

## » **Benchmarks for Success**


Financial success in the sheep industry largely depends upon optimizing the income from the sale of lamb – most dollars coming in relative to expenses. The most critical bottom-line number is the total pounds of lamb sold as compared to ewes on inventory. This means the ewe must be bred, maintain the pregnancy with multiple fetuses through parturition and the producer has the ability to sell a live lamb to the next link in the market chain. Managers might benefit from some benchmarks or targets to hit at each of these junctures, knowing that achievable levels will vary with types of operations, geographic locations and climate.

The number of ewes bred in the first 50 days of the breeding season relative to the number of ewes on inventory is termed the breeding percent. This number will be affected by culling/selection practices, nutrition, genetics and how they match the locale, season of breeding and ram fertility.

The number of lambs conceived will be a factor of genetics, body-condition score change during the last 30 days before breeding, season of the year, and to a lesser degree, selection.

Maintaining the pregnancy will have a lot to do with disease management, nutrition and handling.

The lambing percent is the number of live lambs born as compared with the ewes on inventory. To keep those lambs alive during the first two to three weeks of life is a factor of managing habitat, proper nutrition, health management and handling.

The percent lamb crop is the number of lambs marketed as compared to the number of ewes on inventory. In order to get the lambs from the first two to three weeks of life up to marketing size requires management of predators, proper nutrition and health management. Traditionally, we have worried about individual weight of weaned lambs. However, the total pounds of lamb the ewe produced is much more important to the profit picture as multiples will add more total weight than trying to produce a bigger single. 

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### THE FOLLOWING CHART SUGGESTS SOME BENCHMARKS WHICH MIGHT SERVE AS USEFUL TARGETS

	<b>Small Scale</b> (less than 200 ewes)	<b>Medium Scale</b> (200-750 ewes)	<b>Large and Extensive</b> (western range operation)
<b>Breeding Percent</b>	100	98	96
<b>Lambing Percent</b> Mature Ewe lambs	240 160	210 140	180 120
<b>Percent of live lambs born that live until 1 month</b>	95	95	95
<b>Percent lamb crop weaned</b>	215	185	155

Assumes death loss of lambs born to ewe lambs is 10 percent (vs. 5 percent if born to mature ewes)