

[What Is a Marketing Plan](#)

Simply put, your marketing plan clearly lays out your strategy to sell your venture to both your customers and your potential investors and bankers. Getting this plan prepared will involve substantial research into the industry you wish to market in as well as a complete understanding of consumer motivations. Your marketing plan in a complete description of how you will get your product or service to market, build a market niche, maintain growth, and deal with future market change. Portions of the plan become templates and schedules for specific activities such as festival markets, newsletter mailings, advertising copy and other specific operations to promote your business.

Your market plan is made up of the following parts:

[Positioning](#)

How do your customers perceive your business and its products? Since all decisions made by individuals and businesses are motivated by emotions, you must position your products and services to benefit from the market position that you choose. Look at how important brands are when we purchase any given product. With so many brands of a similar product competing for every consumer dollar it is certainly in every business's best interest to create more than just a quality product. You must also develop an allure to help entice sales. Convince your buyers that they cannot do without your version of the product and you now have an excellent market position. The location of your business, the appearance of your entrance, employee attitude, employee appearance, and so many other factors all contribute to your business's position.

[Pricing](#)

Getting your price structure right for your business is one of the most effective marketing tools you have. Price conveys image, affects demand, and effectively targets specific market segments. Base your price structure on the value of the product or service to the customer, not costs plus profit. If your price structure fails to generate sufficient profit, then changes must be made.

Many questions must be answered to develop a complete pricing strategy:

1. Is the pricing scheme competitive?
2. Is there some perceived value inherent in higher prices?
3. Are prices to be based on cost plus some standard mark-up?
4. Why are your prices higher or lower than your competitors?
5. How will price affect consumer demand?

There are so many decisions to make regarding pricing and price policies. Below are some of the considerations that go into a complete pricing policy:

[Pricing Strategies](#)

There are three primary strategies involving pricing:

1. “Skimming the cream” When there is limited competition you can charge what you like since substitution will be limited.
2. “Matching the competition” This simple strategy guarantees that your prices will meet local standards. Often, a new marketer will slightly undercut the competition to expand market share
3. “Undercut the competition” This strategy involves substantially undercutting competitors’ prices to exclude their market access.

Goals

Profit-Oriented Goals

One way to determine your pricing is to base the mark-up on your goals for the company. You decide what the return on investment needs to be and set your prices accordingly.

Sales-Oriented Goals

These are usually set to develop or maintain a particular market share and are very useful in new product introductions where the profit is less of a goal in the beginning. Retailers to induce customers into the store or introduce a new product typically use “Loss Leaders”. In the “Loss Leader” you sell a product at or near cost in an effort to increase market share.

Status Quo Pricing

You choose to sell your products at a set price since everyone sells theirs at that price and no one wants to “rock the boat” and possibly set off a price war.

Discounts

Once you establish a price you can then look at various discount schemes to sell more product. Quantity discounts are common throughout the greenhouse industry as well as Senior Citizen discount plans and frequent buyer promotions.

Coupons

Coupons have gotten to be extremely popular among consumers and retailers alike. The consumer gets a set deal based on your coupon and you have an easy method to measure advertising effectiveness through coupon returns. Be sure your pricing structure is balanced to handle the coupon deals or your end of year profit statements will suffer.

[Shipping Terms](#)

If your business ships products in any way, you must have a policy for assessing freight charges and recouping shipping costs. This can be a very sensitive subject, especially when it comes to local deliveries. Spell everything out clearly so there is no question regarding the delivery cost.

[Sales Term and Credit Policies](#)

Sales terms allow customers to take a discount if the invoice is paid within a set period. Typically, the terms will read 2% 10 days, net 30. This means that you are providing for a quick pay discount of 2% if the bill is paid within 10 days, then until the end of the 30 days the full amount is due. Most sales terms also provide for a slow pay fee of 1.5-2% per month in finance charges. New charge customers are frequently COD for the first year or must pay 50% COD and the remainder, net 30. Spelling your policies out in writing can substantially limit disagreements later.

