

LAMB STANDARDS



Firsthand Foods sells local, fresh, pasture-raised lamb produced by a network of small-scale livestock producers based in the central and western parts of North Carolina. Our lamb producers abide by these standards:

LOCAL

Our lamb producers live and farm in Central and Western North Carolina.

HUMANE

All of our lamb producers are certified to meet the rigorous standards for farm animal welfare and environmental sustainability established by Animal Welfare Approved. (<https://animalwelfareapproved.us/standards/sheep-2017/>)

PASTURE-RAISED

Our lamb producers raise their animals exclusively outdoors on pasture in accordance with AWA standards. At no time do they live in confinement or in confinement-like conditions. Instead they live in their natural habitat of fields and wooded areas where they graze, typically in rotation with other ruminant animals such as beef cattle. All sheep are provided with guard dogs to protect them from predation.

NO ANTIBIOTICS

Our producers do not use growth-promoting antibiotics. This prophylactic use of antibiotics is unnecessary when sheep are raised outdoors in a low-stress environment and get plenty of exercise. If a sheep does get sick, it is segregated and treated with an antibiotic to prevent suffering and ultimately sold into a different market channel.

NO HORMONAL IMPLANTS

Our producers do not use hormonal implants to speed growth of their sheep.

NO ANIMAL BY-PRODUCTS

Sheep are ruminant animals and eat a diet primarily of grass and forages. When supplements are provided, they do not include animal by-products.

BREED SELECTION

All of our producers raise Khatadin hair sheep, a breed well suited to southern growing conditions that produces high-quality meat with an exceptionally clean flavor profile. Khatadin sheep have a coat of hair rather than wool, which allows them to thrive outdoors in the heat. They are also highly resistant to parasites, a particular concern in the south. Historically, Khatadin sheep are small, however Firsthand Foods has worked with its producer network to develop a larger-framed carcass that produces more meat and larger primal cuts, which satisfies the needs of our customers and helps improve profitability for all involved.

NUTRITION

Sheep are ruminant animals that eat grasses and forages almost exclusively. Our producers feed small amounts of high fiber supplements to ensure we have year-round production. The

reproductive capacity of sheep is highly dependent on consistent and adequate nutrition. When pasture quality declines such as during severe drought or weather extremes, female sheep have difficulty breeding. That's why lamb produced on pasture is typically only available on a seasonal basis. To ensure proper nutrition and develop a year-round supply, our producers provide their sheep with access to high-fiber supplements, including soy hulls (skin of a soybean) and/or corn gluten* (non-starchy components of a corn kernel).

TRACEABILITY

Typically, our sheep are raised on the farm where they were born. In some situations, we move our sheep to nearby farms to graze and make use of available forages. For example, we are partnering currently with Duke Energy to graze our sheep on their 400-acre solar farm. In all instances, each cut of meat can be traced back to the farm where it was sourced. This level of traceability is rarely seen in the meat industry.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

We frequently visit with our farmers and provide carcass quality feedback. In particular, we evaluate each batch of lamb for carcass characteristics such as loin eye size, color and marbling. This information is shared with each producer so they can make informed decisions about breed selection and nutrition programs to optimize meat quality.

**Corn gluten is not the same as the gluten found in wheat.*