

ABSTRACTS
*** Author Presenting Paper**

127 Value-based lamb marketing systems in other countries. D. L. Thomas, *University of Wisconsin, Madison.*

Many developed countries have national systems for classifying lamb carcasses for merit and price discovery. These systems involve some measure of carcass fatness and may include carcass weight and conformation. New Zealand (NZ) and the U.K. rank 5th and 6th among countries in sheep numbers and 1st and 3rd among countries for sheep meat exports. In NZ, all lamb exported (90% of total production) is marketed under a classification system. Lamb carcasses are classified into 18 carcass weight-fat cover classes. Fat cover is based on GR measurement - total tissue depth over the 12th rib at a point 11 cm from the midline of the carcass. Carcasses with a GR greater than 12 mm are not allowed to be exported as intact carcasses and must be broken into cuts and trimmed of excess fat before export. For carcasses weighing 13.3 to 21.2 kg, those with $GR \leq 12$ mm are most valuable with discounts of 10 to 15% for $12 \text{ mm} < GR \leq 15$ mm and 25 to 30% for $GR > 15$ mm. The classification system was compulsory for all export abattoirs until the 1999/2000 season. Abattoirs can now institute their own systems, but most have stayed with the old system. Great Britain uses a 5x7 grid for classification of lamb carcasses according to conformation (E, U, R, O, P from best to poorest conformation) and fat class (1, 2, 3L, 3H, 4L, 4H, 5 from less to more fat). Classification is by visual appraisal and is performed by trained graders from the Meat and Livestock Commission. In 1997, 28% of the national lamb kill (4.4 million carcasses) was classified. Target classes are E, U, or R conformation and 1, 2, or 3L fat class. Since 1993, 50% of carcasses have been classified in the target sectors. Carcasses of less than 18 kg that fail to make one of the target sectors are generally of poor conformation, whereas carcasses of 18 kg and over that fail are generally too fat. There are large regional differences for distribution of lamb carcasses in the grid. In 1997, the percentage of lamb carcasses in the target sectors was 58.5% in England, 48.9% in Scotland, and 31.1% in Wales. In England and Scotland, the main reason for failure to make one of the target sectors was overfatness, and in Wales it was for poor conformation.

Key Words: Lamb carcass value, Lamb grading, Lamb marketing