[Market Channels](#)

All products are marketed through two primary channels, retail and wholesale. Retail marketing is selling product to the end user. Wholesaler marketing is selling through a middleman, whom then sells it to the retail marketer. Each form of marketing has advantages and disadvantages that will ultimately affect choice of channels. Most smaller growers sell a larger proportion of their product directly to the consumer or end use, but sell some wholesale, while larger producers exclusively sell their product wholesale. This is called market mix. Each business owner must determine this mix for himself and it will vary as your business evolves.

[Advertising and Promotions](#)

For many, advertising is synonymous with marketing, but as you can see from all the other aspects of marketing it is only the most visible, or you hope it is the most visible. An example is probably the easiest way to illustrate the difference between advertising and promotion. Assume you are a retail marketer, your spring promotion centers around a theme called "A Month Of Color." Every day you feature a different flowering plant in bloom at half price.

In order to communicate your theme to the public you place radio and newspaper advertisements as well as explaining the idea in detail in your regular customer newsletter. To better focus the public on your goal, you lease a small tethered blimp and have special classes every Saturday in flower bed design. The promotion is the "Month of Color" and everything else that you do is advertising or promoting your products.

The promotion noted above would be only one aspect or part of your overall marketing plan. Your plan includes everything from pricing to the way your employees dress to your returns policies. Also included under market planning is your public facade, which you manage through good public relations. Your activities in the community, appearances at festivals and newsletters all contribute to your public image. There is usually a blurry line between advertising and public relations. Everything you do in the public eye should be considered marketing and needs to be carefully planned.

[Marketing Meat Animals Directly to Consumers](#)

Selling directly to the consumer may significantly increase profits and prices above those received in conventional markets.

Marketing Meat Animals Directly to Consumers

Selling directly to the consumer may significantly increase profits and prices above those received in conventional markets.



There are several options for direct marketing of livestock.

Small-scale operators and part-time producers, in particular, have the opportunity to market additional services or special aspects of their product and realize significant price premiums. Four types of activity are generally considered as direct marketing of livestock:

- Selling directly to a packer/buyer on a live or grade and yield basis. This is the textbook type of marketing referred to

as direct marketing in many market summaries and reports.

- Setting up a slaughter facility and merchandising carcasses or retail cuts directly to the consumer.
- Selling the live animal to the consumer who has the responsibility of making slaughter arrangements.
- Selling all or part of the carcass to the consumer after slaughter by an established butcher shop. This option, often referred to as producing for the freezer trade, is the primary focus of this publication.

[Advantages of Direct Marketing](#)

The following discussion covers some advantages of this practice in relation to other selling methods. Potential for increased costs and other considerations are discussed under other headings.

[Higher Prices for Small Groups](#)

By selling directly to the consumer, the producer sets the price and doesn't experience the price discrimination generally encountered when selling small groups of animals. In contrast, most packers/buyers want large enough groups of livestock to pay costs of buying and trucking the animals; they are unlikely to make a trip to the farm to offer a bid on three or four steers. Even in auction markets, small groups of livestock tend to bring lower prices.

[Higher Prices for Leaner and Lighter Weight Animals](#)

Small-scale producers can market animals to their own specifications without the large discounts experienced in markets involving packers/buyers. This may allow the producer to purchase and feed the smaller framed breeds. In conventional markets, for example, a steer weighing under 1,000 pounds may have been fed well and properly finished but bring as much as \$5 per hundredweight less than a similarly finished steer weighing 1,200 pounds. However, in many localities, families prefer to buy the leaner and lighter animal fed in their area.

[More Net Profit](#)

A combination of higher selling prices, no sales company or buyer commissions, and lower purchase prices can help improve profitability. Small-scale livestock producers often have distinct disadvantages in production costs. Their fixed costs generally are spread over fewer animals, and feed costs tend to be higher because current technology is not used to the extent that large producers use it. When selling directly to consumers, producers may set their selling price at a level that ensures profitability (if they know their production costs).

[Better Cash Flow](#)

By setting their own price and standards for the number fed and sold, market weight, and amount of finish, producers may know the market price prior to selling and perhaps even prior to purchasing or producing the feeder animals. Marketing can coincide with cash needs (such as taxes) or accommodate a year-around schedule without the seasonal price fluctuations normally experienced in other marketing situations.

[Identifying Your Market](#)

Marketing can coincide with cash needs (such as taxes) or accommodate a year-around schedule without the seasonal price fluctuations normally experienced in other marketing situations.

