Module 7: Sheep

Handling Market Lambs
Handling Market Lambs

- Purpose of Handling Sheep:
  - Confirm what your eyes have told you
  - If offered, take opportunity to handle lambs
  - Occasionally, visual appraisal doesn’t give true picture
Handling Market Lambs

First Step:
- Handle a lamb down its top
- Place an open hand over the top of shoulder
- Feel for neatness, or lack of neatness of shoulder
- Also, feel for:
  - How smooth shoulder blends into rack & forerib
  - Firmness of shoulder
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Continue handling lamb down its top to evaluate firmness and thickness
Handling Market Lambs

Second Step:
- Use your thumb to roll the muscle coming out of the shoulder approx. 2 to 3 inches off the midline of the back.
- Butterfly shape to the rack muscle:
  - Is desired
  - Indicates high degree of muscling
Third Step:
- Handle lamb over ribs to evaluate finish or fat cover
- Using fingerprint area of first two fingers:
  - Lightly feel over lower rib
  - Keep fingers together
- Lambs should be:
  - Very lean (approx. 0.10 – 0.20 inch)
  - Soft feel indicates too much fat (excess of 0.20 in.)
- Handle down backbone with thumb or forefingers
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Fourth Step:
- Measure length of hindsaddle
- First – find last rib
  - Compare length from last rib to dock (hindsaddle)
  - To length from last rib to neck-shoulder junction (foresaddle)
- Length of hindsaddle should be at least equal, or preferably longer than foresaddle
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Fifth Step:
- Measure width of loin
- Place one hand on each side of loin to determine width
- Wider the loin, the higher degree of muscling
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Sixth Step:
- Measure length of loin
- Place index fingers on last rib
- Extend hand to loin-leg junction (hipbone)
- Observe length of loin
- Longer the loin, the higher degree of muscling
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Seventh Step:
- Measure length of rump
- Place index fingers on the hipbone
- Extend hand to dock
- Observe length of rump
- Longer the rump, the higher degree of muscling
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Eighth Step:
- Determine volume of leg muscle
- Place both hands under rear leg, as high as possible
- Touch middle fingers on inside of leg
- Wrap hands around leg from both directions
- Evaluate distance between thumbs on outside of leg
- Greater distance between thumbs, higher degree of muscling
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Locations on the body where condition is evaluated and fat is deposited
Handling Market Lambs

- Good indicator for estimating fat on a lamb:
  - Place one finger over the other hand’s knuckles
  - Move finger back & forth
  - Boney and not very smooth
  - Less than 0.10 inches of fat
  - Next, place a finger over the back of hand
  - Move finger back and forth
  - Approx. 0.10 to 0.20 inch of fat
  - Ideal market lamb finish, over ribs, should feel like back of your hand

Less than 0.10 in.

0.10 – 0.20 in.
When Handling Lambs Evaluate For:

- Firmness down the top including:
  - Rack
  - Loin
  - Leg
- Finish over the back & ribs
- Finish over the sternum, in twist & in flank
- Amount of muscle in loin
  - Determining depth, width & length of loin
- Amount of muscle in leg
  - Determining length & depth of leg
Review

- Neatness of top of shoulder
- Smoothness of fit to rack
- Firmness

- Rack muscle expression
- Firmness

- Width & firmness down the top

- Roll of muscle in the rack

- Finish over ribs

- Length of hindsaddle vs. length of foresaddle

- Width of loin

- Length of loin
Review

Length of rump

Volume of leg
Questions?