

Maryland 4-H Animal Science Program Guidebook

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Maryland 4-H Sheep Tail Docking and Rectal Prolapse Policy

Part 1 – Voluntary Policy

“Lambs should be docked no shorter than the distal end (farthest point from the body) of the caudal tail fold. The caudal fold is a flap of skin attached to the underside of the tail near the rectum that is clearly visible when the tail is lifted. Lambs docked in this manner will have a minimum tail length of 0.7 inches at the time of show. Purchased lambs should have a minimum tail length of 1.4 inches at the time of weaning.”

Since 2008, compliance with this aspect of the policy is voluntary. Tails will not be measured at 4-H events. The success of the volunteer policy will be evaluated periodically.

Part 2- Mandatory Policy

“Any sheep or lamb that exhibits a rectal prolapse at a 4-H activity will be ineligible for that show and be sent home by the Extension Educator, Sheep Superintendent, or other appropriately deemed individual. Lambs that have had surgical repair of a rectal prolapse must not have visible sutures to be eligible to show. The following will be used as a guideline for making this determination: ‘A rectal prolapse is defined as an inversion of the rectum that protrudes 4 cm (1.6 in.) or more outside the body and remains exterior to the body while the animal is standing.’ (Journal of Animal Science, 2003, Thomas et al.) If a lamb is observed with a rectal prolapse (by one of the above people) and in the future is not observed with a rectal prolapse, it is still classified as having a rectal prolapse.”