

Testing of the Final Version of the Detail Device and Proposed Protocol for Use

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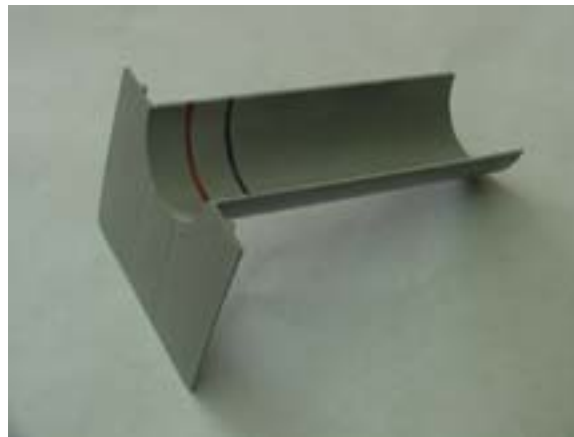
Background

On May 4, 2004, Jeff Goodwin from the Idaho 4-H & Youth Development Office and Jerry Newman from the Washington State 4-H Office were invited by show management to attend the weigh-in of lambs for the 2004 Junior Livestock Show of Spokane. The third rater for this test was Michele Pike, also of the Idaho 4-H & Youth Development Office. The main purpose for Goodwin and Newman to be involved in this activity was to test the proposed protocol for use of the newly developed DeTail Device, which is being proposed as an educational tool to assess and identify appropriately docked lambs.

The 2004 rule book for the Junior Livestock Show of Spokane specified a credit card rule identical to the National Western Livestock Show in Denver where a credit card held on a vertical plane must contact the tail structure. It must be understood that the 0.7 inch minimum standard assessed by the DeTail Device is a more strict standard than that assessed by the credit card assessment.

About the DeTail Device

The DeTail Device itself is made from an injection molded plastic material. There are two recessed lines on the barrel or trough of the device. The lines are located 0.7 of an inch and 1.4 inches from the end of the barrel.



The line closer to the end of the barrel (0.7 of an inch) is the minimum standard for the tail length of appropriately docked lambs at market weight as determined by a 2004 five-state lamb tail docking study. Of the 782 lambs in the study that were docked at the distal end of the caudal fold, 99% measured 0.7 of an inch or longer at market, as measured with the DeTail Device.

The second line at 1.4 inches is used in selection of lambs at weaning time. Based on data from the five-state study, if a lamb measures 1.4 inches at weaning, the lamb should measure at least 0.7 inch at market weight (99% confidence). The purpose of the 1.4 inch line is to encourage exhibitors and breeders to focus on an area closer to the average tail length of a lamb docked at the distal end of the caudal fold, and not push the envelope of the 0.7 inch line that is the minimum standard.

This device should not be used as a guide for docking location! It is still advised to dock all lambs at the distal end of the caudal fold (American Veterinary Medical Association, 2000; American Sheep Industry, 2004 ASI, etc.)

Proper Use of the DeTail Device

With the lamb standing, the DeTail Device is placed under the tail, with the tail contained in the trough. The operator should ensure that the flange is in firm contact with the pin bones and the barrel of the device is held level. Disinfectant can be used on the device between sheep. If the end of the tail at least meets the edge of the 0.7 inch recessed line closest to the lamb, it is deemed to have met the minimum standard.



Measurement of a lamb that clearly fails the 0.7 inch test, but passed a “credit card” test.

Rule Enforcement Protocol Using the DeTail Device

It is recommended that enforcement of the 0.7 inch minimum standard be done by a 3-person committee at the weigh-in of animals at the show. One person should be designated to measure all lambs. If the initial measurement identifies a lamb as below the standard, the two other show officials will make one measurement each of the suspect animal. All three measurement officials must agree that the lamb is below the 0.7 inch minimum before the lamb is disqualified from exhibition. If disqualified, the lamb should be immediately removed from the grounds.

Use of the DeTail Device Prior to the Show

It is recommended that exhibitors use the DeTail Device as they search for prospective show animals. If a lamb does not measure 0.7 of an inch at weaning, purchase of the lamb for exhibition is **NOT** recommended. For lambs that measure between 0.7 and 1.4 inches at weaning, the closer the lamb is to the 1.4 inch mark, the more likely the lamb will measure at or greater than the 0.7 inch minimum standard at show time.

