

# Selecting and Feeding your Market Project Lamb



Marc R. Horney, Ph.D.  
Natural Resources Management and Range Livestock Advisor  
University of California Cooperative Extension  
Colusa, Glenn and Tehama Counties

## Step 1: PLAN AHEAD!

What are your **targets**?

Finished weight: \_\_\_\_\_ lbs

ADG: \_\_\_\_\_ lbs/day

Fat thickness: \_\_\_\_\_ inches

Loineye area: \_\_\_\_\_ sq. inches

Leg Score: \_\_\_\_\_ (1 to 5)

Conformation: \_\_\_\_\_

Structural Soundness: \_\_\_\_\_

## Step 2: Start with the right weight

How much should a project lamb weigh if purchased 90 days before the fair?

\*Target weight = 120 lbs

Days to Fair = 90

ADG = 0.6 lbs/day

$$0.6 \text{ lbs/day} \times 90 \text{ days} = 54 \text{ lbs TG}$$

$$120 \text{ lbs} - 54 \text{ lbs} = 66 \text{ lbs}$$

**Ideal weight range: 66 lbs  $\pm$ 5 lbs**

## \*Determining Target Weight

Is 120 lbs the correct target finished weight for every lamb?

**NO!**

Correct finished weight is the point at which a lamb's backfat thickness is likely to reach about 0.20 inches.

How do you know?

Rule of thumb:

Have a look at the lamb's parents.

Frame Size	Dam's weight	Sire's weight	Market weight
	lbs	lbs	lbs
Small	<200	<250	90-115
Medium	200-250	250-300	115-130
Large	>250	>300	130-150