- Flavor (palatability)
- Freshness (wholesomeness)
- Health enhancement (lower fat content)
- Variety and flexibility
- Convenience
- Ease of preparation
- Portion size
- Value

Your initial customers will be people you know: friends, relatives, and business and social acquaintances. These people will help you decide if you are producing the right product for your market area. They will also help your business grow by spreading the word about your product.

Deciding What to Raise

Once you have identified your market, it is much easier to decide what to produce. While the breed, finish, weight, or type of animal may vary with your personal preference, these factors influence other decisions.



Animal size can affect the size of the meat cuts, which can be a concern for the consumer. And, animal size can also affect the amount of fat in the meat.

Breed

You may have already decided which breed you want to raise. Consumer needs related to palatability and composition are not so much related to breed as they are to management and nutrition. The primary consideration with respect to breed is the size of the animal and resulting carcass when finished and ready for market.

Size is a concern for two main reasons. The first is economics. Large meat purchases such as sides or quarters are major investments for most consumers. The beef animal that fits most consumer needs is no more than 1,100 pounds and preferably less than 1,000 pounds. Producing finished beef animals under 1,000 pounds may be difficult with the larger Continental breeds but easily attained with the small British breeds. You may wish to consider feeding heifers because they finish at lighter weight than steers. Beef side weights should be no more than 300 pounds (most are sold under 250 pounds) and quarters no more than 150 pounds. Pork and lamb are often marketed at heavier than average weights. Consumers are not so concerned about the total cost of these as they are with beef. Producers often find consumers are satisfied with hogs as large as 250 pounds live (175 to 180 lb carcass) and with lambs up to 135 to 140 pounds live (75 lb carcass). The major complaint with heavier carcasses is that they often have more fat than do lighter carcasses. Extra fat is undesirable to the consumer from the health aspect as well as the economic aspect. The second consideration of carcass size is individual portion size. The major problem with heavy beef carcasses is the large size of the steaks. To make large steaks a desirable weight, they must be cut thinner which in turn makes them more difficult to cook without overcooking.

Sex

Your operation may dictate which sex (or sexes) you should be feeding. But if you purchase animals to feed, consider the initial savings possible by purchasing heifers or bulls (or rams). With proper management and nutrition, there is no discernible difference in final palatability characteristics in the intact (uncastrated) males, except in boars. In addition, bulls (or rams) have a higher growth rate, less fat, and better feed efficiency than steers (or wethers). Whatever you produce, supply your consumers with consistent products; no one likes surprises!

Natural and Organic

Many consumers are concerned about the wholesomeness of the food supply and may believe that meat from animals fed antibiotics and growth stimulants is less wholesome to eat. You know this is not true, and that good conventional management practices call for castrating male animals, promoting growth with implants, and using feed additives to improve feed efficiency. But in some areas there is a demand and a ready market for a “natural” product. You may wish to eliminate the implants, antibiotics, and feed additives, and offer the type of product to your customers. Producing an “organic” animal increases production costs at least 10 to 20 percent. To produce a truly “chemical free” animal you must be concerned about all potential sources of contamination. These increased costs should be reflected in the selling price.

[Picking a Meat Processor](#)

Finding the right meat plant to process your meat is generally the most important key to your success. In effect, you form a partnership and place your trust and reputation in the hands of someone else. In turn, your customers put complete trust in both of you; first-time customers are buying sight-unseen. Here are some of the qualities to look for:

Reputation

Your reputation is no better than the butcher who is processing your meat. The meat processor and staff you work with must be honest, dependable, and live up to their word.

Facilities

- Facilities should be clean and inspected. They should present the image you wish to project. No consumer wants to buy in a dirty or smelly place. Facilities also should be USDA inspected as well as being clean inside and outside. Meat sold directly to the consumer must be slaughtered under federal (or state in those states that still have it) meat inspection. If you wish to retail the meat yourself through a store or farmers’ outlet, the retail facility must be inspected and approved by a state or local agency. The Pennsylvania Bureau of Food Safety and Laboratory Services inspect Pennsylvania retail establishments.
- Facilities should be capable of aging the carcass for at least seven days to ensure maximum tenderness.
- Freezers should be capable of rapidly freezing large quantities of meat. Insist that your customers take their meat after it is frozen. Home freezers are not designed to freeze large amounts of meat, and slow freezing can adversely affect the final quality of the meat. Meat can spoil in a home freezer (if large amounts are piled in the freezer, the meat freezes on the outside and insulates packages of meat on the inside, allowing spoilage in the center).
- Packaging should be done with airtight, high-quality freezer paper that is permanently marked with the name of the cut, date packaged, and customer name.

