

INDUSTRY E-NEWS

YOUR LAMB CHECKOFF



American Lamb Board Actions During COVID-19

In a matter of days, the American lamb industry went from preparing for the most important time of year for consumption – Easter and Passover – to facing a potentially devastating crisis. On March 9, 2020, the American Lamb Board (ALB) hosted a workshop in New York City with food editors and test kitchen staff of Bon Appetit Magazine and on March 10, 2020, participated at a national conference for caterers.

Just a couple days later, cities around the country announced closures, including restaurant shut-downs as part of measures to control the spread of COVID-19.

The lamb industry is now facing one of its toughest times in recent memory, and there is no shortage of concerns for our feeders, producers, suppliers and processors. With 50% of American Lamb sold into foodservice, ALB and lamb suppliers have had to quickly shift strategies and identify new programs that will provide meaningful opportunities to help our industry. We have seen some very innovative programs from companies who have shifted lost foodservice sales to direct-to-consumer lamb programs. We applaud these efforts!

While our critical restaurant partners continue to be in crisis, the good news is that retail sales are increasing, as expected. Retail sales data confirms what is being seen in grocery stores across the US – sales of all fresh meats, including lamb, have surged as consumers stockpile.

For the 4-week period March 15 to April 5, 2020, compared to the same period in 2019, fresh lamb volume sales at retail climbed 17% and Easter week sales of fresh lamb were strong with more than \$19 million in sales across the US.

In the past few weeks, many consumers have bought lamb for the first time, which presents an opportunity to attract new customers and increase at home consumption of lamb. As more meals are being prepared at home, consumers will want a variety of protein choices and will be more interested in trying new recipes and products, like lamb.

Checkoff Programs Highlights During Covid-19

- ALB has connected with a fast-casual national restaurant chain about a joint summer promotion emphasizing American Lamb.
- A pilot retail dietician program is being explored with a leading supermarket.
- A new social media campaign will be launched in May, challenging consumers to cook with lamb
- Two new recipe booklets have been designed. One promotes the versatility of value cuts, like ground and shoulder, in comfort classic dishes that will be approachable for new lamb consumers. The other gives tips and recipes for creating restaurant quality meals at home with rack, loin chops, shanks and leg.
- ALB reached out to its chef network to encourage lamb take-out programs during Easter and Passover and provided discounted pricing.
- ALB coordinated lamb product donations to support restaurants who are serving meals to laid-off foodservice staff and frontline workers.
- For the food media, bloggers and influencers, ALB shifted messaging to reflect the new reality of at-home cooking – including the importance of sourcing American and supporting local farmers and ranchers.
- The ALB blogger and influencer network was recruited to help the industry by creating content to keep lamb part of spring holiday meals.
- ALB has significantly increased its social media presence as people search for meal ideas and cooking information.
- ALB is designing new virtual lamb educational experiences for influencers in key markets to replace planned face-to-face-events.
- ALB is evaluating a new online meat focused education program for retailers and distributors.

We'll continue to share information in this ALB e-newsletter. Please pass it along to other members of the American Lamb industry. As always, ALB is here to support local promotions and provide industry information: email Info@AmericanLamb.com or call (866) 327-5262 ext. 3.