Use of the DeTail Device at initial weigh-in at the start of the project can identify animals that might have problems meeting the 0.7 inch minimum standard at show time. However, it is not recommended to make the final official measurement at this time as lambs could experience re-docking before show time in this arrangement.

States Using the 0.7 Inch Minimum Standard

As of 2004, Utah and West Virginia have implemented policies that recognize the 0.7 inch minimum standard. Maryland is implementing the 0.7 minimum standard in 2005. Plans are underway for livestock shows in Idaho to implement a statewide 0.7 inch minimum standard in 2006.

Other states are expected to adopt the 0.7 inch minimum standard in the near future.

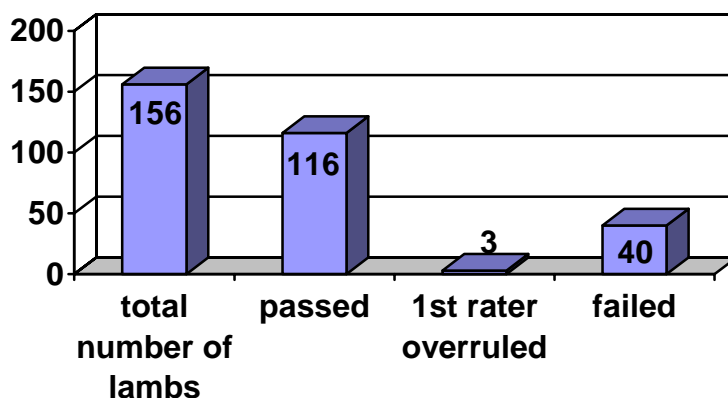
Results of Spokane Jr. Livestock Show Test

There were 156 lambs presented for weigh-in. Of the 156 lambs presented for weigh-in one was disqualified from the show by the credit card assessment.

Of the 156 lambs measured with the Detail Device, 116 (74.4%) would have been accepted for exhibition by the protocol for use described earlier in this paper. Of the 156 lambs measured, 113 (72.4%) passed the initial assessment by the first measurement official. Three lambs that were called short by the 1st rater were called acceptable by either the second or third rater and thus would have been eligible for show by the proposed protocol for use of the device. The other 40 lambs initially called short by the first rater were unanimously called short by all three raters.

Of the 156 lambs presented for measurement, there were 7 lambs (4.5%) that appeared to have been recently re-docked as evidenced by dry scabs on the end of the tail. Caution should be taken in calling all of these seven lambs as “re-docked”, as sometimes the method of docking can cause such an appearance that is actually caused by not enough skin being left on the end of the tail to properly heal.

Overview of Spokane Jr. Show Test



Observations of the Three Raters

All three raters stated that they were pleased with the ability of the device to sort this group of lambs into two distinct pass-fail categories. The vast majority of the 40 lambs that failed to meet the minimum standard were very obvious. In the cases of the 3 times that the 1st rater was overruled, all measurements were very close to the 0.7 inch mark. In these three cases, the point needs to be made that all benefit of doubt should go to the lamb and the exhibitor, thus those lambs would not have been disqualified if this standard would have been in effect at this show.

It is also the opinion of the 3-person measurement team at this test of the device that even if the measurement committee were to purposefully try to allow as many lambs as possible to pass the 0.7 inch minimum standard (by not keeping the device level while measuring), at least 30-35 of the 40 short-tailed lambs would not or could not pass the test. This speaks well of the device to adequately sort the sheep with no tail from those with adequate tail length regardless of the motive of the operator.

The point must also be made about possible misuse of this information. If a person were to suggest that if this minimum standard were to be imposed at this show, 40 lambs would have been disqualified, that would be a very misleading statement. True, 40 lambs would have been disqualified in this case if no prior education were conducted to exhibitors, parents and project supervisors. But that would be an extremely unwise policy/management decision. This actually demonstrates why advance notification of such a rule change is critical to the success of a show.

As they witnessed the proper use of the DeTail Device, many exhibitors and parents expressed positive comments that they thought this device could bring greater objectivity and consistency to this sometimes contentious issue.