## Average Daily Gain

Range: 0.3 to 1.0 lbs/day

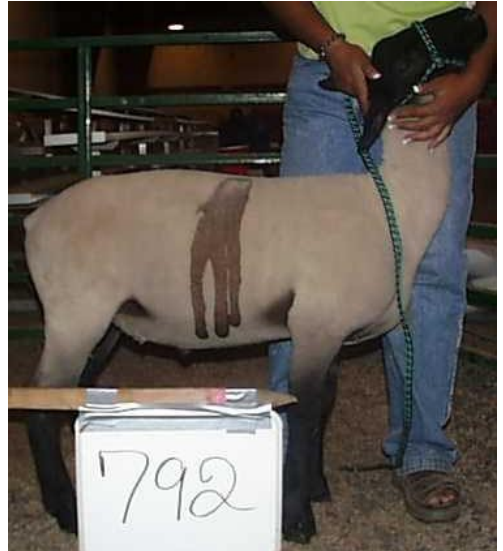
Normal: ~0.6 lbs/day

## Step 3: Pick a quality lamb

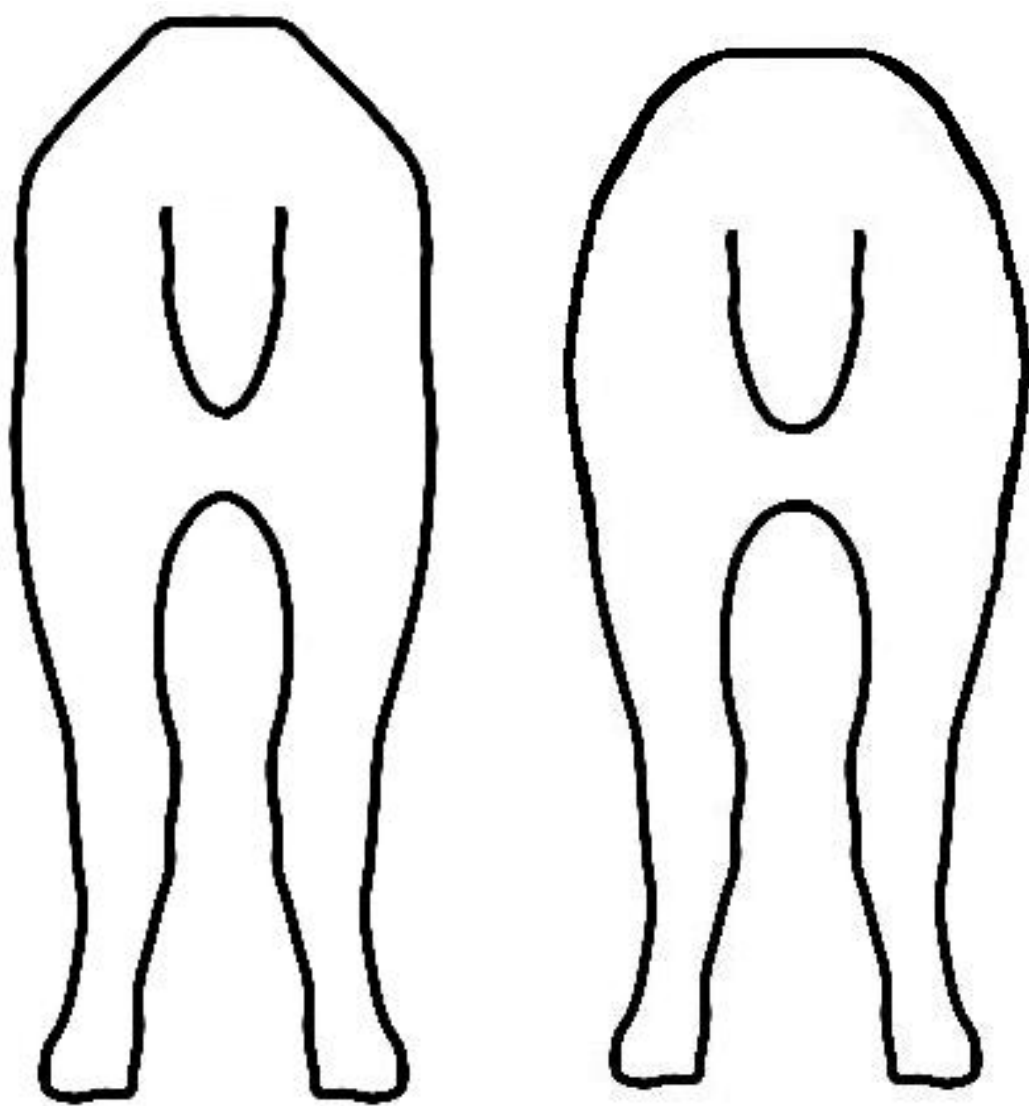
4 things to look for:

1. Muscling
2. Fat
3. Conformation
4. Structural Soundness  
(feet & legs)

# Muscling



Which has more?





# Fat



Which has more?

