LINCOLN UNIVERSITY
College of Agriculture
Cooperative Extension

Michael Owusu Ansah, Ph.D.
Postdoc Researcher

102 Lorenzo Green Hall
OwusuAnsahM@lincolnu.edu

Ye Su, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
of Ag Business

103B Lorenzo Green Hall
573-681-5370
SuY@LincolnU.edu

Fact Sheet

MIDWEST SHEEP PRODUCTION AND MARKETING

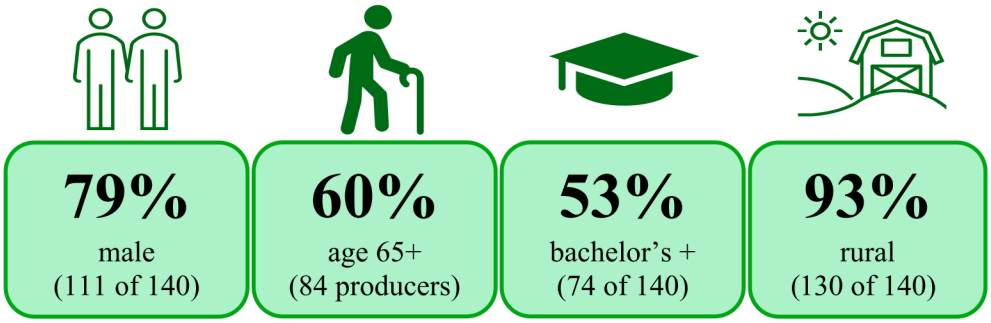
Farm Characteristics and Production Outlook | A Producer Survey Fact Sheet

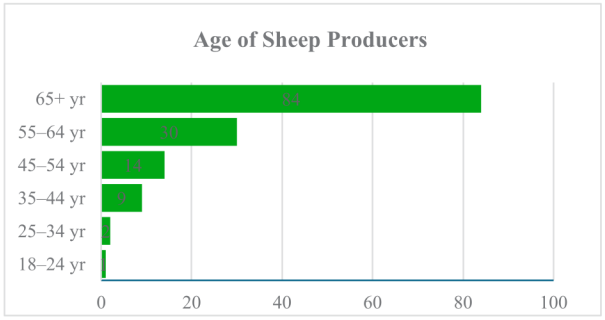
Survey at a glance

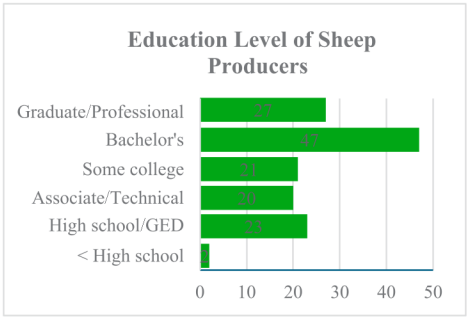
A mail survey of small ruminant producers across the Midwestern United States was conducted May-August 2025. Producers were drawn from the U.S. Farm Data directory. Data from 140 sheep producers were collected.



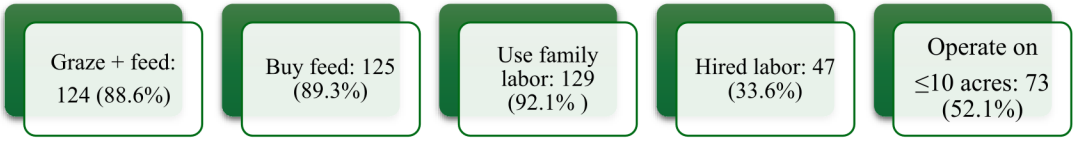
Who is raising sheep?





