

MEMORANDUM September 26, 2007

To: Lamb Producers selling to Mohave County Fair Exhibitors

From: Gerald Olson
Extension Agent 4-H Youth Development

Re: 4-H Lamb Tail Docking Policy

Background

We have had many discussions both internally and with our clientele concerning the lamb tail docking policy over the last several months. This is an important topic and one that is generating much interest. It is important for everyone in the organization to be informed and knowledgeable on the topic. I have heard arguments from all sides on this issue and find that the research evidence and recommendations of many national and industry organizations indicate that we are on the appropriate path to uphold the established policy.

The Policy

Tail docking policy will apply to all 4-H and FFA youth exhibitors in Mohave County beginning this 2008 year. The policy for all youth sheep projects (both breeding and market lambs) and for exhibition of animals by youth at fairs and shows in Mohave County is as follows:

"Lambs born after January 1, 2008 will be accepted for exhibition only if tails are not docked shorter than the level of the distal end of the caudal tail fold.

Lambs that are properly docked will have a minimum tail length of .7 inches at show, measured by the approved measurement device, which will be placed against the base of the tail and pin bones."

The Sheep Tail Measurement Protocol

The Sheep Tail Measurement Protocol lists the following steps for implementation of the policy.

- 1) Only a measurement device designated as an official device by the Mohave County Extension will be used to make the measurement.
- 2) A committee of three designated individuals appointed by the responsible show officials will measure each sheep one time only. At least one of these individuals must be trained by the Mohave County Cooperative Extension the proper use of the measuring device. Each sheep show or event will appoint a committee for the purposes of measuring tail at check-in.
- 3) All sheep will be measured at check-in at the fair (market time).
- 4) Stand the sheep squarely on a level surface.
- 5) Gently raise the tail and place the measurement instrument firmly under the tail and against the pin bones.
- 6) Adjust the measurement instrument so that the trough, under the tail, is approximately level with the ground and maintains contact with the pin bones.
- 7) The committee will determine if the length of the tail is acceptable by confirming that the distal point of the tail (excluding wool) meets the line in the trough designating .7 inch.

The ethical treatment of animals and the elimination of unethical practices in the show ring are important to our youth programs. As organizations that promote educational programming with life skills attainment, it is prudent to exemplify ethical treatment of animals and utilize quality management practices. Everyone involved with youth livestock shows must be, and must teach our youth to be, responsible stewards of livestock and remember that the focus of these programs is our blue ribbon youth.

<http://www.wvu.edu/~agexten/youth/taildockg.pdf>