# Conformation

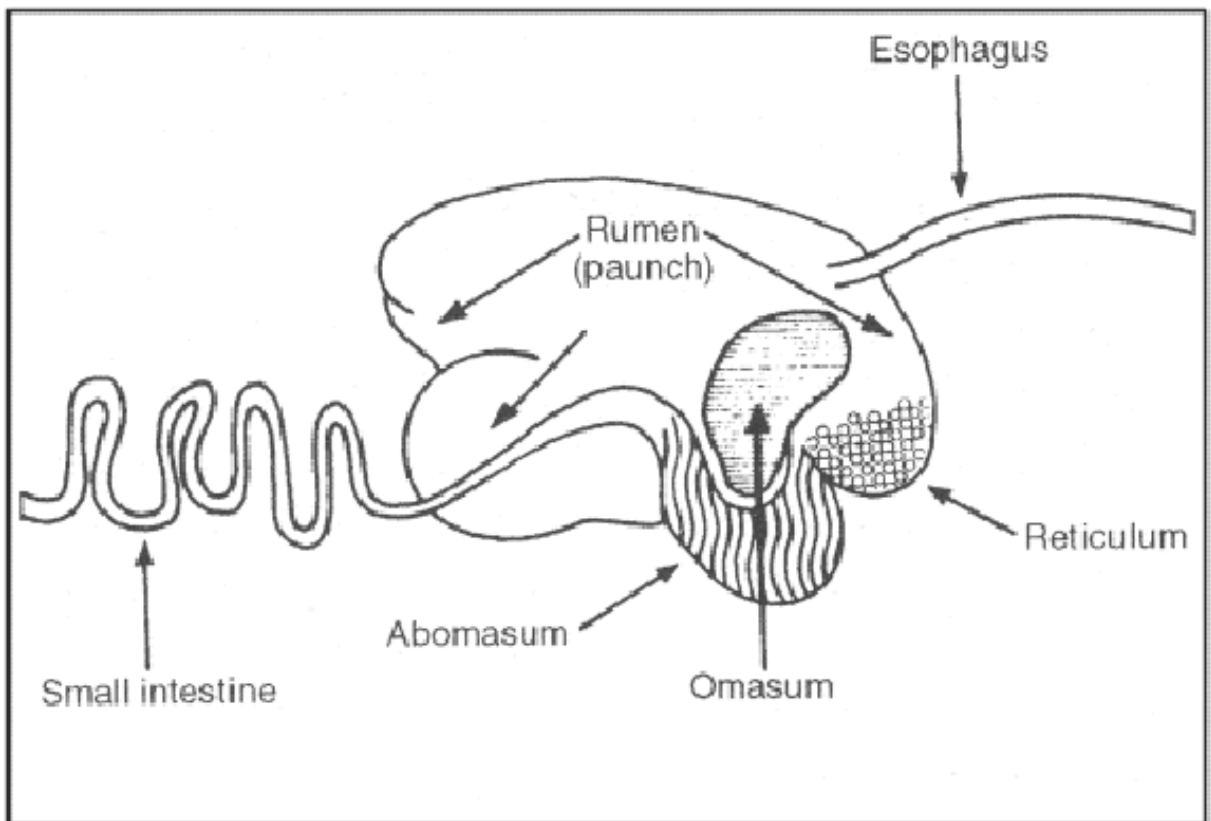


# Structural Soundness

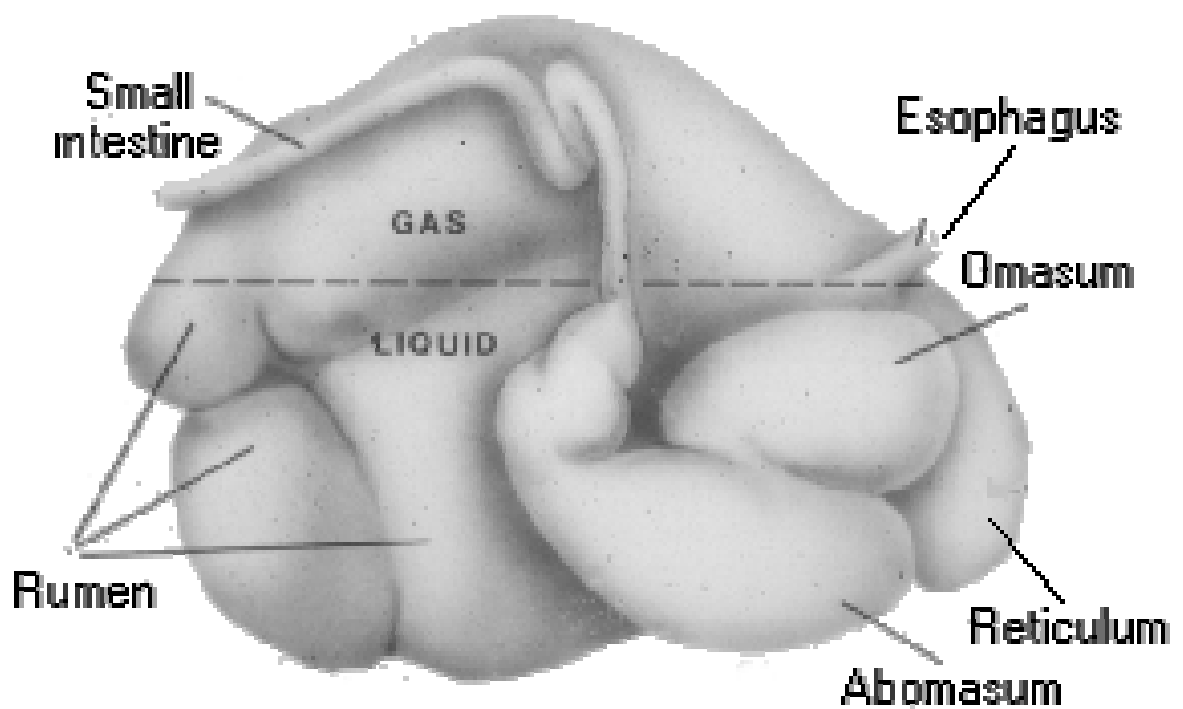


