



Overview of Lamb and Mutton Imports

American Sheep Industry Association

March 11, 2025

Overview

In 2024, imported lamb and mutton accounted for 73% of total U.S. lamb and mutton consumption (disappearance). The share of imported product has steadily increased over the last 25 years, impacting American lamb production. The level of imported lamb and mutton in the U.S. market has now reached a critical point that it threatens the livelihood and sustainability of the U.S. sheep and lamb industry.

Australia accounts for 74% of lamb imports, followed by New Zealand at 25%. The remaining 1% of lamb imports is from Chile, Uruguay, Canada, United Kingdom, Ireland, Mexico and Iceland. Australia and New Zealand representing 99% of imported lamb in the U.S., have captured significant market share away from U.S. lamb which it is not only having a dire impact on U.S. lamb producers but is depriving U.S. consumers of fresh, local, American lamb.

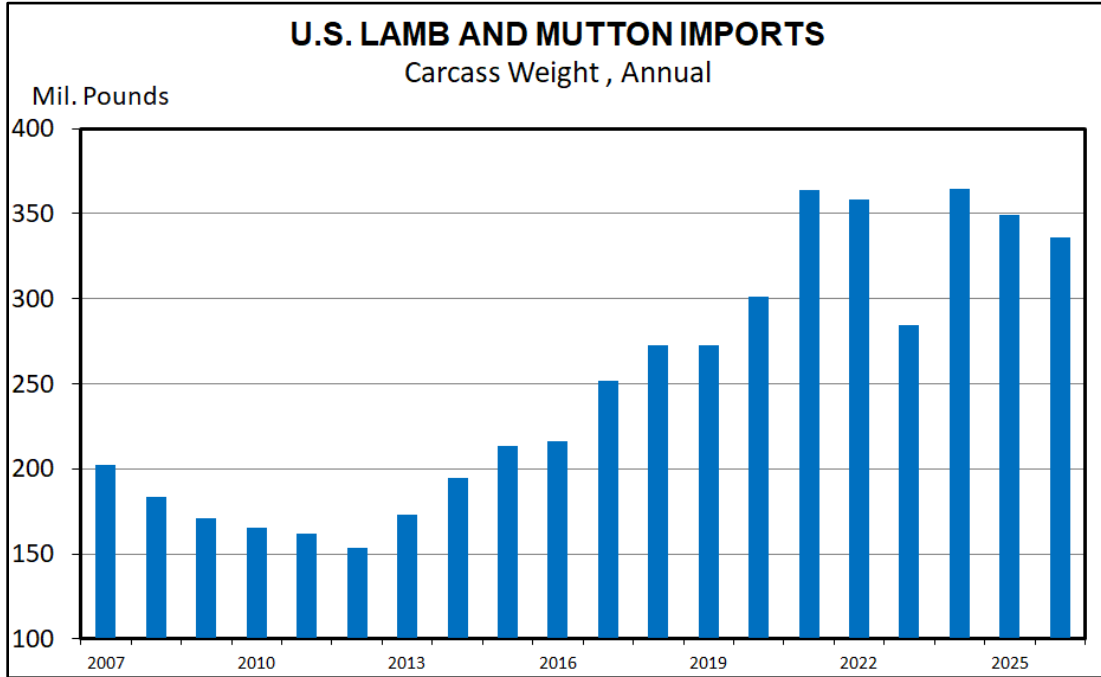
The U.S. sheep and lamb industry is at a competitive disadvantage to imported lamb in the marketplace. Australian and New Zealand lamb is marketed at lower prices due to a currency exchange rate that favors imported lamb over American lamb.

Trends

- In 2024, lamb imports set a record at 309.3 million pounds.
- Total lamb and mutton imports reached a record 364.8 million pounds in 2024.
- Lamb imports from Australia and New Zealand were up 28.5% and 30.8%, respectively in 2024.
- Foreign countries take advantage of the U.S. currency exchange which favors imports and hurts U.S. lamb producers.
- The cost of production in the U.S. remains above pre-pandemic levels, input costs such as labor have increased, and high interest rates have driven up borrowing costs.
- Buyer demand for American lamb has weakened as imported lamb is priced lower than American lamb. Buyers are opting for imported product, impacting sales for American lamb, and pressuring U.S. lamb producer prices lower.
- The lamb industry, unlike other livestock sectors, does not have a risk management program to help weather the impact of imports, periods of uncertainty or economic losses.

We ask for your support in addressing the surge in foreign lamb and including lamb imports in the agriculture/food tariff plan expected to be announced on April 2, 2025, to ensure consumers have access to American Lamb and the future sustainability of the U.S. sheep and lamb industry.