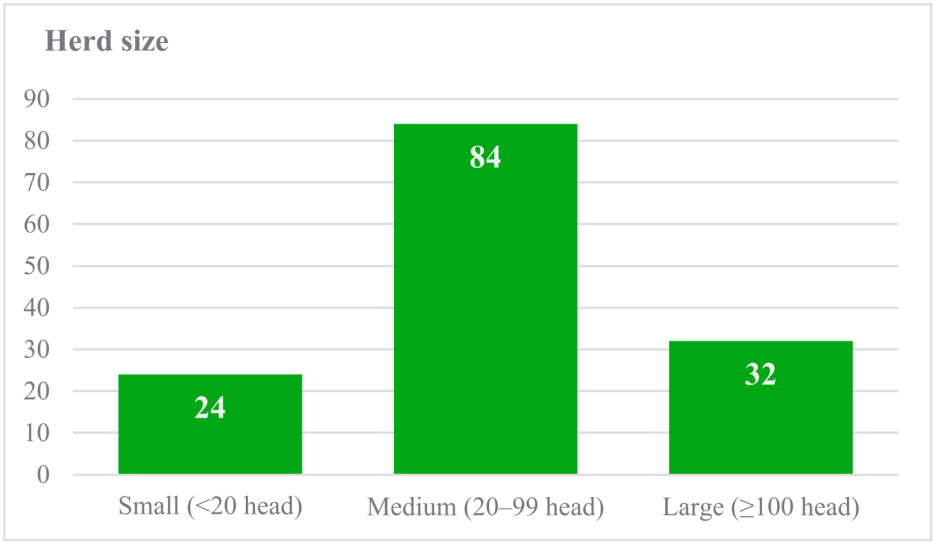


How sheep operations are structured

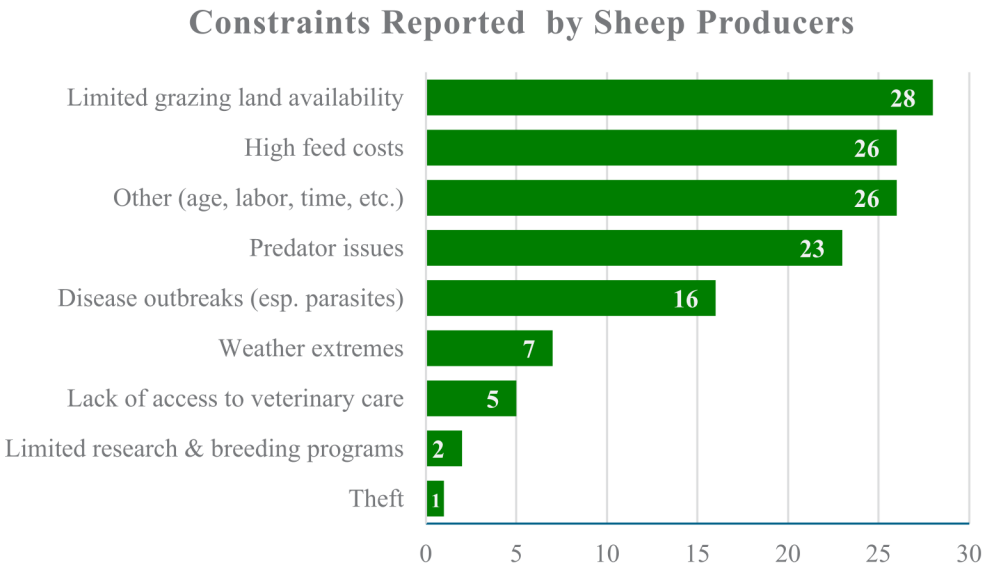


Herd scale

The farms are small overall. About 77% (108) have less than 100 animals and more than half are fewer than 10 acres.



Constraints



Support systems

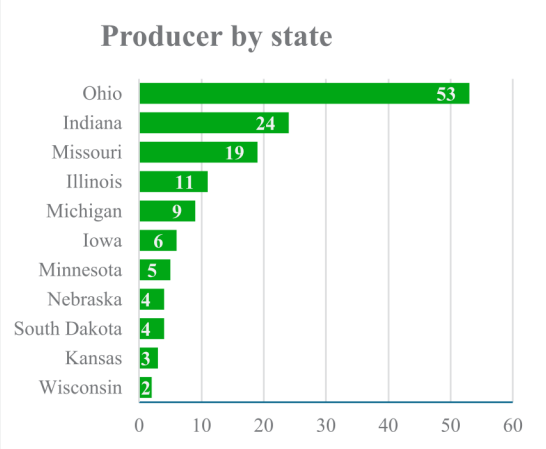
60%
Cooperative membership
(84 of 140)

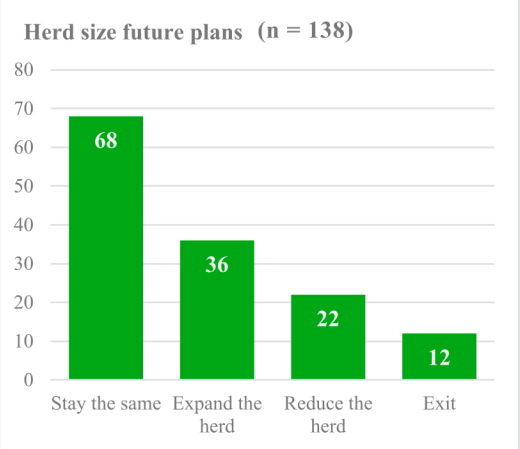
12%
Credit
(17 of 140)

21%
Extension visits
(30 of 140)

Where they farm and future plans

Respondents span eleven Midwestern states. Half report at least 38 years in sheep production, making this a highly experienced producer base. Most intend to hold their flock size steady, though a quarter of them plan to expand.