- Current technology should be used if possible. New developments such as electrical stimulation ensure maximum tenderness.

Location

The processing plan should be convenient to your farm and your customers.

Relationships

- You should have a good working relationship with the meat processor. Make sure you both understand what is expected of each other, and that you are both giving the same information to the customer. Decide who should obtain the cutting instructions. Become familiar with the order forms and cutting methods of the meat processor.
- The people at the meat plant should be polite, personable, and willing to answer consumer questions.
- Decide who is going to explain to consumers that they are paying for hanging carcass weight, and that a normal cutting loss is at least 25 to 30 percent of the hanging weight, depending on the degree of finish and the methods of cutting and trimming.

[Deciding What Products to Sell](#)

Consider the following factors when making a decision on what you will sell and how you will sell to your customer.



Selling by the half or quarter is a popular option for marketing meat.

Sides (half carcasses)

This is the most common and generally the most appealing way for you to sell beef (whole carcasses in the case of pork or lamb). However, a decreasing number of consumers can buy a side or even a quarter of beef at one time. Increasingly, families lack freezer storage for large quantities of frozen meat. Current trends indicate that people are eating out more often and

preparing fewer meals at home, especially meals such as roasts that require long preparation times. Offering lighter weight animals and wrapping cuts in smaller packages sometimes overcome these objections.

Quarters

Rather than selling individual front and hind quarters, some producers use a practice known as splitting sides. It involves an even division of steaks and roasts from the entire side. The conventional method of selling fronts and hinds often results in an excess of front quarters no

matter how inexpensively they are sold; grinding excess front quarters for hamburger can be a better alternative.

Bundles

In some areas, consumers find bundles are a good alternative to sides. They get a variety of cuts of uniform quality at an attractive price and have a smaller total cash outlay. Types of bundles could include (a) an economy pack that has most of its cuts from the chuck and round to provide more roasts than steaks or (b) a deluxe bundle that has most of its cuts from the loin and rib to provide more steaks than roasts. You and your meat cutter may need to experiment a while to find the feasibility, sizes, types and prices of bundles that generate uniform sales volume for all part of the carcass.

Specialty Products

A profitable direct marketing option could be the processing and selling of a specialty product. This might be nothing more than selling cull cows as hamburger or selling cull sows as whole hog sausage, or developing a special recipe for lamb bologna using cull ewes. This approach might be taken in conjunction with a more conventional approach of selling sides and quarters. Specialty products sometimes sell well at farmers' markets, especially after a reputation has been developed. In some cases, the entire production has been successfully marketed with this approach.



Specialty products can be produced to increase revenue from animals.

[Pricing](#)

A variety of pricing methods and factors should be considered. Be aware of current local prices of other producers and retailers, but remember that you are selling more than just a commodity. Other services and aspects of your product might include:

Processing costs

Charges currently vary from 40 cents to 50 cents per pound of carcass weight for cutting, wrapping, and freezing of beef and \$25 or more for each lamb or goat. Additional charges are sometimes added for making patties, sausage, smoking, or rendering lard. Not included in processing charges is the slaughtering fee that ranges from \$20 to \$40 per head, with the processor often keeping the hide. You and your processor decide whether these charges are included in your price.

Quality

Many factors influence the concept of quality. They could include increased freshness or increased tenderness or decreased fattiness. These qualities may be related to special practices used during aging and processing of the carcass, or because of particular genetics programs, or a freedom from antibiotics and feed additives.

Consumer information

You might provide advice on new uses for common cuts, improved cooking methods, new recipes, or information on cutting procedures that better fit the needs of a particular household.

Delivery

The convenience of having purchases delivered is very important to some consumers. You should consider adding delivery and other convenience costs into your pricing system.

Services

You might offer other services such as public speaking for community organizations. This is a good way to promote your product and inform potential customers of the positive aspects of eating red meat.

