



School of Animal Sciences

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DATE: February 27, 2024

TO: Potential Virginia Ram Test Consignors
FROM: Scott P. Greiner, Extension Sheep Specialist

Dear Sheep Producer:

The Rules and Regulations for the 2024 Virginia Ram Lamb Performance Test are now available. We invite you to consign another set of high quality rams for this year's test and sale. All information is available on our website:

<https://www.apsc.vt.edu/extensionandoutreach/Sheep-Extension/sheep-programs/vt-ram-test.html>

Nominations are due **April 5th**, and ram delivery is scheduled for **Monday, April 29**. Upon receipt of your nominations, we will send you a consignment form and other details pertaining to delivery of the rams.

Please read through the rules and regulations carefully. The program is open to breeders from Virginia and surrounding states, and for rams of all breeds (born September 2023 through February 2024). A summary of program expenses and sale results for the last five years can be found at the back of the Rules and Regulations.

Here are few reminders for 2024:

- Feed deposit to \$50 per ram is due at delivery. This deposit will be credited towards total expenses at the conclusion of the program.
- Our buyers very much favor moderate framed, stout, muscular rams that have growth. Keep this in mind as you evaluate your potential consignments.
- We plan to host a consignment ewe lamb sale along with the ram test sale. Additionally, we will have a Sheep Field Day & Educational Program the morning of the sale. Both of these items have been highly successful the last few years, and helped us attract a nice crowd.

Should you have any questions, please give us a call. We look forward to working with you.

Rules and Regulations

2024 Virginia Ram Lamb Performance Test

Location: Virginia Sheep Evaluation Station
Virginia Tech Shenandoah Valley Research and Extension Center
2763 Raphine Road, Raphine, Virginia

Sponsor: Virginia Sheep Producers Association
VSPA Seedstock Council

Coordinator: Dr. Scott Greiner
Extension Animal Scientist, Sheep
School of Animal Sciences, Virginia Tech
366 Litton Reaves Hall (0306)
Blacksburg, VA 24061
Phone: (540) 231-9159
email: sgreiner@vt.edu

Manager: Gabe Pent, Superintendent
Shenandoah Valley AREC
128 McCormick Farm Circle
Raphine, VA 24472
Phone: (540) 377-2255 (main office)
email: gpent@vt.edu

Program Website: <https://sas.vt.edu/extension/vtsheep/va-ram-test.html>

I. Program Purpose

1. To provide a standard, impartial postweaning performance test that will furnish records which will be useful to the consignor's breeding program.
2. To provide a source of and market for performance tested rams.
3. To serve as an educational tool for the sheep industry.

II. Administration and Management

Virginia Cooperative Extension (Dr. Scott Greiner) is responsible for consignments, performance record keeping, correspondence, and general coordination/oversight of the program. Care, feeding, and management of the rams on a daily basis are conducted by staff at the Shenandoah Valley AREC. The Virginia Sheep Evaluation Station is owned by the Virginia Sheep Producers Association and the VSPA Seedstock Council is responsible for decisions regarding its use and upkeep. All finances of the program will be handled through VSPA. Faculty from the VA-MD Regional College of Veterinary Medicine will serve as consulting veterinarians for the program.

III. Program Overview

At delivery, rams will be weighed, vaccinated for clostridial diseases and soremouth, be dewormed, have feet trimmed and soaked, and have scrotal measurements taken (and other procedures as recommended by the consulting veterinarian). Rams will be allocated to one of four pens based on test group. Test groups for evaluation of performance will be determined by breed and age (i.e. fall and winter-born rams evaluated as separate test groups within breed as numbers allow). After a two-week adjustment period, the rams will start on test. Weights will be taken at the beginning of the test, 21 days, 35 days, 49 days,

and off test (63 days). Average weights on two consecutive days will be used for on and off test weights. The following performance measures will be determined:

- Test Average Daily Gain (ADG) = total weight gain/number of days on test
- Weight Per Day of Age (WDA) = weight/age in days
- ADG Ratio = individual ADG/test group average ADG
- WDA Ratio = individual WDA/test group average WDA
- Ultrasound Loin Muscle Area (LMA) = adjusted to 125 lb.
- Ultrasound LMA Ratio = individual Adj. LMA/test group average LMA
- Ultrasound Fat Thickness (FT) = adjusted to 125 lb.
- Ultrasound FT Ratio = individual Adj. FT/test group average Adj. FT
- Station Index = $0.67 \times \text{WDA ratio} + 0.33 \times \text{ADG ratio}$
- Sale Index = $0.75 \times \text{Station Index} + 0.25 \times \text{LMA ratio}$

