

# Proper Handling of Market Lambs

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A market lamb class is best seen, and therefore, placed from further away rather than close up views and while handling. A common mistake made by many livestock judges is to get too close to the sheep, which results in them not clearly seeing each individual lamb simultaneously. Prior to lining up to handle, you must have a very good idea of how muscular each lamb is, if the lamb is correctly finished or if he appears too stale or too fat, and finally how we project him to measure thru his hip. The traits of balance, extension, and skeletal correctness will also be determined from a distant view. This is a habit that is vital to market lamb evaluation and judging success. You are only given 12-15 seconds per lamb to handle, so be sure you have a confident idea of what each lamb will offer muscle, length, and finish wise. This means you need to rely on your eyes from the outside, because in the heat of battle, it is easy to start manufacturing handling differences that may or may not be present. I also suggest going in front of the lambs to obtain an aerial view. This particular viewpoint assists in determining how powerful and fresh the sheep is on the top side of his skeleton, how mush indentation he shows in his fore rib, and finally how wide and youthful he is through his chest floor and rib cage.

1. Before handling a market lamb first take a step backwards from the lamb and view him from behind. During this, you should be evaluating the lamb for the following:

- Amount of top shape, dimension, and how tightly wedged in their shoulders are.
- How the lamb views in term of his hip construction
- How powerful legged and the depth with which he carries down
- How wide and square the lamb stands off of his rear skeleton

2. Next, start handling the lamb right behind his shoulder and progress back over his rack and loin. You should be measuring for muscle dimension and shape in these locations. You will also be determining for freshness, especially the fullness, squareness, and depth of the lamb's loin edge. Stale sheep will handle too sharp and rigid over their shoulder and their spine will feel pronounced from their shoulder back.

3. Then, with the tips of your fingers, gently feel the lamb's rib cage to detect fat deposition. Please do not fiercely rub the rib cage, because if we handle the lamb hard enough the ribs of any animal can be picked up on.

4. Next, take both your index and middle fingers and place them on the backside of the last rib on each side. Then extend both hands until your thumbs are placed on the hook bones. This will measure length of loin. Then replace where your thumbs are with you index and middle fingers and place your thumbs on the pin bones. This will measure the length and levelness of the lamb's hip.

5. Finally, position yourself on one side of the rear skeleton of the lamb. Using both of your hands, on the opposite side, grab the upper part of the leg with each hand (one from the front of the leg and one from the back of the leg), and measure the circumference of the leg. Also determine if the lamb tapers and how deep he carries thru his twist. Truly powerful sheep will not flatten nor taper in their lower leg.

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