

Narrowed Niche Markets in the Ohio Lambing Industry: An Agricultural Alternative

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Introduction

In recent years, the stagnant market prices for lambs has initiated the rise in alternative market outlets, as producers look to increase their profits in the industry.

“What exactly is Niche Marketing? Why is it important?”

Niche marketing is targeted marketing:

- Producers choose to focus on one specific section of the market.
- Concentrated efforts in a small, specific, and well-defined segment of the consumer population.
- Well-designed niche markets are made to withstand the competition of mass markets within the same industry.

Producers have to learn **how** and **when** to promote their product in a niche market, or they miss the opportunity to receive the maximum market price when selling their animals.

The top niche lamb markets currently in Ohio are the production of club, holiday, and hot house lambs.

Club Lambs

Club lambs are terminal projects that are grown to potential, shown, and harvested following a live lamb show.

“Club lamb exhibited by Bethany Starlin, 2017 Hocking County Fair”



While club lambs are traditionally used in the show industry, they are often have **greater value** than lambs raised for the meat market. Due to the high premium that club lambs and their genetics offer, this niche market is a profitable one to enter.

However, it is also an extremely competitive market.

Emphasis and education need to be placed on the following aspects **prior** to entering the club lamb industry:

- Management
- Nutrition
- Health
- Markets

Holiday Lambs

Holiday lambs are those lambs that are produced and sold in a timely manner to supply the increased demand during the holidays.

Throughout the year, lamb is a part of the main course for many celebrated holidays. Those who are knowledgeable in the timing of breeding seasons have the opportunity to market their lambs in this **unique** and **profitable** niche market.

Biggest holidays where lamb is consumed based on ethnic background:

Christian holidays:

- Western/Roman Easter
- Eastern/Greek (Orthodox) Easter
- Christmas

Islamic holidays:

- Eid ul Adha – The Festival of Sacrifice
- Muharram – Islamic New Year
- Mawlid al Nabi – Birthday of the Islamic prophet Muhammad
- Ramadan Eid al Fitr – The breaking of the Ramadan Fast

Jewish holidays:

- Pesach- Passover
- Rosh Hashanah – Jewish New Year
- Chanukkah – Hanukkah

The price and supply of slaughter lambs tend to peak in the second quarter, due to an increased demand around the Easter and Passover holiday season.

The specific requirements for slaughter differ, based on the religious practices that they adhere to.

“Holiday Calendar for Marketing Sheep and Goats⁵”

Holiday	Religion	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Type of Lamb Wanted
Eid al Adha begins (Festival of Sacrifice)	Muslim	21-Jan	10-Jan	31-Dec	20-Dec	9-Dec	60-80 lbs
Passover begins	Jewish	24-Apr	13-Apr	3-Apr	20-Apr	9-Apr	30-55 lbs, milk fed and fat
Western/Roman Easter	Christian	27-Mar	16-Apr	8-Apr	23-Mar	12-Apr	30-45 lbs, milk fed and fat
Eastern/Greek Easter	Orthodox	1-May	23-Apr	8-Apr	27-Apr	19-Apr	40-55 lbs, milk fed and fat
Rosh Hashanah begins	Jewish	4-Oct	22-Sep	12-Sep	29-Sep	19-Sep	Forequarters from weaned lambs, 60-110 lbs
Ramadan begins (Month of Fasting)	Muslim	4-Oct	24-Sep	13-Sep	2-Sep	22-Aug	60-80 lbs
Eid al Fitr (Ramadan ends)	Muslim	3-Nov	24-Oct	13-Oct	2-Oct	21-Sep	60-80 lbs
Christmas	Christian	25-Dec	25-Dec	25-Dec	25-Dec	25-Dec	milk fed

Hot House Lambs

A hot house lamb is a milk-fed lamb that is usually born out-of-season, in the fall or early winter, and raised indoors.

Hot house lambs tend to be marketed from 25-60 pounds (live weight) and after weaning, meaning **reduced feed costs** for the producer.

