

Holidays that may affect the demand for lamb

Demand for lamb may increase in the weeks before various holidays. Producers can take advantage of the increased demand by carefully timing lamb crops and knowing the type of product preferred for each market.

Some holidays that may affect demand include the following (see the following page for details):

Holiday	2023
Easter (Christian)	Apr 9
Passover (Jewish)	Apr 5 – Apr 13
Othodox Easter (Christian)	Apr 16
Ramadan (Muslim)	Mar 22 – Apr 20
Eid-al-Fitr (Muslim)	Apr 20
Eid-al-Adha, Festival of Sacrifice (Muslim)	Jun 28 – Jul 2
Muharram (Islamic New Year)	Jul 19
Rosh Hashanah (Jewish)	Sept 15 – Sep 17
Thanksgiving (Christian)	Oct 9
Chanukah, Festival of Rededication (Jewish)	Dec 7 - Dec 15
Christmas (Christian)	Dec 25

Legal Requirements for the Sale of Live Lambs:

Leading up to certain holidays, producers may experience an increase in requests for farm sales and/or slaughter of live animals. In particular, during Eid-al-Adha the traditional expectation is for all able adults to slaughter their own animal. Producers need to be aware of laws concerning the sale and slaughter of live lambs.

Alberta's [Meat Inspection Act and Regulations](#) dictate the requirements for slaughter practices, carcass inspection and the sale of meat. Based on these requirements, the Alberta Agriculture and Forestry fact sheet '[Direct Marketing Meats...Selling Freezer Lambs](#)', states:

'A lamb may be slaughtered on a farm only if it is going to be eaten by the farm family. A live lamb can be sold to a buyer who makes his/her own arrangements for off-site slaughter and cutting. If the meat is to be sold, the lamb must be taken to a licensed, provincially or federally inspected abattoir for slaughtering and processing. Only inspected meat can be sold.'

([www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex10316](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex10316))

The document '[Farm Direct Marketing: Know the Regulations - Meat and Meat Products](#)' further clarifies that '(y)ou cannot sell your animals and have customers conduct the slaughter at your farm.'

([https://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex15375](https://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex15375))

Federal and provincial laws regarding animal welfare must always be followed. Visit www.ablamb.ca for links to welfare regulations.

Brief descriptions of holidays and the type of product in demand

Easter / Passover / Orthodox Easter

These holidays typically occur within a few weeks of each other and may all contribute to a rise in demand. The traditional market is for healthy, milk-fed lambs weighing under 50lbs live and not over 3 months of age. Having lambs of the correct type ready for the spring market will require planning a lamb crop in late fall/early winter. An increase in demand for older, heavier lambs may also be seen during the weeks leading up to Easter. Check local auction schedules or www.ablamb.ca for special Easter sales.

Note: For the Jewish holiday, Passover, animals must be slaughtered and processed according to Kosher laws.

Ramadan and Eid al Fitr

Muslims observe the month of Ramadan by fasting from sunrise to sunset. Goat or lamb meat is commonly part of the daily evening feast. The end of Ramadan is marked by a one-day holiday, Eid al Fitr - Festival of Fast Breaking, which traditionally features lamb or goat. Weaned market lambs (60-80 lbs live weight) are preferred.

The timing of this holiday is based on the Islamic lunar calendar, and occurs 11 days earlier every year.

Note: Animals must be slaughtered and processed according to Halal requirements.

Eid al-Adha (Sacrifice Day)

Traditionally, adult Muslims who do not have any financial constraints are expected to sacrifice a goat or a lamb and distribute the meat to the needy. Weaned market lambs under a year of age are preferred. However, large market kids/lambs and older goats/sheep are also used. The animals must be healthy, non-pregnant and blemish free (no broken horns, no open wounds, intact ears and no lameness, etc.). Intact ram lambs may be preferred. Wethers and lambs with docked tails may not be acceptable.

The timing of this holiday is based on the Islamic lunar calendar, and occurs 11 days earlier each year.

Note: Animals must be slaughtered and processed according to Halal requirements.

Muharram

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. Steady market, a limited influencer.

Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year)

Well finished, weaned market lambs (60-110lbs).

Note: Animals must be slaughtered and processed according to Kosher laws.

Chanukah

Chanukah celebrations last for eight days. Chanukah occurs in December and may coincide with Christmas. Healthy, heavy lambs are usually in high demand before the start of these holidays.

Note: Animals must be slaughtered and processed according to Kosher laws.

Christmas

Light, milk-fed lambs may also increase in demand in the weeks leading up to Christmas. Producing lambs for the Christmas market requires out-of-season breeding* resulting in a late summer/early fall lambing. The demand for "curry" mutton/market lamb may also increase during this time of the year.

*For information about out-of-season breeding, see the '[Sheep and Goat Management in Alberta - Reproduction](#)'.