LAMB MARKETING

Hill and Upland Livestock Production
Occasional Publication No. 10—British Society of Animal Production 1985
edited by T. J. Maxwell and R. G. Gunn

LAMB MARKETING IN HILL AND UPLAND FARMS

G. E. POLLOTT

Meat and Livestock Commission, PO Box 44, Bletchley, Milton Keynes MK2 2EF

The Meat and Livestock Commission recorded 112 upland and 43 hill farms in 1984 as part of its Flockplan scheme. The results from these farms have been used to examine various aspects of lamb marketing as practised on recorded flocks in Britain, including the effects of breed, system and physical environment on lamb sales.

Lamb sales accounted for 54% and 80% of gross returns in hill and upland flocks, respectively. Table 1 shows the main components of gross returns in upland and hill flocks.

TABLE 1
Components of gross returns from upland and hill flocks (£/ewe)

	Upland	Hill
Lamb sales and valuations	46.77	22.36
Wool sales	2.31	1.65
Ewe premium and LFA subsidy	9.62	12.36
Draft ewe sales	—	5.40
	58.70	41.77

Four different types of lambs were sold from these flocks, as shown in Table 2.

Finished lambs produced carcasses of 17.7 and 15.4 kg in weight from upland and hill flocks and thus averaged £2.01 and £2.03 per kg e.d.c.w. including variable premium. There was marked regional variation in both the weight of carcass produced per lamb and the price per kg received (Table 3) although the price per kg from hill flocks was less variable.

TABLE 2
The percentage of lambs reared and sale price per lamb for four types of lamb sold from upland and hill flocks

	Upland		Hill	
	%	£/lamb	%	£/lamb
Finished lambs	53	35.50	24	31.24
Store lambs	13	32.69	18	26.68
Breeding lambs	17	47.39	7	38.17
Other lambs	1	16.40	1	15.23

TABLE 3
Carcass weight, price and percentage of lambs reared as finished lambs from upland and hill flocks by region

	Upland			Hill		
	Av. weight (kg)	Price (£/kg)	%	Av. weight (kg)	Price (£/kg)	%
Scotland	19.6	1.91	50	17.0	2.00	12
Northern	19.0	2.00	50	16.0	2.02	15
South West	19.0	2.03	33	—	—	—
Midlands	17.3	2.03	24	—	—	—
Wales	16.6	2.05	48	13.7	1.99	45

Regional variation in the pattern of finished lamb sales was also apparent. Lambs from Welsh upland and hill flocks were sold earlier than in other areas although in upland flocks the proportion of the flock sold as finished lambs was similar for Wales, Scotland and Northern England (Table 3).

TABLE 4
The increase in percentage gross returns from a 5% increase in some components of output

	Upland	Hill
Carcass weight	2	1
Price/kg	2	1
Rearing %	4	3

Opportunities for increasing output by a 5% improvement in certain components of lamb output are shown in Table 4. A 5% improvement in rearing % will improve gross returns by 4% and 3% for upland and hill flocks. Although attempts to achieve this may rely on greater inputs and thus negate some of the increased output, top-third MLC results show a lower level of spending for average flocks. Increased rearing % can be achieved in a variety of ways but a combination of one less barren ewe, one less dead ewe and one less lamb death at birth and before rearing per 100 ewes mated would achieve this.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0263967X00030883 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Improvements in carcass weight can be achieved with little extra cost by buying rams with high growth potential from recorded flocks. The 5% improvement in carcass weight mentioned above can be achieved from lambs growing at 10 g carcass gain per day more than usual.

The price per kg received for finished lambs can be increased by altering sale dates to take better advantage of the seasonal scale of guide prices or by selling through alternative outlets. This may be either through an abattoir offering quality payments or a more competitive livestock market.