# Nutrition

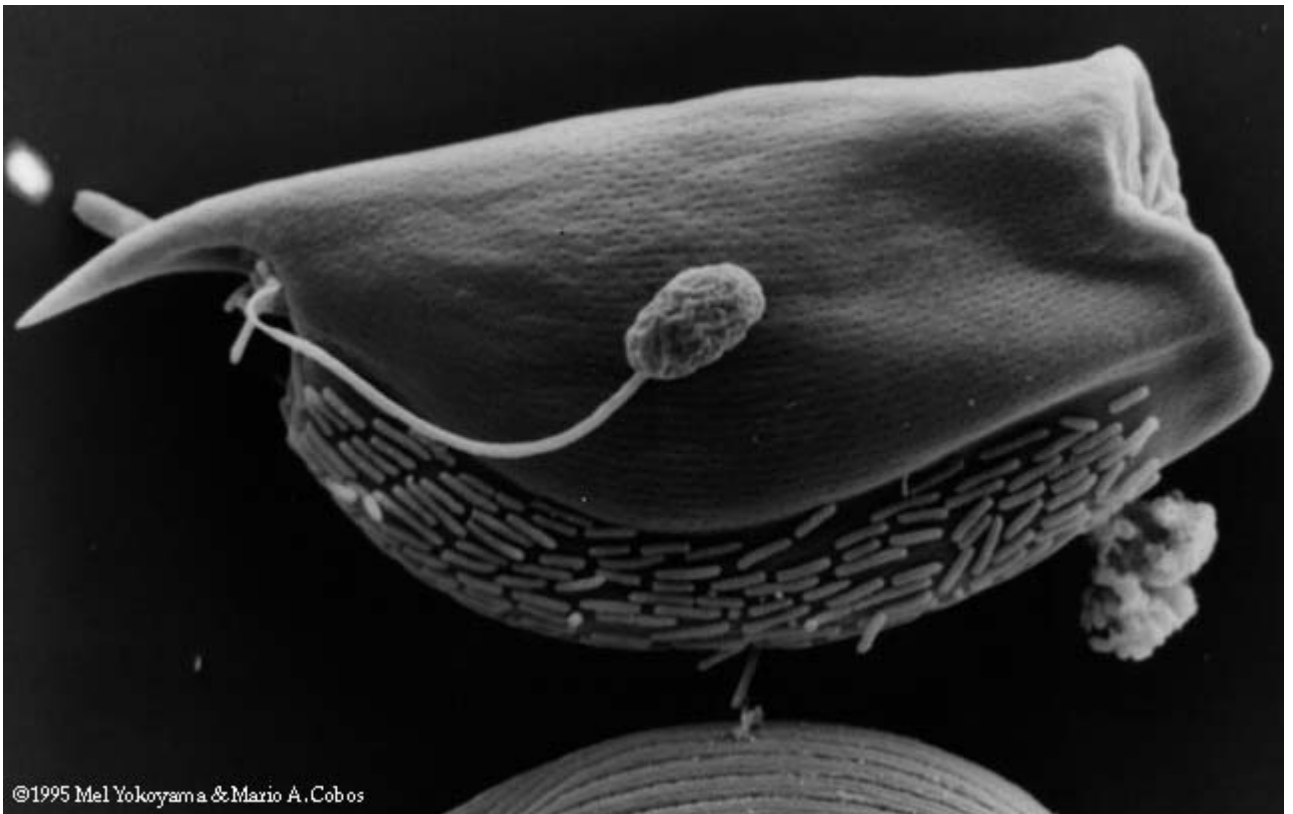
# The Ruminant Digestive System



# The "Reticulo-Rumen"

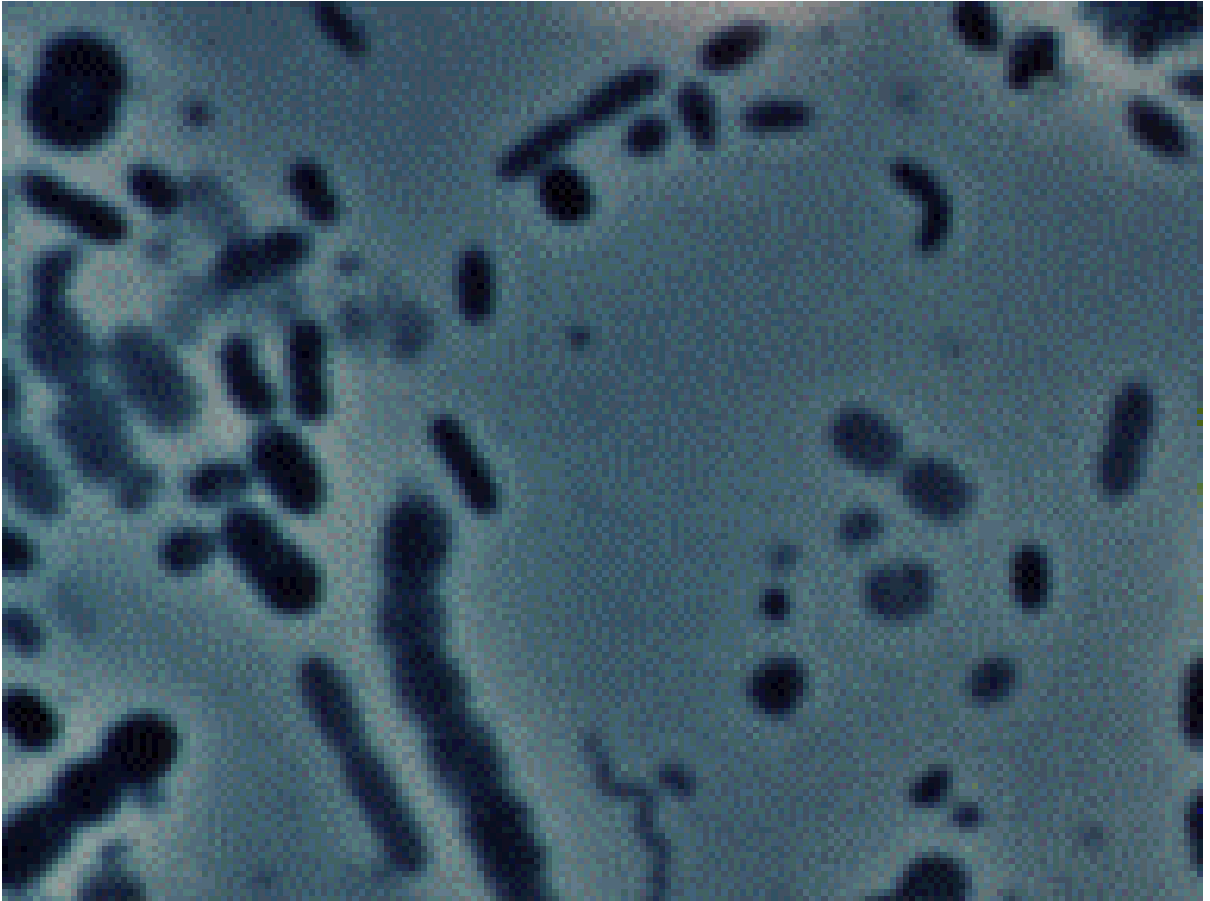


