

U. S. Sheep Inventory 2006: Some "Hair Raising" Statistics

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Exciting sheep inventory news was announced to the industry in late January by the National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS), USDA. Sheep and lamb numbers had increased for the second consecutive year. This is the first year-to-year increase in total sheep numbers in the United States during the last eighteen years.

A closer look at sheep raising statistics reveals some interesting trends. The top-five sheep raising states (TX, WY, CA, SD, MT) have 20.7 percent of U.S. flocks and 46.1 percent of the total sheep inventory as of January, 2006. During the past two years these five states have experienced a slight decline in both total sheep and breeding age ewes.

Texas leads all sheep states with 17.5 percent of the national inventory. A recent market report by Producers Livestock Auction in San Angelo shows that, during the past ten years, sheep sales at San Angelo have declined approximately 50 percent while Texas breeding ewe numbers fell 36 percent.

The NASS, USDA news release in January reported there were 700 new sheep flocks added during the past two years providing a national flock count of 68,280. So where have the new flocks been established and where is the increase in sheep numbers occurring?

A consolidated state report by NASS named the "Other States" (AL, AK, AR, DE, FL, GA, HI, LA, MS, NC, SC) along with New England (CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT) and Ohio and Pennsylvania increased flock numbers by 200, 100 and 200 each, respectively, during the past two years. Total flock numbers in the top five states declined by 500 flocks during the same period. The Other State region accounted for 18 percent of the breeding ewe number increase in the past two years. Over the past ten years the same region has increased breeding ewe numbers by 138 percent while the national ewe inventory dropped by 29 percent. States (MO, KY, TN, VA) that border Southern and Southeastern regions have increased total sheep numbers by an average of 26 percent during the last two years.

Further probing into the numbers and regional trends reveal some "hair raising" statistics!! Recent estimates of the woolless sheep inventory in Texas range from 110,000 to 120,000 head. Registered breed data compiled by Dr. Jim Morgan in 2005 show that Texas has more than 200 registered hair sheep flocks with 37 percent of all Dorper flocks in the U.S. located in Texas. A close second in woolless breed flock numbers is the Other State category. Texas and Other States account for 42.5 percent of all registered hair sheep flocks in

the United States. States bordering the Southern and Southeastern regions (MO, KY, TN, VA) have 18 percent of the registered hair sheep flocks, with Katahdins accounting for 21 percent of the total. Missouri has the highest total number of registered Katahdin flocks. Currently the total number of Dorper and Katahdin registered flocks exceed 1000.

A closer look at breed registrations in the United States is available from the annual summary provided by The Banner magazine. Since 2000, hair sheep breed registrations have increased by 83.5 percent while all other breeds have declined by 14 percent. Dorper and Katahdin registrations accounted for 92 percent of the 12,926 hair sheep registered in 2005 which represented 15.6 percent of total breed registrations.

Growth of woolless sheep raising in the United States has been subtle yet real with a strong demand for seedstock that commonly exceeds the available supply. The hair sheep inventory change represents the only continuous growth segment of the United States sheep industry during the past eighteen years. National sheep industry news showing two consecutive years of growth in total sheep numbers is strongly supported by an expanding hair sheep landscape. This is an exciting "hair raising" statistic!

PHOTO CONTEST, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

- Provide the following information in an email or in a file on the disk or CD:
- 1. Title of photo
- 2. Category (from the seven listed above) into which it is being entered
- 3. Photographer's name

- 4. Mailing address
- 5. Phone number
- 6. E-mail address
- 7. Approximate date photograph was taken
- 8. Approximate location of where photograph was taken

Questions? Please call or email KHSI Operations at khsint@earthlink.net or 479-444-8441. We do want to acknowledge that we used ASI photo contest guidelines as the basis for the KHSI contest.