Integrity and dependability

Many people are willing to pay slightly more for products they know and trust. You may want to have them present when their meat is being cut and wrapped. Additionally, you might provide a list of all packages and contents in their order.

Comparison prices

You may wish to compare your prices and local retail prices. Tables 1, 2, and 3 have been provided for that purpose. You must remember these tables contain only averages; your values may be higher or lower than these because of the type of animal and cutting services involved. They will, however, give you a place to start and allow you to give an honest answer when asked for a comparison. The following example uses local prices and the calculated average retail price of beef obtained from the table below.

[Comparing Prices](#)

Comparing Prices

Item	Example Your Situation
Average Retail Price (Calculated) *	\$3.35
Cost of Harvesting (Per head)	\$30.00
Cost of Harvesting (Per lb. 30/600 lb)	\$.05
Cost of Processing	\$.45
Break-even prices (\$3.35 - \$3.50)	\$2.90

Calculated from reports produced by USDA's Economic Research Service in cooperation with the Livestock Marketing Information Center: October 2006-March 2007.

Using the above example, if you charged your customer \$2.90 per pound of carcass weight (plus processing costs), the consumer would be getting meat for a price equal to that available in the local retail store (not considering higher quality meat or services provided by you). On the other hand, you may wish to compare your alternative market prices in order to calculate what your break-even price would be.

Item	Example Your Situation
Live Weight	1,000 lb.
Live value per cwt	\$95.00
Carcass value per cwt (at 60%) $\$95.00/.60$	\$158.33
Advantage of selling direct $(\$290 - 158.33) \times 6$ cwt	\$790.02

You must then decide if this is enough of a premium to justify the extra time and effort involved in the freezer beef, pork, or lamb business. Consider other costs such as trucking for both the animals and meat. These costs are reduced by minimizing the trucking and carefully timing your deliveries.

Financing

Because a quarter or side of beef represents a sizable investment for most families, you may be required to wait for your money. Perhaps you want to avoid payment delays. Producers in some areas have been very innovative in respect to financing. One producer, for example, advertised for custom-feeding of freezer beef and encouraged owners to come to the farm once a month to view their steers. Owners began paying as soon as the feeder steer was purchased and continued monthly payments until the steer attained finish weight; at that time the steer and the processing charges were totally paid. Other producers have asked for a portion (up to one-third) of the total cost a month in advance, another portion when the meat is picked up, and the remainder a month later.

It is difficult to collect for a product that has been consumed. If you can't collect for your product, it doesn't matter what the potential profit might be. Some finance companies are willing to finance meat sales. When selecting one, you should consider whether the company upholds the image you are trying to maintain. You will need to develop a system that works for you. Try to find what works for others, adapt it to your situation, and improve on it.

Customers

Remember that customers make a business. A good philosophy is that the customer is always right. You should establish a policy for dealing with customer complaints. You will certainly have some. When they arise, you must listen to them carefully. It is generally a better policy to replace the meat than to refund the money. Dealing with customers directly takes a great deal of time and patience. Many of them know little about meat. Try to deal as fairly as possible and always give the customer the benefit of the doubt. You may find marketing directly to the consumer is a rewarding and profitable method of merchandising our livestock.

Worksheet for Estimating Retail Value of Beef Side

Table 1. worksheet for estimating the retail value of a beef side (300 lbs.)

Retail Cut	Pounds/side	Price/lb	Total \$
Round			
Round steak	20.4 X	\$_____	\$_____
Tip roast (or steak)	8.5 X	\$_____	\$_____
Rump roast (or steak)	6.4 X	\$_____	\$_____
Stew and ground beef	12.2 X	\$_____	\$_____
Fat and bone	20.8		
Loin			
Porterhouse and T-Bone	16.0 X	\$_____	\$_____
Sirloin steaks	20.0 X	\$_____	\$_____