# Micro'Moo'ry



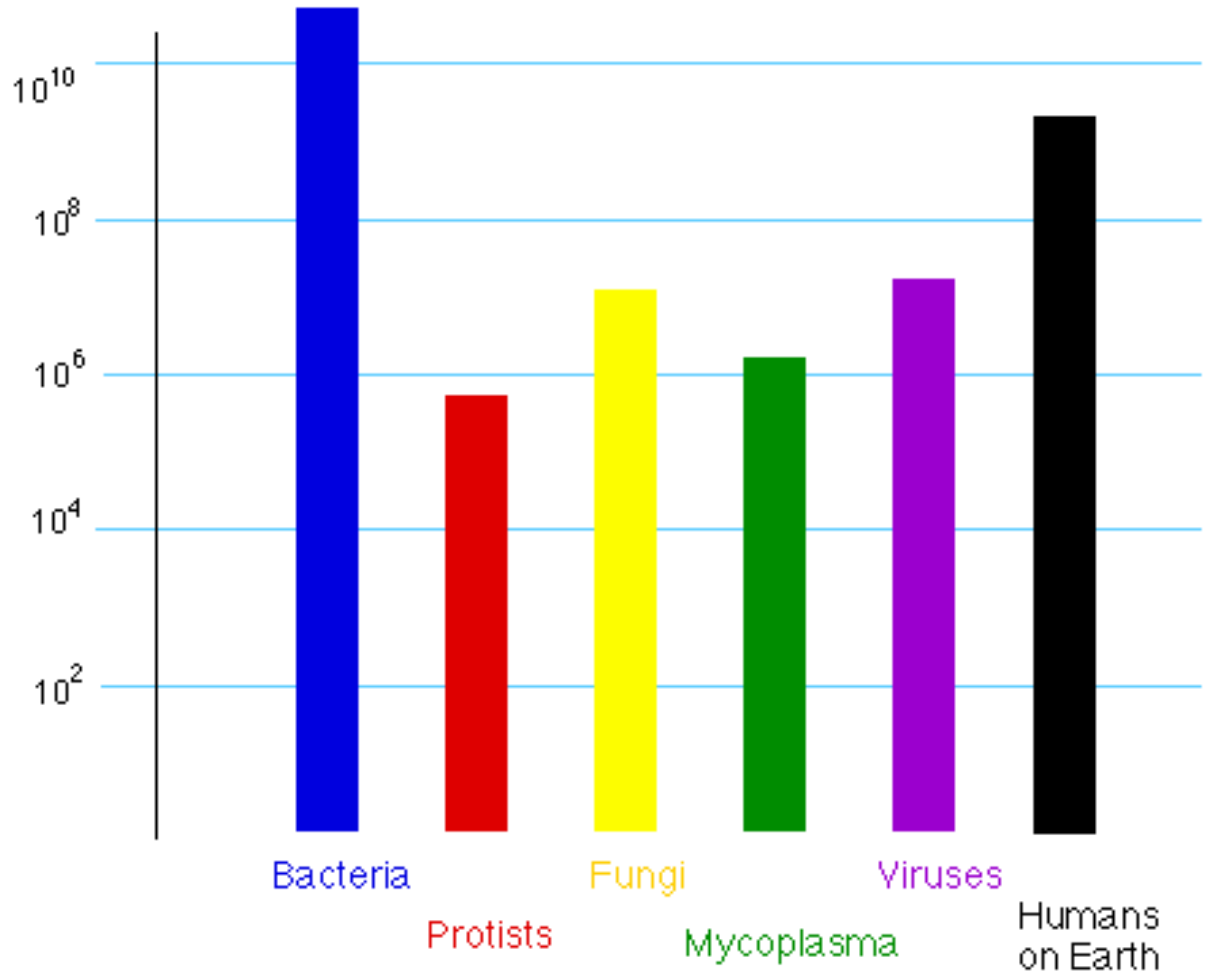
Rumen protozoa with fungi attached to side and bacteria lining its underside

