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MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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New Best Practices Aim to Increase Productivity for Lamb Producers

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. – Lamb producers were introduced to the industry’s first set of Productivity Best Practices at the 2016 Sheep Industry Convention January 27-30.

Lambs sold per ewe is the biggest influence on profitability, and implementing the new *Best Practices to Increase Your Lamb Crop* gives sheep producers more control over price volatility, according to the panel of sheep producers and production experts who developed the best practices.

“The long-term vision is to increase demand and profitability for the entire U.S. lamb industry,” says Wes Patton, a California sheep producer who chairs the American Lamb Board. “As demand is increased over time, we want more American Lamb on more consumers’ plates. That involves improving consistency and quality, while increasing productivity and reducing costs of production. By using best practices, the U.S. lamb industry can implement change that leads to increased demand and profitability.”

The American Lamb Board, which administers the lamb checkoff, supported the efforts to develop the lamb crop best practices in collaboration with other industry groups, including the American Sheep Industry Association’s “Let’s Grow” program.

To make best practice information as accessible as possible, it is part of the new U.S. Lamb Resource Center website (www.LambResourceCenter.com). Funded by the national lamb checkoff program to support the efforts of the entire industry, the Lamb Resource Center pulls together important information from major sheep organizations into one central location. Topics on the site include the lamb checkoff, industry and market news, marketing, Productivity Best Practices, and other production resources.

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Best practices are a cornerstone of many industries – from computer manufacturing to education – and guide processes to achieve a desired result. For the lamb industry, Productivity Best Practices identify ways to produce more with comparable resources, which is a critical component of profitability.

“Because they are based on both time-tested practical experience and research, the *Best Practices to Increase Your Lamb Crop* are reliable, worthwhile actions for U.S. sheep producers. Best practices help you find ways to be more efficient and allow you to take more control of your flock’s productivity – actions you can take now to protect against price volatility,” says Reid Redden, Ph.D., who chaired the team charged with developing the best practices.

Redden emphasizes even though sheep production practices in the U.S. vary, there are lamb crop best practices that will benefit every flock. Most sheep producers will be able to identify at least three of the 12 best practices that will help them gain efficiency and improve profitability.

For example, the lamb crop best practice topics include optimizing nutrition, selecting prolific genetics, culling underperforming ewes, pregnancy testing, disease prevention and reducing lamb loss. Another best practice involves breeding ewe lambs at the age of seven to nine months so they lamb at or near their first birthday. Research shows ewes that give birth to their first lamb before they are yearlings tend to be more productive throughout their lifetime compared to those that first lamb as yearlings. Yet, Redden points out, in this case, the specific practice requires management considerations that may not be an option for every flock.

“Our team recognizes that some of the lamb crop best practices mean challenging the status quo. Yet, that is what is required to take action so the U.S. lamb industry can be more competitive,” Redden says.

Key indicators have also been developed to help identify which lamb crop best practices will be most beneficial for various production styles. For example, a range flock should have no more than seven to 10 percent of dry ewes, whereas a farm flock should have no more than five to seven percent.

“Best practices are an important way to implement the changes identified in the U.S. Lamb Industry Roadmap. These best practices will help increase demand while driving profitability for all industry segments,” concluded Patton.

The American Lamb Board (ALB) is a national promotion, research and information organization whose purpose is to strengthen the position of lamb and lamb products in domestic and foreign markets. The work of the Board is overseen by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Agriculture Marketing. For more information, go to www.LambResourceCenter.com.

GRAPHIC AVAILABLE FOR MEDIA USE



Suggested outline:

The U.S. Lamb Industry Roadmap, adopted less than two years ago, set goals to achieve the long-term vision of increasing demand and profitability for the entire U.S. lamb industry. Improving consistency and quality, while increasing productivity and reducing costs of production, are requirements in order for more American Lamb to be on more consumers' plates. By using best practices, the U.S. Lamb Industry can implement change that leads to increased demand and profitability. Find out more at www.LambResourceCenter.com.

EDITORS:

To request a copy of the above graphic in high-res JPEG or EPS formats, please contact Sharlet Teigen at SharletTeigen@DemeterCommunications.com or 605-390-8320. Please include a message with the format you prefer and your deadline. Thank you.