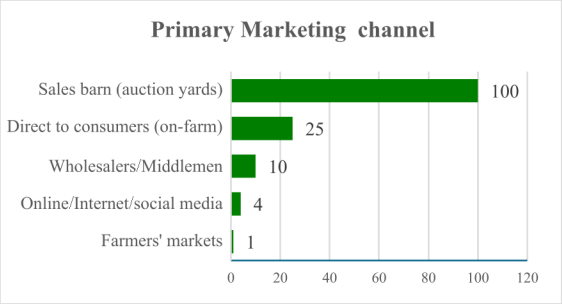


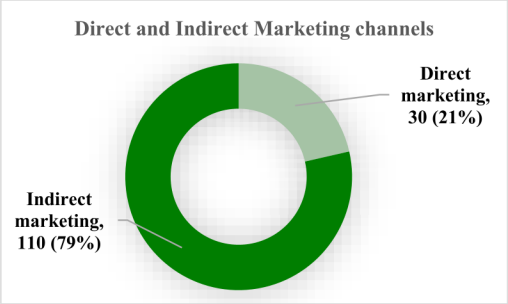
MIDWEST SHEEP PRODUCTION AND MARKETING

Marketing, Profitability and Support | A Producer Survey Fact Sheet

How sheep are marketed

Marketing is overwhelmingly indirect, with the auction yard the dominant outlet. Direct marketing refers to sales made to consumers without intervening distributors or retailers. Direct and online channels remain underused. In general, respondents reported relatively few transportation barriers and generally short travel distances to primary market.



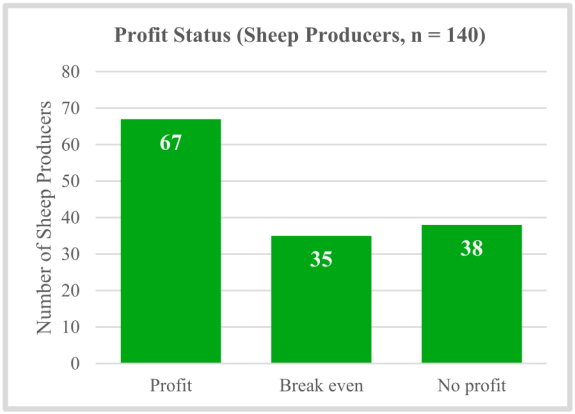


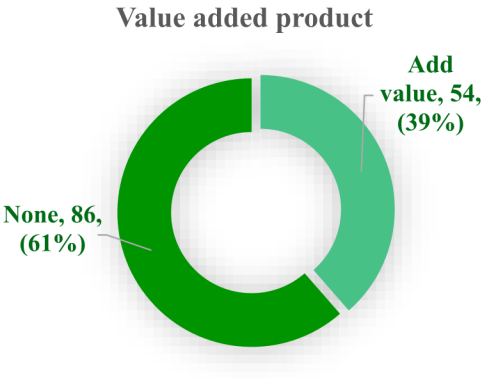
Market access: Low barriers

128	25	38 mi	16
report no transport difficulty	sell on-farm	median travel to market	travel 100+ miles

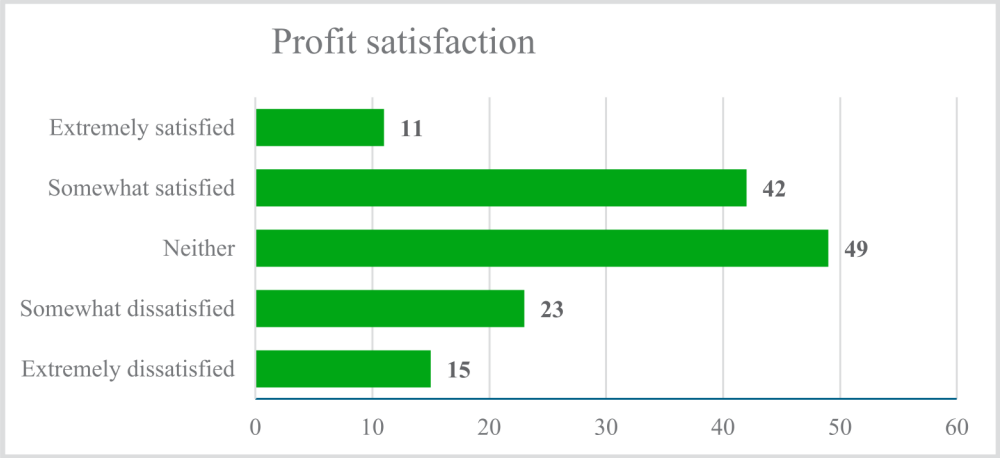
Profitability and value addition

About half of the producers reported a profit, while fewer than one-third reported a loss. Producers' satisfaction for profit is mixed. More producers sold their animals as commodities rather than as value-added products.

