



2018 Ontario lamb market reminders

1. **Ontario Sheep Farmers (OSF) embraces an open market policy allowing producers to have free choice in how they market live sheep, lambs or wool.** The OSF website provides online weekly Ontario public auction market volume and price history by live market weight class and a phone in market message service exists. It is recommended that producers, whether new or experienced, invest time at the local auction market or at district meetings to gain knowledge of current market buyers and preferences. The markets are always changing.
2. **Islamic holidays follow the Islam lunar based calendar and change each year.** This calendar has twelve months with each new month beginning at sunset on the day the crescent moon appears. As the calendar is based on lunar activity, the 12-month rotation occurs in about 354 days. The months drift backwards through the seasons and occur 11 days earlier every year according to the Western (Julian) calendar.
3. **Processor market inventory build-up:** a 2 to 3-week period of demand build-up is normal as processors prepare fresh supply for holiday sales. Id al Adha (Eid) will experience a sustained live sheep sale demand up to the day of the festival (and past if the holiday is near a following weekend). Meat processors and retailers ideally wish to hold fresh meat for no more than seven days.
4. **Certain holidays may influence ethnic processing plant activity during the holiday period.** Ethnic plant staff will celebrate holiday festivals and plant activity may be reduced. Auction market demand can be lower from ethnic processors in the days leading immediately into certain holidays and when they occur.
5. **Statutory Canadian holidays will impact both auction market and processing plant activities.** There will be a lower desire to hold livestock during a holiday, and this may often lead to lower auction market participation and buyer demand. Each statutory holiday should be reviewed closely to assess potential impact on buyers/processors and the auction markets. Auctions post sale changes occurring due to statutory holidays.
6. **On-farm sales:** Selling live lambs from your farm can present an advantage in that you can maximize your price potential without incurring yardage, trucking or other fees. However, there can be disadvantages that require extra time, an understanding of cultural and language differences when negotiating with customers, and often management of difficult customer demands to conduct an on-farm slaughter. This presents a loss of producer privacy and it can introduce on-farm family stress. For this reason, many producers avoid on farm sales and prefer to sell through agents, auction markets or direct to processors. It is illegal to slaughter a lamb on the farm for purpose of a sale. Lamb meat may only be sold if the lamb has been processed in a federal or provincial inspected slaughter plant. When selling lambs for slaughter, you need to sell a live lamb and let the buyer process the lamb, or facilitate the slaughter of the lamb at a licenced slaughterhouse. You cannot help the buyer process the lamb, however you have a responsibility to ensure that a lamb is handled and killed in a humane manner.

For a list of current Ontario auction markets and processors handling sheep and lambs, visit <http://www.ontariosheep.org/sales-barns-abattoirs>.

You may also find advertisements from buyers or processors on our website or in the quarterly Ontario Sheep News magazine.