Rams will be fed ad-libitum a pelleted ration containing approximately 75% TDN and 14% CP, and will have unlimited access to grass paddocks surrounding the station while on test. Ultrasonic evaluation for carcass merit/body composition will be conducted at appropriate times during the test. At the conclusion of the test and up to sale day, rams will by limit fed the pelleted ration and have access to pasture. Rams will be run through the foot bath on a regular basis. FAMACHA will be utilized as tool to manage internal parasites, and rams will be dewormed as needed. Rams eligible for the sale will be sheared, and have their feet trimmed prior to the sale.

“Custom test” rams may participate in the program. These rams will be evaluated for performance, but will not be eligible for the sale. Custom test rams will be subjected to the same rules and regulations, as well as fees and costs as rams that participate in the regular test. Reports on custom test rams will be furnished only to the consignor, and performance will be evaluated separately from sale eligible rams (ratios expressed within consignor groups only).

IV. Eligibility of Consignors

1. Open to Virginia breeders and breeders from states which border Virginia.
2. All consignors must be members of, and in good standing with, the Virginia Sheep Producers Association (\$15 annual dues) and the VSPA Seedstock Council (\$15 annual dues).

V. Dates

	<u>2024 Dates</u>
Nomination Deadline	April 5
Ram Delivery	Monday, April 29
Start Test	May 13 & 14
21-day Interim Weight	June 4
35-day Interim Weight	June 18
49-day Interim Weight	July 2
Off-test (63 days)	July 15 & 16
Sale & Field Day	Saturday, August 24

Other procedures such as ultrasound evaluation, off-test grading, and breeding soundness exams will be scheduled at appropriate times.

VI. Entry and Delivery Requirements

1. **Breed:** Program open to registered rams of any breed, as well as crossbred rams. Registered rams must be recorded with and have registration papers issued from a national breed association (rams need not be purebred if percentage/appendix rams are recognized and recorded by respective breed association). Crossbred, non-registered/recorded rams must be from registered parents of different breeds, and registration papers must be furnished on both the sire and dam. Breeds new to the test (breeds other than Dorset, Suffolk, Hampshire, Katahdin, Dorper), a minimum of three rams of similar age (age difference of not more than 60 days) must be consigned for breed to be eligible.
2. **Age:** Rams born September 1, 2023 through February 29, 2024.
3. **Number:** A maximum of 15 total rams and no more than 10 ram lambs per breed will be accepted per consignor (for sale eligible rams). First-time consignors may test a total of 3 rams per breed, and a maximum of 6 total rams. Any number of "custom test" rams may be consigned as long as the ram test facilities can comfortably handle them (these rams will not be eligible for the sale). The test and sale committee may use their discretion in making adjustments.
4. **Health, Soundness, and Management:**
 - a) Rams must be accompanied at delivery by a Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (health paper) stating that the flock of origin is free of contagious disease. Rams delivered from out of state must comply with interstate health requirements.
 - b) Rams must carry appropriate Federal Scrapie Program identification tag at delivery.
 - c) Rams must be vaccinated for *clostridium perfringens* types C & D two to three weeks before delivery to the test.
 - d) Rams must be weaned prior to delivery.
 - e) Rams must be started on feed and bunk-broke prior to delivery (adapted to ad-libidum diet recommended).
 - f) Ram lambs must be sheared just prior to delivery.
 - g) Feet must be trimmed on all rams just prior to delivery.
 - h) Rams cannot be vaccinated for epididymitis.
 - i) On arrival at the test station, ram lambs will be evaluated for type, soundness (reproductive, mouth, feet/leg structure), and health (including any foot problems) by a committee and veterinarian appointed by VSPA. Rams not qualifying under any of the above conditions will not be accepted.
5. **Minimum Weight at Delivery:** As guideline, ram lambs should meet the following minimum weight guidelines at delivery to the test station (for breeds not listed contact the test coordinator):