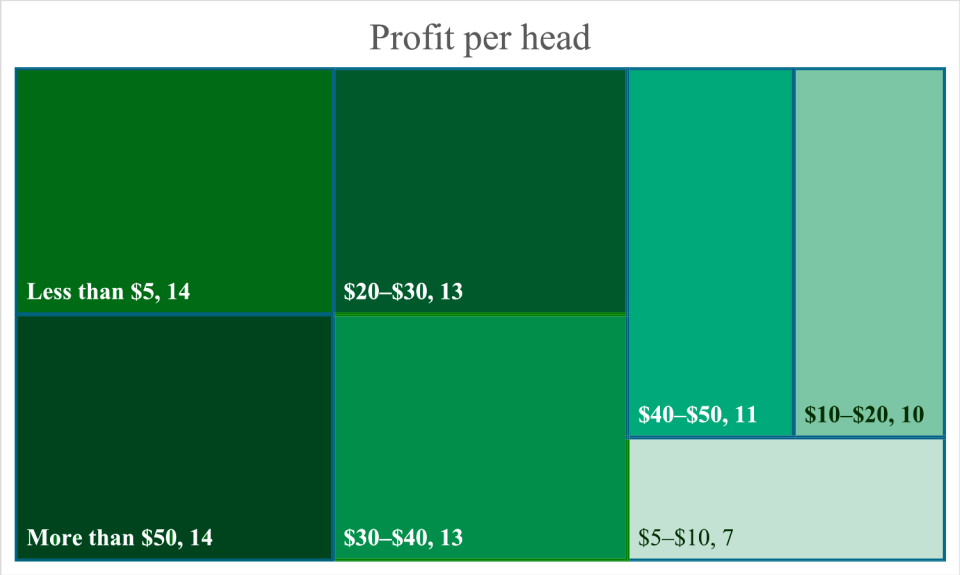




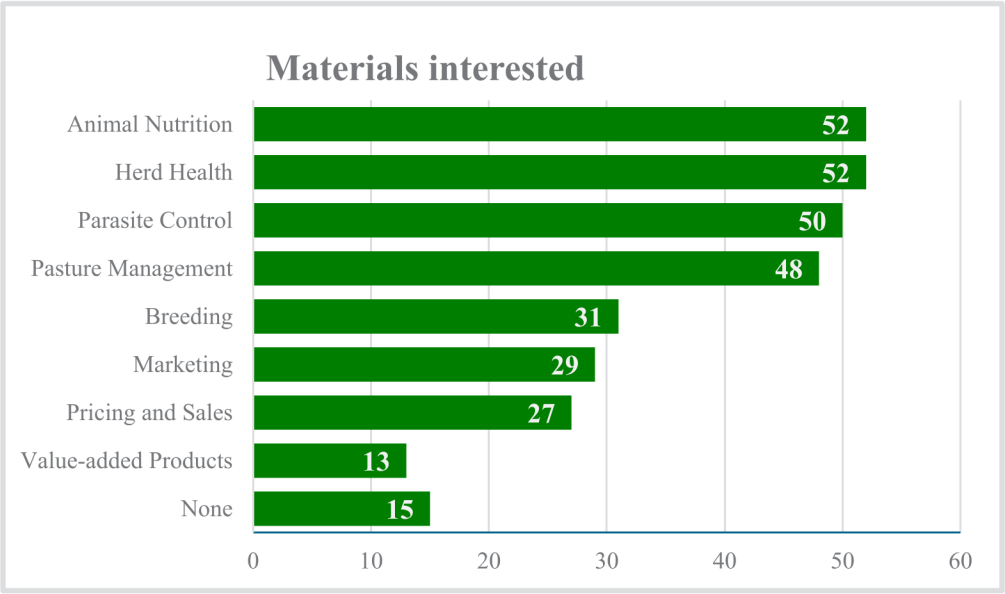
Profitability and value addition



Among producers reporting per-head profits, returns ranged from less than $5 to more than $50 per head.



Educational needs



Key takeaways

- About 39% of sheep producers reported value-added product sales, while 60% reported cooperative membership.
- Value addition and cooperative membership distinguish sheep producers and are associated with higher profitability.
- Producers request production materials more frequently than marketing materials; combining herd-health programming with pricing and marketing education could broaden Extension support.