Retail Cut	Pounds/side	Price/lb	Total \$
Stew and ground beef	2.4 X	\$ _____	\$ _____
Fat and bone	12.5		
Flank, Kidney, Fat and Hanging Tender			
Flank steak	1.7 X	\$ _____	\$ _____
Ground beef	7.4 X	\$ _____	\$ _____
Fat and suet	15.9 X	\$ _____	\$ _____
Rib			
Rib Steak	11.7 X	\$ _____	\$ _____
Rib Roast	6.0 X	\$ _____	\$ _____
Short ribs	2.3 X	\$ _____	\$ _____
Stew and ground beef	3.0 X	\$ _____	\$ _____
Fat and bone	5.6		
Chuck			
Blade roast	20.3 X	\$ _____	\$ _____
Arm pot roast	11.1 X	\$ _____	\$ _____
Cross rib pot roast	10.2 X	\$ _____	\$ _____
Stew and ground beef	15.9 X	\$ _____	\$ _____
Fat and bone	15.1		
Plate, Brisket, Shank			
Short ribs	11.2 X	\$ _____	\$ _____
Stew and ground beef	13.0 X	\$ _____	\$ _____
Fat and bone	17.1	\$ _____	\$ _____
Other			
Oxtail	1.6 X	\$ _____	\$ _____
Liver	5.0 X	\$ _____	\$ _____
Heart	2.0 X	\$ _____	\$ _____
Tongue	1.0 X	\$ _____	\$ _____
Retail Weight (excludes fat and bone)	218.3		
Total Retail Value			\$ _____
Retail Value/lb of Hanging Carcass (Total \$/300 lb.)			\$ _____

Summary of Cuts	Pounds
Roasts	81.5
Steaks	59.8
Ground beef	33.7
Stew	20.2
Misc.	23.1

Source: American Meat Institute and USDA

[Worksheet for Estimating Retail Value of Lamb Carcass](#)

Table 2. Worksheet for Estimating the Retail Value of a Lamb/Goat Carcass (55 lb.)

Retail Cut	Pounds/side	Price/lb	Total \$
Leg	13.2 X	\$_____	\$_____
Loin chops	4.4 X	\$_____	\$_____
Rack (rib)	3.9 X	\$_____	\$_____
Shoulder	11.0 X	\$_____	\$_____
Ground /goatlamb	9.4 X	\$_____	\$_____
Fat and bone	11.9		
Shrink	1.1		
Retail Weight (excludes fat and bone)	41.9		
Total Retail Value			\$_____
Retail Value/lb of Hanging Carcass Total \$/55 lb.)			\$_____
Summary of Cuts	Pounds		
Roasts	24.2		
Chops	8.3		
Ground /goatlamb	9.4		

Source: American Meat Institute and USDA

[Worksheet for Estimating Value of Pork Carcass](#)

Table 3. Worksheet for Estimating the Retail Value of a Pork Carcass (165 lb.)

Retail Cut	Pounds/Side	Price/lb.	Total \$
Ham			
Cured hams (2)	29.7 X	\$_____	\$_____
Loin			
Blade Roast	8.0 X	\$_____	\$_____
Center Chops	17.3 X	\$_____	\$_____
Sirloin Roast	5.6 X	\$_____	\$_____
Side			
Cured Bacons (2)	18.6 X	\$_____	\$_____
Spare ribs	6.4 X	\$_____	\$_____
Shoulder			
Blade Roast	7.3 X	\$_____	\$_____

Retail Cut	Pounds/Side	Price/lb.	Total \$
Blade Steaks	4.4 X	\$ _____	\$ _____
Arm Roast	7.7 X	\$ _____	\$ _____
Various			
Trimming for Sausage	20.8 X	\$ _____	\$ _____
Miscellaneous			
Neck Bones, Feet	3.5 X	\$ _____	\$ _____
Fat, Skin, Bone	32.7		
Shrink	3.5		
Retail Weight (excludes fat and bone)	128.8		
Total Retail Value			\$ _____
Retail Value/lb of Hanging Carcass (Total \$/165 lb.)			\$ _____

Summary of Cuts	Pounds
Cured Pork	48.3
Roasts	28.3
Chops and Steaks	21.5
Misc.	9.9
Sausage	20.8

Source: American Meat Institute and USDA

[Marketing Lamb and Goat for Holidays](#)

Throughout the year, lamb and goat is often the main course at holiday celebrations for many people. This creates an excellent opportunity for sheep and meat goat producers to plan their breeding seasons so that they can market their lambs or kids at the proper size for these holidays. The United States currently has a population that varies greatly in their religious beliefs and in their ethnic backgrounds. According to data from the 2000 National Survey of Religious Identification and the 2000 American Religious Identity Survey, 76% identified themselves as Christian, 1.3% Jewish, and .5% Islamic. Data also showed that from 1990 to 2000, Islamic identification increased by 109%.