Birthdate	Hampshire Suffolk	Dorset North Country Cheviot	Hair Breeds
September 1-30	135	111	100
October 1-31	121	100	89
November 1-15	113	92	86
November 16-30	104	86	84
December 1-15	97	78	74
December 16-31	88	70	64
January 1-15	79	63	54
January 16-31	68	54	49
February 1-15	59	49	45
February 16 and later	50	45	40

VII. Sale Requirements and Policies

1. Number: One sale will be held at the Virginia Sheep Evaluation Station with a maximum of 60 rams sold.
2. Minimum Test Performance: Rams must have a minimum ADG ratio of 67, or a minimum WDA ratio of 100 to be eligible for the sale (ratios calculated within breed/age test group).
3. Type and Structural Soundness: Rams will be inspected at the end of the feeding period for structural soundness (including feet/legs and mouth) and type by a committee appointed by VSPA and a representative of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Only sound rams of desirable type and quality will be sold. The decisions of the committee shall be final.
4. Breeding Soundness and Health: Rams must achieve an acceptable breeding soundness examination rating as determined by the attending veterinarian prior to the sale. Guidelines published by the Society for Theriogenology will be applied. This will include physical examination, body condition score, genitalia examination, scrotal examination and palpation (including scrotal circumference), and semen examination (motility and morphology). Rams must also test negative for *B. ovis*. All rams must be healthy and eligible for interstate shipment as approved by the consulting veterinarian (this may include necessary diagnostic tests for issuance of interstate health papers).
5. Spider Syndrome Genotype: Only rams free of the spider gene will be sold. All rams of all breeds will sell guaranteed by the breeder as free of the spider gene (NN genotype). DNA genotyping will be conducted as part of the ram test procedures for breeders wishing to have their rams tested (consignor will be obligated to pay genotyping expense). Rams are not required to be genotyped, however consignors must agree to guarantee their rams as NN.
6. Codon 171 Genotype: All rams of all breeds must be DNA genotyped for scrapie susceptibility. Copies of official test results (showing flock ID and genotype) must be furnished to ram test coordinator on rams tested on-farm prior to delivery. For rams not tested prior to arrival at the station, DNA samples will be drawn at delivery and genotyping conducted as part of the ram test procedures (at consignor's expense). Genotypes officially recorded on breed association registration certificates will be accepted as documentation.
7. Additional Cuts: If more than 60 rams meet the above minimum requirements, then numbers will be reduced to 60 by eliminating rams according to performance based on Sale Index.
8. Sale Order: Rams will sell by breed/age test group. The top 10% of the rams in each breed/age test group will sell first. The 10% of each breed/age test group to sell first will be determined by a committee appointed by VSPA (including a representative of VDACS, along with other qualified members which are not consignors). The top 10% will be established by the committee based on performance data and visual appraisal (rams must have a Sale Index of ≥ 100 to be eligible for top 10% consideration). Sale order thereafter will be determined by Sale Index within test group. The order and alternation of test groups for sale order (after the top 10% in each test group) will be determined by the test and sale committee and will be dependent on the number of rams selling (with an effort to alternate breeds each year).
9. Catalog Information: All pertinent information on the rams will be published in the sale catalog. This will include pedigree, birth date, birth type, test ADG/ratio, WDA/ratio, off-test weight, scrotal circumference, adjusted ultrasound data/ratios (fat thickness and loin muscle area), and genotyping results. EBVs will also be published on rams from flocks participating in NSIP. Consignors are responsible for providing appropriate information for inclusion in the sale catalog in a timely fashion.

10. Registration Certificates: The test coordinator must have the endorsed registration certificates on rams by sale day or they are subject to losing sale eligibility.
11. Floor Price: A floor price on all ram lambs will be established by participating consignors. Rams failing to command a bid at the floor price will be subject to sale expenses.
12. Sale Guarantee: All consignors agree to abide by the breeding guarantee published on sale rams.

