

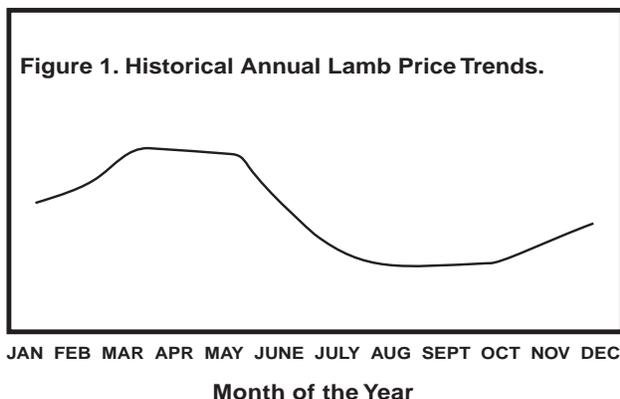
Virginia Winter-Lambing Budget

Steven H. Umberger and Bill R. McKinnon*

Winter lambing is used on farms where adequate winter feed supplies, experienced labor, and covered facilities for lambing are available. In the Southern Piedmont and Southeastern Virginia, where summer temperatures and humidity are high and the quality of summer pastures is low, winter lambing is considered the best option for market lamb production. Winter lambing occurs during the months of December, January, and February. It is more labor intensive than spring lambing and requires a higher level of management for breeding, lambing, and feeding. The profitability of winter lambing is tied closely to the price of grain and the number of lambs marketed per ewe annually. Winter-born lambs must be weaned at two to two and one-half months of age and fed a high concentrate diet to reach market weight before the precipitous drop in market prices that typically occurs in the late spring (Figure 1).

4. The opportunity to maintain a larger flock size because lambs are fed to slaughter weight on grain-based rather than forage-based diets.

Grain and hay of above average quality are fed to the ewe flock starting six weeks before lambing and continuing two to two and one-half months into lactation. Ewes in late gestation are checked at least four times daily. During periods of bad weather, ewes are housed and lambled under shelter. After lambing, ewes and lambs are placed in individual lambing pens to promote bonding and to monitor their overall health and well-being. At 7 to 10 days of age, lambs are given access to a high quality, highly palatable creep feed that is formulated to promote increased average daily gain. This is particularly important on farms with a high incidence of multiple births. At two months of age, lambs are weaned and placed on a high energy diet for finishing. The accompanying budget is based on hay and grain diets. However, other feeds such as corn silage, stockpiled fescue, and winter small grain pasture can be used with the ewe flock to lower the overall costs of production. A variety of lamb finishing and feeding programs are used with winter lambing. Producers should always evaluate all available resources on the farm and utilize those resources that best optimize profitability.



Advantages for winter lambing include:

1. The full utilization of labor and facilities that are often available from December through February.
2. The opportunity to sell slaughter lambs on the traditionally high spring market.
3. Better control over predators because lambs are fed and finished in a barn or feedlot.

The information provided in this publication is best used as a guideline for decision-making. Market prices for lamb and wool vary, and every farm has different costs of production. A separate line is provided beside each variable to be used for the calculation of individual farm expenses and receipts. Bottom-line figures are based on return to land, labor, and investment. Other than market price, the percentage of lambs marketed per ewe per year has the greatest impact on profitability of production. Conception rate, lambing rate, lambing percentage (lambs born/ewe lambing), and lamb survival rate are all important flock performance characteristics affecting the percentage of lamb crop marketed. No single system of production is right for everyone. However, every system must emphasize those practices that enhance the overall well-being of the sheep flock.

*Extension Animal Scientists, Virginia Tech

WINTER LAMBING^a
 Market Lamb Production
 125% Lamb Crop Weaned
 (105 lambs sold; 20 ewe lambs retained for replacements)

<u>Receipts</u>	<u>Per Ewe</u>	<u>100 Ewe Flock</u>	<u>Your Farm</u>
Choice, Yield Grade 1-3 (115 lbs x 100 hd x \$0.80/lb)	\$92	\$9200	_____
Feeder Lambs (90 lbs x 5 hd x \$0.90/lb)	\$ 4	\$ 405	_____
Cull Ewes and Rams (150 lbs x 18 hd x \$0.30/lb)	\$ 8	\$ 810	_____
Wool (6.5 lbs x 103 hd x \$0.90/lb)	\$ 6	\$ 603	_____
Total Receipts	\$110	\$11,018	_____
<u>Expenses</u>			
Hay - 30 tons @ \$60/ton ^b	\$ 18	\$1800	_____
Corn - 320 bu @ \$3/bu ^c	\$ 9.5	\$ 960	_____
Lamb Feed - 18 tons @ \$145/ton ^d	\$ 26	\$2610	_____
Replacement Ram	\$ 3.5	\$ 350	_____
Vitamins and Minerals	\$ 3	\$ 300	_____
Health	\$ 3	\$ 300	_____
Supplies	\$ 2	\$ 200	_____
Pasture - 30 acres @ \$20/acre	\$ 6	\$ 600	_____
Building and Fence Repair	\$ 2	\$ 200	_____
Shearing (Ewes and Lambs)	\$ 2.5	\$ 250	_____
Miscellaneous Costs	\$ 1	\$ 100	_____
Interest on Operating Capital - 6 mos @ 12%	\$ 4.5	\$ 460	_____
Hauling and Marketing	\$ 3	\$ 300	_____
Total Expenses	\$84	\$8430	_____

^aDecember-February Lambing

^b600lbshay/ewe/year; \$60/ton cost of production

^c180lbs corn/ewe year

^d280lbs feed/lamb (creep, growing and finishing)

Financial Implications at Selected Percentages of Lamb Crop Weaned
 Expressed As Income Per Ewe

<u>Item</u>	<u>125%</u>	<u>150%</u>	<u>175%</u>
Receipts	\$110	\$133	\$156
Expenses	\$84	\$88.50	\$95
Return to Land, Labor and Capital or Amount to Service Debt	\$26	\$44.50	\$61