An important consideration when marketing lambs and goats for ethnic markets is the weight and sex of the animal and the method in which the meat is harvested such as Halal (Islamic) or Kosher (Jewish). Halal refers to foods that are considered permitted or lawful in the Muslim Qu'ran. These foods, and in this case animals, must be treated with respect and be well cared for. When the animal is harvested, the jugular vein is cut and the blood from the animal is allowed to

drain. (Muslims are not allowed to consume blood or blood byproducts.) The animal is also blessed at the time of slaughter.

Lambs and kids designated for the ethnic market can be sold at auction or they can be sold directly to the consumer. Keep in mind that state laws prohibit a producer from selling meat unless the animal was processed in a USDA inspected facility. Therefore, the lambs and kids should be sold live or they should be delivered to a processing facility. One point to make is that holidays vary in when they will occur each year. Some holidays follow the Julian or solar calendar, which allows them to occur at the same time or at approximately the same time each year. The Julian calendar is followed by most of the western part of the world. Muslim holidays will follow a lunar calendar which is dictated by the moon. This calendar is about 11 days shorter than the Julian calendar. Jewish holidays occur at the same time each year on a Jewish calendar. This calendar is also of a different length than the Julian calendar.

The following information discusses some of the holidays that feature lamb or goat meat and points out the sizes and sexes that should be sold for these markets. A table with holiday dates can be found after the holiday descriptions.

[Christian Holidays](#)

Western or Roman Easter

This holiday is a celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ three days after his death from crucifixion. Lambs marketed for this holiday should be milk fed and weigh between 30 and 45 pounds. They should also be nicely conditioned, but not excessively fat. The preferred size of goat for this holiday is a milk fed kid that weighs between 20 and 40 pounds: 30 pounds is considered optimum. These kids should carry some condition or fat to reach the prime price categories. Kids that weigh 40 to 50 pounds are often acceptable, but may have a price discount for their larger size. Kids that weigh less than 20 pounds are often thin and are not as acceptable to buyers.

Eastern or Greek (Orthodox) Easter

This holiday also celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but the time is calculated a bit differently and so the holiday often occurs about one to two weeks following the Western Easter celebration. Ideal size for lambs and goats is slightly heavier than the Western Easter at 40 to 55 pounds for lambs and 25 to 50 pounds for kids. Both should also be milk fed.

Christmas

Christmas is the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. Lambs and kids should both be milk fed. At this time of year, milk fed lambs and kids are at a premium because ewes and does must breed outside of the typical breeding season. Ideal weights for lambs are 40 to 60 pounds and under 50 pounds for kids.

[Islamic Holidays](#)

Eid ul Adha - The Festival of Sacrifice

Eid ul Adha is a celebration that commemorates the Prophet Ibrahim (renamed Abraham) who was willing to sacrifice his son Ismail for Allah. Animals that are sacrificed for this celebration must be Halal. The sacrificed animal is often shared with extended family members and some may be given away to the needy. Many Muslims will look for an animal that is blemish free. In other words, the animal should not have been docked or castrated and if the animal has horns, the horns should not be broken. In addition, the animal should not have open wounds, torn ears, or be lame. Some Muslims find animals acceptable if they have been castrated with a burdizzo or if the castration wound has completely healed. Heavier lambs and goats are preferred for this holiday since the meat is shared. Yearling lambs and goats are preferred, but older sheep and goats are also acceptable. Weights of lambs and goats should be heavier than 60 pounds.

Muharram - Islamic New Year

The Islamic New Year is the first day of the Muslim calendar. Mutton is often served as the main course for this holiday meal. There is no preferred weight for this holiday, although animals should appear healthy.

Mawlid al Nabi

Mawlid al Nabi celebrates the birth of the Prophet Muhammad, the founder of Islam. There is no specific recommended size for lambs and goats for this holiday.