# Cellulose-digesting Bacteria





## Numbers of Different Rumen Microbes



Data courtesy of Mel Yokoyama, Michigan State University

## Step 4: Feed correctly

How?

1. According to manufacturer's instructions
2. With unlimited cool, clean water and shade
3. Without adding too much "extra" stuff

Will my lamb grow better if I use a "show feed"?

Probably not.

## Know Your Feeds!

*Roughages* are feeds that are made up of plant fiber (leaves, stems and fruit pulp). Roughages are often low to moderate in energy and protein.

- Hays & Straws
- Pasture & Green Chop (forages fed fresh-cut)
- Haylages (hay crops preserved wet through fermentation)
- Pulps (beet & citrus)

*Concentrates* are feeds that are low in fiber and high in energy or protein concentration.

- Energy Concentrates
  - ✓ Grains: corn, barley, sorghum, oats, bakery waste, milling by-products
  - ✓ Fruits, roots and nuts: apples, citrus, potatoes, discarded nut crops
- Protein Concentrates
  - ✓ Oilseed meals: linseed meal, cottonseed meal, soybean meal, sunflower meal
  - ✓ Animal byproducts: meat & bone meal, blood meal, fish meal

*Supplements* have high concentrations of single nutrients that are added to fortify feeds.

- Vitamins - usually added in commercial premixes
- Minerals - limestone (calcium), ammonium phosphate (phosphorous)

*Additives* are put in feeds to give them special properties, such as offering greater resistance to illness.

- Antibiotics

## Acidosis

Question: In the wild, do sheep eat a lot of rolled corn and barley?

So what happens when you allow ruminants to eat too much grain?

BIG tummyache

We call what causes that tummyache "acidosis".

What does it mean?

That lots of starch-eating bacteria are having a party in the rumen - producing acids as waste from the starch they consume.

## Acidosis

What can you do?

1. Make increases in grain **SLOWLY**. No more than a 1/4 lb every other day.
2. Do **NOT** let lambs skip eating some of their grain one day and eat the leftovers plus the next day's ration together.
3. Split grain into at **LEAST 2** separate feedings (am/pm). On high-grain rations, 3 feedings can be better.

# Market Animal Purchase Information Form

**Member Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Club/Chapter:** \_\_\_\_\_

Species: Beef / Goat / Sheep / Swine

Sex: M / F

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Purchase: \_\_\_\_\_

Sire Breed: \_\_\_\_\_ Dam Breed: \_\_\_\_\_

Performance information available on parents or other progeny of parents?: Y / N

Permanent ID # (if any): \_\_\_\_\_

Birth Weight: \_\_\_\_\_

Purchase Weight: \_\_\_\_\_

Hip Height: \_\_\_\_\_

Vaccinations: \_\_\_\_\_

Castrated?: Y / N

Implanted? (cattle only): Y / N

If "Yes", approximate date calf was implanted: \_\_\_\_\_

Herd/Flock Health Programs: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

## SELLER INFORMATION

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_