



American Lamb Council  
November 7, 2003



American Sheep Industry Association, Inc.

www.sheepusa.org



American Wool Council



Dr. Joseph Spence  
Acting Associate Deputy Administrator  
GWCC-BLTSVL, Room 4-2188  
5601 Sunnyside Ave  
Beltsville, MD 20705

Dr. Ronald Green  
National Program Leader  
GWCC-BLTSVL, Room 4-2164  
5601 Sunnyside Ave  
Beltsville, MD 20705

Dear Drs. Spence and Green:

The U.S. sheep industry could use breed resources more effectively to improve reproductive efficiency, to reduce labor requirements, and to produce uniform, nutritious, lean lamb. The industry should emphasize specialized sire and dam breeds, and encourage their broad use and further development based on roles in terminal crossbreeding systems. Widespread use of well-structured crossbreeding systems needs to become a common practice for the industry to compete against international markets.

The American Sheep Industry Association (ASI) respectfully requests that ARS provide genetic resources to facilitate broad use of specialized sire and dam breeds. Two specific needs are noted. First, commercial producers often express dissatisfaction with hardiness and longevity of existing sire breeds. Second, there is rapidly growing interest in "easy-care" breeds for use in low-input production systems.

Sheep geneticists at the U.S. Meat Animal Research Center (MARC) created a terminal sire composite flock. The ASI review team that visited MARC in September of 2000 was favorably impressed with the flock. We are aware that these composite rams are currently being evaluated by industry in a large-scale commercial operation and that composite rams and ewes have been readily accepted by producers, selling well during past sales at MARC. We believe that a meaningful number of composite rams should be produced and offered for sale at MARC for the betterment of the U.S. sheep industry.

We are also aware that MARC scientists are currently conducting comprehensive research to evaluate several breeds for easy-care characteristics. Results will provide information to assess the merit of creating an easy-care composite flock and to determine the optimal breed composition of such a flock. If warranted, we believe an easy-care composite breed should be developed and made available to the U.S. industry.

ASI appreciates the Agency's and specifically MARC's outstanding track record of working with and serving our industry. Many technologies and resources used to make U.S. sheep the fastest growing and largest in the world and our products some of the most valuable, are attributable to ARS and MARC. We encourage you to consider our requests and we are always available should you have questions or want to develop these ideas further.

Sincerely,

*Signed by Guy Flora, President of ASI*

cc:

Dr. Steve Kappes

Xc: *Ky master 11/17/03* ✓