

Maryland's Revised 2008 4-H Sheep Tail Docking Policy

This is a change from the previous year. Maryland 4-H still recommends that all lambs be docked at the distal end of the caudal fold, although tails will not be measured. Elimination from fairs and events will be based on the presence of prolapse. Please read below for the details of the policy.

Part 1 - Voluntary

"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. At 'weaning age,' lambs should have a minimum tail length of 1.4 inches."

In 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 at the end of 2008.

Part 2 - Mandatory

"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. 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."