

KERN COUNTY

SAMPLE COSTS FOR 1000 EWES
by
Winston L. Engvall, Farm Advisor

Feed

Alfalfa - 5,000 head months	\$ 8,000
Range - 7,000 head months	5,250
Supplementary hay, grain, minerals	4,000

Replacements

200 ewes - net cost	5,855
6 rams - net cost	285

Labor

1,000 ewe share	4,000
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Shearing	1,000
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Hauling	2,000
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Marketing	1,000
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Miscellaneous	4,000
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DIRTI (depreciation, interest, repairs, taxes, insurance)	<u>4,000</u>
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\$39,390

Income at 3 lamb price levels

Wool - 10,000 lbs. @ 70¢	7,000	7,000	7,000
Unshorn lamb incentive	1,000	1,000	1,000
Lambs - 1000 - 100 lb. lambs @ 30¢	<u>30,000</u>	@ 40¢ <u>40,000</u>	@ 50¢ <u>50,000</u>
Income	\$38,000	\$48,000	\$58,000

100 cc
Oct. 1976

FARM MANAGEMENT SHORT COURSE FOR COMMERCIAL BANKERS

Sheep Industry - Kern County by Winston L. Engvall, Farm Advisor

Kern County is number one in California as far as sheep numbers are concerned. This is so in spite of the fact that from April to September only a few herds of sheep remain here. Of the 870,000 head of sheep in California on January 1, 1976, 17% or 145,000 were in Kern County.

Sheep numbers in the county have followed the national trend, decreasing about 20% in the last 10 years in Kern. As the following statistical picture shows this trend appears to have slowed locally, more than likely due to the increase in lamb prices.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Jan. 1, sheep inventory</u>	<u>lbs. sheep & lambs sold</u>	<u>price per cwt.</u>	<u>value</u>
1972	156,100	180,000	27.30	4,914,000
1973	145,300	178,000	33.07	5,886,000
1974	146,200	155,000	38.76	6,008,000
1975	151,300	169,000	37.80	6,388,000
1976	145,000			

In late September the ewes are trucked into Kern County. Typically they are pastured on alfalfa fields, confined by movable fencing. Lambing begins soon after the ewes arrive and continues through the fall months.

The lambs are crossbreds, offspring of black faced, 'meat type' rams and the wool type ewes. Since they aren't suitable for flock replacements all will be marketed as soon as they reach a desirable weight.

If rain has produced good forage growth the flocks will leave the relatively expensive alfalfa for the hills and desert about February 1.

The unfarmed land on the west side of the valley, which was another feed source, is rapidly becoming irrigated farmland, so much is now unavailable for grazing. In addition to the disappearance of this feed source crop residues are becoming scarce

as a feed source due to the double cropping of farm land leaving no time for sheep to move in and clean up.

Most of the lambs will reach market weight by May. At this time the ewes will be trucked to rangeland--to Inyo and Mono Counties or to other states. While in these summer ranges the rams are turned in to breed the ewes and in the fall they again return to the alfalfa fields to complete the cycle.

Shearing takes place in the early spring. Wool prices have fluctuated widely in recent years. This fluctuation, however, is not a major factor in returns because of the wool incentive program which tends to shift returns toward the incentive price level set by the USDA. This is a program to encourage the production of better quality wool.

One of the more recent developments to boost the sheepman's efficiency has been the introduction of new methods to increase lamb production per ewe. Twice a year lambing, three lamb crops in two years are both possibilities. Increased multiple births is possible with new bloodlines. These practices may be of great value to the farm flock producer but do not fit in well with the typical range operation.

Predators, especially coyotes, have caused losses in all locations. Dogs are often a problem especially in areas near population centers.

With the prices received this year, the sheep industry may continue at the present level but the future is not at all clear.

Cost studies for the sheep industry are difficult to devise. There is such a great variation in feed costs from year to year and individual operations. Alfalfa pasture that was rented for \$10 per acre in the winter of 1964-65 increased to as much as \$45 per acre in 1975-76.

Consider these precautionary statements when reviewing sample costs and incomes.

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