantic) Shepherd’s Symposium. The marketing summit will consist of a marketing panel followed by an open discussion with the NESGMP as the focal point. Both sheep and goat producers are urged to attend. For more info contact Susan Schoenian at (301)432-2767 ext 343 or **ss80@umail.edu**.

- **Saturday 18 January 2003** at the Cornell Sheep Farm, Harford, New York in conjunction with the Quinterly Cornell Sheep Farm Field Day. Both sheep and goat producers welcomed. For more info contact Dr. Michael Thonney at (607)255-2851 or **mth2@cornell.edu**.

Northeast Sheep and goat Marketing Program - [www.sheepgoatmarketing.org](http://www.sheepgoatmarketing.org)
The NESGMP halal/kosher restraint device. Note that the feet of the lamb are off the ground and the lamb is supported by the double rails and the sides of the chute. Animals held in this manner remain very calm.