VIII. Costs

1. Consignment Fee: \$10 per head due at the time of nomination. If a breeder fails to deliver a consigned ram, the consignment fee will be forfeited. Rams turned down prior to or at delivery will receive a refund. The consignment fee will be credited towards test expenses at the conclusion of the test.
2. Feed Deposit: A \$50 per ram feed deposit will be collected on all rams at delivery. The feed deposit will be credited towards test expenses at the conclusion of the test.
3. Feed Costs: Feed costs for the entire period will be pro-rated on a per head basis by test pen, according to average feed consumption per head per day.
4. Yardage: Rams will be charged an \$10 per head yardage fee. Proceeds will be utilized for the maintenance and upkeep of the Sheep Evaluation Station facilities.
5. Veterinary and Medical Costs: Charged on an average per head basis for all vaccinations, treatments, and tests provided (includes delivery vaccinations, deworming, breeding soundness exams, treatments, pre-sale tests for TB/Brucellosis/other if necessary, etc.). Veterinary and medical costs for rams with chronic health problems will be the responsibility of the consignor.
6. Insurance: Commercial insurance will be purchased to cover rams against accidental death by fire, lightning, wind, etc. This cost will be charged on a per head basis.
7. Other Costs: Other costs associated with conducting the test charged on a per head basis (ear tags, bedding, genotyping, etc.).
8. Sale Expenses: Advertising, catalogs, mailing, auctioneer, and other sale and marketing expenses charged on a per head basis for rams selling. Registration papers will be transferred to the new owner at the consignors' expense. Rams failing to bring the floor price will be charged sale expense. Rams "bought back" will also be charged sale expenses.
9. Settlement: Feed, yardage, veterinary, sale, and other costs shall be deducted from the sale proceeds for consignors with one or more rams in the sale. In the event a consignor does not have one or more rams qualify for the sale, complete test expenses must be paid at the time rams are removed. Consignors are responsible for payment of all applicable feed, yardage, veterinary, and other costs on rams not qualifying for the sale, rams removed from the test, and rams which die while at the test station. VSPA reserves the right to withhold settlement on rams for which registration papers have not been provided.
10. Custom Test Rams: Custom test rams (not sale eligible) will be subject to the same fees and test costs as sale eligible rams.

IX. General Rules

1. Reports: Consignors will receive reports following each weigh date. These reports will also be made available to potential buyers and other interested parties. It is the responsibility of the consignor to furnish appropriate information for inclusion in these reports and the sale catalog.
2. Removal of Rams: No ram may be withdrawn from the test without proper authorization from the test management. All rams must remain for the entire length of the test unless removal is authorized for health or other reasons. If a consignor wishes to remove rams at the end of the test for home use, the test management must be notified by July 25.

3. Notification of Consignors: The test station manager will notify consignors immediately in the case of severe sickness or malperformance of any ram. A diagnostic statement from the veterinarian will accompany such notification when warranted. The consignor agrees to have appropriate health treatments and diagnostic tests conducted on rams as authorized by the ram test management. All individual treatments to rams must be given by or under the supervision of the test supervisor or veterinarian.
4. Other Procedures: Consignors agree to allow their rams to be used in research/education/demonstration projects related to genetic improvement, performance evaluation and/or management. Such projects will have prior approval from the ram test committee, and will not jeopardize or disrupt the normal performance evaluation process of the test.
5. Station Visits: The station is open to interested parties for the viewing of rams at any time. However, any consignor or other person interested in handling the rams for any purpose (photos, videos, close inspection, etc.), at any time (including after hours and weekends), shall do so with the knowledge and consent of the station management. Consignors and others should contact the station management in advance of such needs.
6. Rules Infractions: The test committee may act at their discretion and may make, or have necessary investigations made, and may act to eliminate rams from the test and sale which, in their opinion, have been misrepresented or which may be a discredit to the test and sale.

X. Liability

The owner assumes full risk and liability for animals during the feeding period and sale. Virginia Tech, Virginia Cooperative Extension, the Virginia Sheep Producers Association, test station management, and the ram test committee assume no responsibility whatsoever for loss of animal, personal injury, or property damage.