Statistics & Graphs



Data Source: USDA-ERS & USDA-FAS, Compiled by the Livestock Marketing Information Center

U.S. LAMB IMPORTS

Monthly, Carcass Weight
(1,000 Pounds)

	Australia	% of Total Imports	New Zealand	% of Total Imports	Total Lamb	% of Previous Year
2015	128,323	71.8%	48,276	27.0%	178,740	8.7%
2016	140,144	74.6%	46,614	24.8%	187,896	5.1%
2017	149,374	72.8%	53,365	26.0%	205,222	9.2%
2018	150,421	73.1%	52,921	25.7%	205,678	0.2%
2019	161,958	74.1%	54,664	25.0%	218,510	6.2%
2020	161,989	75.8%	48,460	22.7%	213,634	-2.2%
2021	195,652	74.0%	64,400	24.4%	264,241	23.7%
2022	207,836	74.8%	64,953	23.4%	278,003	5.2%
2023	178,849	74.5%	58,505	24.4%	239,948	-13.7%
2024	229,737	74.3%	76,523	24.7%	309,338	28.9%

Data Source: USDA/ERS, Compiled by ASI

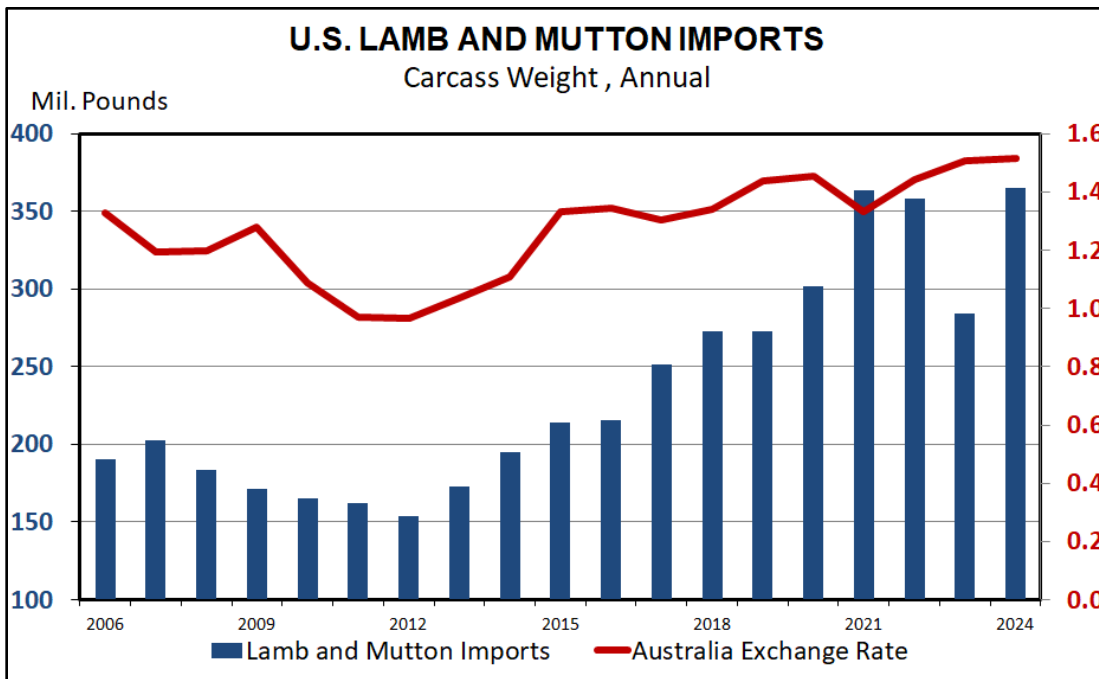
**TOTAL U.S. LAMB & MUTTON PRODUCTION, LAMB & MUTTON IMPORTS & EXPORTS,
LAMB & MUTTON IMPORTS & EXPORTS AS A PERCENT OF U.S. LAMB & MUTTON
PRODUCTION**

	Total U.S. Lamb & Mutton Production¹	Lamb & Mutton Imports	Lamb & Mutton Exports	Total Lamb & Mutton Disappearance²	Imports as % of Production	Imports as % of Disappearance
	(Carcass Weight, Million Lbs.)				(Percent)	
2015	155.4	213.7	4.5	357.1	137.5%	59.8%
2016	155.4	215.9	5.4	381.2	138.9%	56.6%
2017	150.4	251.7	5.9	395.6	167.4%	63.6%
2018	158.4	272.6	5.9	415.4	172.1%	65.6%
2019	153.7	272.4	5.7	422.1	177.2%	64.5%
2020	143.6	301.5	3.2	451.8	210.0%	66.8%
2021	143.5	363.9	3.5	506.7	253.6%	71.8%
2022	136.8	358.1	5.8	484.7	261.8%	73.9%
2023	135.7	284.3	5.1	421.1	209.5%	67.5%
2024	138.8	364.8	4.8	499.4	262.8%	73.0%

¹Includes on-farm production

²Disappearance is the available supply of lamb. It accounts for production including on-farm, beginning & ending stocks, imports, & exports.

Data Source: USDA/ERS, USDA/NASS, Compiled by ASI



Data Source: USDA-ERS & USDA-FAS, Pacific Exchange Rate Service, Univ. of B.C., Compiled by the Livestock Marketing Information Center