

March 20, 2020

The Honorable Greg Ibach
Under Secretary, Marketing and Regulatory Programs
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 228-W
Washington, DC 20250

Under Secretary Ibach,

The lamb industry is struggling with the loss of lamb meat sales due to the COVID-19 pandemic closing of restaurants this week. Historically, the majority of American Lamb is sold to food service industries, so the closing of restaurant businesses is devastating to lamb sales.

The loss of meat sales beginning on Monday pushed our second largest lamb company over the edge to file Chapter 11 bankruptcy on March 19, 2020. We have confirmed other lamb companies are experiencing weakening sales this week to their food service customers and distributors.

We encourage prompt solicitation of bids under the February 19, 2020 Pre-Solicitation Notice Announcement for Trade Mitigation Purchase of Lamb Products.

The Easter/Passover season is traditionally the single largest lamb consumption period of the year, so the loss of sales is devastating. Decreased slaughter during this run up to the largest lamb processing period can lead to back-up of live lambs in the feedlots which again supports an aggressive use of USDA lamb meat purchases. We ask that every consideration is made of any additional lamb products for near term solicitations, as well as use of section 32 procurement funds as appropriate.

We appreciate consideration of USDA tools to help our producers and feeders deal with this crisis.

American Sheep Industry Association

Benny Cox – President

National Lamb Feeders Association

Jeff Hasbrouck - President