Virginia Performance Ram Lamb Test Historical Test and Sale Expense Summary

	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2015</u>
Number of Rams Tested	78	78	64	64	73	89	86	92	77
<u>Test Costs</u>									
Feed	\$108.94	\$126.17	\$117.80	\$103.42	\$94.14	\$99.21	\$97.94	\$84.65	\$86.21
Yardage	\$10.00	\$8.00	\$8.00	\$8.00	\$8.00	\$8.00	\$8.00	\$8.00	\$8.00
Codon 171/Spider Genotyping	\$11.50	\$11.50	\$11.00	\$11.00	\$11.00	\$11.00	\$11.00	\$11.00	\$11.00
Vet/Medical	\$9.93	\$4.92	\$4.60	\$9.44	\$12.24	\$1.50	\$6.01	\$1.22	\$3.31
Misc.	<u>\$13.95</u>	<u>\$14.40</u>	<u>\$14.42</u>	<u>\$15.85</u>	<u>\$10.48</u>	<u>\$12.75</u>	<u>\$7.23</u>	<u>\$8.98</u>	<u>\$4.94</u>
Total Test Costs	\$154.32	\$164.99	\$155.82	\$147.71	\$135.86	\$132.46	\$130.18	\$113.85	\$113.46
<u>Sale Costs</u>									
Shearing	\$8.00	\$7.50	\$7.00	\$7.00	\$6.50	\$6.50	\$6.00	\$6.00	\$6.00
Sale costs	\$35.00	\$30.00	\$30.00	\$25.00	\$25.00	\$25.00	\$25.00	\$23.50	\$12.00
Registration Transfer	\$10.00	\$10.00	\$10.00	\$10.00	\$9.00	\$8.00	\$6.00	\$6.00	\$6.00
VA Check-off	<u>\$0.50</u>	<u>\$0.50</u>	<u>\$0.50</u>	<u>\$0.50</u>	<u>\$0.50</u>	<u>\$0.50</u>	<u>\$0.50</u>	<u>\$0.50</u>	<u>\$0.50</u>
Total Sale Expenses	\$53.50	\$48.00	\$47.50	\$42.50	\$41.00	\$40.00	\$37.50	\$36.00	\$24.50
Average Sale Price	\$809	\$715	\$799	\$592	\$615	\$672	\$573	\$611	\$483
Avg. Total Test & Sale Expenses	\$208	\$213	\$203	\$190	\$177	\$172	\$168	\$150	\$138
Avg. Net to Consignor	\$601	\$502	\$596	\$402	\$438	\$500	\$405	\$461	\$345

SALE RESULTS Breed Group	2023		2022		2021		2020		2019	
	No.	Avg.	No.	Avg.	No.	Avg.	No.	Avg.	No.	Avg.
Winter Suffolk	14	\$954	14	\$464	21	\$721	16	\$556	19	\$614
Fall Suffolk			2	\$1000	2	\$875	2	\$700	2	\$750
Fall Dorsets	12	\$867	8	\$1069	5	\$910	11	\$652	8	\$781
Winter Dorsets	7	\$657	8	\$538	10	\$745	9	\$483	5	\$560
Winter Hampshire										
Fall Katahdin	2	\$838	1	\$500			1	\$850	4	\$400
Winter Katahdins	5	\$1080	5	\$1080	4	\$900	3	\$433	3	\$367
Fall White Dorper	7	\$618	4	\$819	7	\$964	3	\$1000	5	\$420
Winter White Dorper	3	\$905	3	\$733	1	\$900	1	\$650	1	\$550
Winter NC Cheviot	2	\$438	1	\$400	2	\$675	1	\$400		
Fall Crossbred										
Winter Crossbred			1	\$500	1	\$850	1	\$400		
Winter Texel									1	\$1950
Total Rams	52	\$809	47	\$715	53	\$799	48	\$592	48	\$615
Commercial Ewe Lambs	38	\$304	37	\$321	26	\$423	20	\$313	19	\$328

2024 VIRGINIA RAM LAMB TEST NOMINATION FORM

Farm Name _____

Owner _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

Email _____

Website _____

Please indicate number of rams for each breed and age:

	Fall-born (9/1 - 12/31/23)	Winter-born (1/1 - 2/29/24)	Custom Test (specify age)
Dorset			
Hampshire			
Suffolk			
Katahdin			
Dorper			
Crossbred (specify cross)			
Other breeds (specify)			

Return by **April 5** along with a check payable to **VSPA** for **\$10** per ram to:

Scott Greiner
School of Animal Sciences (0306)
366 Litton Reaves Hall
Virginia Tech
Blacksburg, VA 24061
Email: sgreiner@vt.edu

**Note an additional \$50 per ram feed deposit will be due at delivery (may be paid with nominations if so desired)*

ADDITIONAL DELIVERY DETAILS WILL BE PROVIDED UPON RECEIPT OF THIS FORM