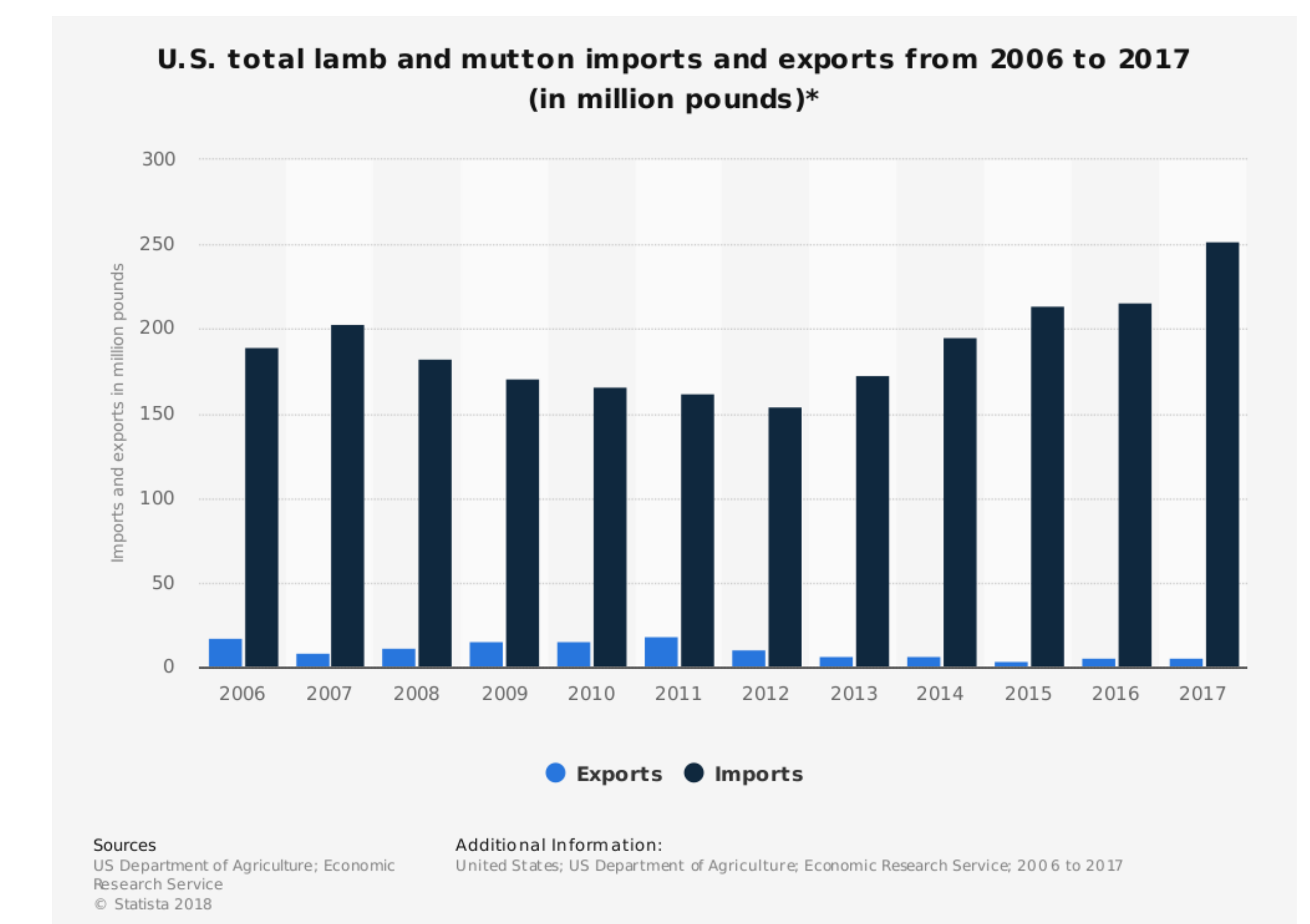
Considerations for Hot House Lambs:

- Lambing rates may be lower than regular seasonal breeders
- Greater replacement rate of the ewe flock
- Labor is required year-round, proper housing needs to be put in place, winter health programs are critical
- CIDRs or other management systems may need to be considered when practicing out-of-season lambing

Advantages of Hot House Lambs:

- Market prices are higher for out-of-season lambs and a premium is paid for smaller lambs
- Labor may be more readily available in the winter, due to lack of field work and parturition of other animal species
- Producers can graze more ewes on pasture during the spring because there is less competition due to the absence of lambs

“U.S. Total Lamb and Mutton Imports and Exports, 2006-2017: The United States imported 252 million pounds of mutton and lamb meat in 2017”



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