

Marketing Lamb and Goat for Holidays

A listing of dates of various ethnic holidays with descriptions of the holidays, and the type of goat required.



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.



Many holiday meals are based on traditional religious practices.

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



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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.



Lamb and goat are often served at Easter dinners.

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.



Muslims celebrate the festival of sacrifice to commemorate the Prophet Ibrahim.

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 Allah, 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 animals 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 to 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 firstborn 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 Americans 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. The table below lists the dates of various holidays from 2016 through 2019.

Resources

Information for this fact sheet was taken from the following resources:

- [Sheep and Goat Marketing Information](#)
- [Interfaith Calendar Definitions](#)
- [Religion Facts](#) website
- [Ethnic Holiday Demand for Lamb and Goat Meat](#) document

Holiday Calendar for Marketing Sheep and Goats

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Holiday	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Eid ul Adha - Festival of Sacrifice	July 30-31	July 19-20	July 9-10	June 28-29	June 17-18
Islamic New Year	August 20	August 10	July 30	July 19	July 7
Passover/Pesach	April 8-16	March 27-April 4	April 15-22	April 5-12	April 22-30
Western Roman Easter	April 12	April 4	April 17	April 9	March 31
Orthodox Easter	April 19	May 2	April 24	April 16	May 5
Ramadan Month of Fasting	April 24-May 23	April 12-May 11	April 2-May 1	March 22-April 20	March 10-April 8
Eid-al-Fitr Ramadan Ends	May 23-24	May 12-13	May 2-3	April 21-22	April 9-10
Rosh Hashanah Jewish New Year	September 18-20	September 6-8	September 25-27	September 15-17	October 2-4
Mawlid al-Nabi Birth of the Prophet	October 29	October 19	October 8	September 27	September 15
Thanksgiving	November 26	November 25	November 24	November 23	November 28
Chanukkah	December 10-18	November 28-December 6	December 18-26	December 7-15	December 25-January 2
Christmas	December 25	December 25	December 25	December 25	December 25

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