



ASI



Sheep Numbers Increase for First Time Since 1990

The American Sheep Industry Association has roots dating back to 1865. That's the year the National Wool Growers Association, the United States' oldest national livestock organization, came into existence. In 1989, it merged into today's national organization, the American Sheep Industry Association (ASI).

ASI is a federation of 42 state associations representing the interests of more than 67,000 sheep producers nationwide who, as of July 2004, were raising approximately 7.7 million sheep. With an over-riding goal to promote the well-being and profitability of the U.S. sheep industry, ASI works to represent all producers -- from East to West, farm flocks to range operations as well as the nation's lamb feeders. The heart and soul of ASI are the thousands of farm and ranch families across America who are active in the sheep business.

Earlier this year, the industry accomplished a monumental milestone and a primary ASI

initiative when the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) confirmed an increase in the U.S. sheep inventory. NASS's announcement of a 10 percent increase in breeding ewes as of Jan. 1, 2005, marked the first growth in the industry since 1990.

"This report of growth in sheep numbers was great news for the entire industry and hit a priority goal of ASI to strengthen our industry," states Peter Orwick, ASI executive director. "Due to serious market conditions, ASI filed an industry adjustment plan in 1999 and took an extremely aggressive course-of-action to assist all segments of the industry in improving competitiveness. A temporary trade restriction on imports and the launch of a dozen new programs, from price support to marketing and animal health, occurred in the subsequent five years. These programs, combined with strong live-lamb prices since 2002 and the lessening of drought conditions, restored optimism for producers to increase their flock size. More sheep strengthens all sectors

of the industry and indeed improves our competitiveness."

Confirmation of better times for the wool sector was also evident over the last 12 months with wool prices improving another 6 percent.

"We are proud that our wool marketing programs launched with new funding in 2001 have helped drive competitive pricing for U.S. wool. We helped strengthen the customer base in the United States and expanded internationally, with our wool now being exported to a dozen countries around the world, consuming nearly two-thirds of our production," continues Orwick.

Just as the spectrum of the U.S. sheep industry is wide and varied, so are the interests of ASI. For this reason, the association has five councils, comprised of industry leaders, in place to define, develop and execute policy on the tough and ever-