Ramadan

Ramadan is the start of a month of fasting. It occurs in the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. During this holy month, Muslims will fast (do not eat or drink) from sunrise to sunset. This holiday is in celebration of the revealing of the Qu'ran. It is based on the sighting of the new moon and occurs when the "White Thread Becomes Distinct From the Black Thread," a poetic description of the coming of a new moon. Based on the lunar calendar, this holiday moves backwards 11 or 12 days each Julian calendar year. Ramadan is a time for Muslims to renew themselves spiritually, devote time to Alla, and practice self control. The ideal lamb and goat should be weaned and have all their milk teeth. Lambs should weigh 60 to 80 pounds while goats have an ideal weight of 60 pounds, but weights of 45 to 120 pounds are acceptable. It does not matter if male goats have been castrated. Animals should not be too fat for this holiday. This holiday is also an excellent time to cull older animals. Both sheep and goats may bring very good prices at this time. However, these animal need to be unblemished.

Eid al Fitr - The Breaking of the Ramadan Fast

The end of the Ramadan fasting period occurs when the next new moon is sighted. For the next three days, Muslims celebrate Eid al Fitr. The celebration is a time for families be thankful for their many joys and blessings. Consistent with the month of Ramadan, lambs should weigh 60 to 80 pounds and goats should weigh 60 pounds.

[Jewish Holidays](#)

Pesach - Passover

Pesach or Passover occurs on the 14th day of Nissan, which is the first month of the Jewish calendar. The holiday represents God passing over the houses of the Jews when the first born Egyptian sons were killed. Pesach also refers to the lamb that was sacrificed in the Temple. Therefore, lamb is often served for this holiday. Lambs should be milk fed, fat and weigh between 30 and 55 pounds.

Rosh Hashanah - Jewish New Year

Rosh Hashanah means head of the year in Hebrew and occurs on the first and second days of Tishri. Tishri is the seventh month of the Jewish calendar. During Rosh Hashanah, Jews will review their past year and make plans for changes in the coming year. This would be similar to how many people make New Year's resolutions. The front quarters of lambs weighing 60 to 100 pounds are preferred for this holiday celebration.

Chanukkah

Chanukkah is an eight day festival that is often known as the festival of the lights. It begins on the 25th day of the Jewish month of Kislev. It is known as a celebration that marks the rededication of the Temple when it was taken back from the Greeks. Tradition says that at that time there was very little oil left to burn in the candelabrum known as the menorah. Most of the oil had been defiled and was not usable. Only enough oil was available to burn for one day, although the menorah burned for eight days, the length of time that it took to produce new oil for the menorah. Therefore, the eight day festival of Chanukkah commemorates this miracle. Meat consumed during this festival should be prepared through Kosher slaughtering. Young milk fed lambs and kids are preferred.

[Information Sources](#)

Many sources are available to find information on holidays as well as holiday dates. Knowing these dates from year to year is very helpful in planning for breeding times so that you can sell the appropriate size animal for a particular market.

<http://extension.psu.edu/courses/meat-goat/marketing>

Markets for Goat Meat

Goat meat is unique in flavor and palatability. It is leaner than many other red meats and usually less tender. However, its leanness has a place in today's market for meats with less fat. Cabrito stands for roasted meat from goat kids 4-8 weeks of age. Its main use is for barbecue meat, and it is highly sought after by certain ethnic groups. Chevon is meat from goat kids 48-60 pounds or 6-9 months old. Of these two types, cabrito is the most tender. The higher collagen content and lower solubility of goat meat, compared with lower levels of the same features in lamb, reduce the overall palatability and tenderness of goat meat. Breeding and slaughtering techniques appear to be key in improving the tenderness factor of goat meat.

Marketing options include direct marketing off the farm, supplying goat meat for specialty markets (particularly holiday sales to various ethnic groups), or producing kids for commercial marketing firms. Success is often a reflection of how well a producer tends to all aspects of breeding, health, management, and marketing. All these factors have their respective roles in producing and marketing a quality product.

Along with direct marketing to ethnic groups, there are two other potential niche markets for goat meat:

- targeted markets serving health-conscious consumers wanting lowfat diets and
- the restaurant trade serving ethnic or gourmet foods featuring goat meat.

These markets are largely untapped and may provide real opportunities, especially for producers within close proximity to the market.