



# Niman Ranch Lamb Protocols

---

## Our Mission

The mission of Niman Ranch is to produce and market the best-tasting lamb in the world, by adhering to a strict code of husbandry principles and practices. Niman Ranch livestock must be humanely treated, fed the finest feeds, never given growth hormones or antibiotics, and raised on land that is cared for as a sustainable resource.

Niman Ranch lamb is:

**ALL NATURAL\***

Raised with:

No Antibiotics Ever

No Added Hormones Ever

All Vegetarian Feeds

Humanely Raised on Environmentally Sustainable Family Ranches

\*minimally processed – no artificial ingredients or preservatives

## Lamb Rancher Requirements

Each ranch shall be a family ranch on which an individual or family member (a) owns the lambs; (b) depends upon the ranch for his or her livelihood; (c) provides a major part of the daily labor to manage the lambs and ranch operation. This shall not prohibit networking among family ranches as long as every member within the network adheres to all criteria listed herein.

## General Husbandry

### Feeds:

No feed containing animal proteins are permitted, with the exception of milk products. Lambs shall never be given any form of growth-promoting hormones, steroids, or antibiotics. Lambs should be consistently fed feed and forage with adequate concentrations of fiber to allow for proper rumination.

Animals should not be kept for longer than 24 hours in nutrient deficient environments (ie: in holding pens).

Troughs and pens must be kept clean and stale feed should be removed to ensure satisfactory hygiene and comfort.

Animals must always have access to a constant and adequate supply of clean, fresh drinking water.

**Housing:**

Housed or sheltered pasture lambs must be provided with dry beds and the appropriate environment to control temperature and allow for adequate ventilation. Particularly during the summer, lambs must be protected from heat stresses (ie: presence of sheep/goat salt mineral mix lick near water). Housing should also include adequate lighting and access to the outdoors. When climatic conditions allow, animals must have access to grazing pasture.

Lambs should at all times be allowed free movement and maximum expression of natural behavior. Ranch corrals, sorting chutes, and barns should be designed to account for the behavioral traits of sheep and should eliminate any risk of injury or harm to the health of the lambs.

**Handling:**

Basic behavioral characteristics should be observed when handling or moving groups of sheep. Animal handlers must be trained and understand the stress factors that sheep experience.

Because sheep are herding animals, various tools are needed to maintain fluid movement of the stock. Facility design and location is the primary tool to fluid sheep movement (the location of the sun in regards to sheep movement in the corral can restrict fluid movement). Handling systems, gates and alleys should be designed to minimize undue stress, injury or suffering to the animals and do not impeded flock movement.

Time of day is critically important when handling sheep. In the summer months, sheep are worked very early in the morning to minimize heat and dust stress. In the winter months, sheep are normally worked when weather is not adverse.

Dogs used for herding and as guard dogs must be properly trained and must be kept under control at all times. Electric prods are not permitted; plastic paddles, blunt PVC plastic pipe, blunt wooden canes or sticks can be used as benign handling tools to help initiate movement and handling of sheep. These tools are not used to strike the animal, but used only on the body of the animal whereby minimal contact will encourage desired movement and prevent harm or bruising.

**Health Management:**

The observation of normal animal behavior and animal body conditions are critically important to help manage and control health problems in sheep. Sheep herders must be trained to identify the difference between normal sheep behavior and abnormal behavior. Normal animal behavior includes how they feed, how they interact with other sheep in their herd, if they appear stress based on their reactions and how they travel in the pasture. Sheep herders must be trained to identify the difference between the normal body condition for the herd of sheep and sheep that are loosing body condition. The loss of body condition is a sign that the sheep is for some reason not eating based on either sickness or stress. Astute observations can minimize the management

of health problems by identifying health problems in the early stages and will help reduce the use of antibiotics in the treatment of sick animals.

The routine use of sub-therapeutic antibiotics or feed additives to prevent coccidiosis or bloat is prohibited. Should a lamb become sick or injured and require an antibiotic or other form of medication, that lamb should be treated individually and identified in some fashion to ensure that it can be properly segregated. Niman Ranch will not purchase treated lambs.

The use of wormers, dips, pour-ons, and routine vaccinations are approved for use, provided they are administered for the wellness of the lambs (preventing parasites), and that the manufacturer's recommended withdrawal time is observed.

Close attention must be given to condition of the animals' hooves. If foot rot occurs, animals must be checked over, isolated and treated promptly.

Provisions must be made for segregation and proper treatment and care of sick/injured animals, and if necessary, humanely euthanized.

**Castration/Tail Docking/Museling:**

Tail docking must be carried out for cleanliness and to protect the health of lambs from fly infestation. Tail docking and castration must be performed prior to one month of age. The timing of these procedures and the method used is done in consideration of the well being of the lamb, in terms of stress, minimizing blood loss, and when sanitation of the procedure can be controlled to minimize infections.

Museling must never be performed. Museling is the removal of strips of flesh from the anal and vaginal area to deter flies. This practiced in the United States and is most common with production systems in Australia and New Zealand where wool breeds are predominant. Niman Ranch and other domestic sheep producers employ proper management such as good breeding and tail docking to prevent fly infestations.

**Weaning:**

Weaning shall take place at an age that considers the health and welfare of both the lamb and its mother. This age may vary depending on the breed of the ewe and level of milk production, her age and health, and the health of her lambs. Weaning should never take place before 5 weeks of age. The recommended minimum weaning age is 90 days (12 weeks of age).

**Transit:**

Loading docks and ramps must be designed to minimize slippage during loading.

Persons who transport live lambs should attend to the animals and take necessary steps to ensure that the animals are not injured or caused to suffer during loading, transport, and unloading.

**Predation:**

All animals should be appropriately protected from predation and environmental hazards. Non-lethal methods are used including fencing, guard animals, noise devises, field rotations, and mix species grazing (cattle and sheep in the same field). Fences should be tight and properly

monitored and maintained. Under no circumstances should traps or poison be used to control predation. Predator control should coincide with all federal, state, and local governmental regulations and, when necessary, the local Wildlife Service should be consulted to help curb predator loss.

### **Feeder Lambs**

Niman Ranch does not source feeder lambs from other producers. All lambs sold by Niman Ranch are born, raised, and fed by the family farmers we purchase them from.

### **Finishing Pastures or Pens**

Lambs shall be given adequate space to behave naturally and, whenever possible, should be housed with their natural social group (the animals with whom they were raised). Lambs must not be confined closely for any reason other than examinations, vaccinations, tests, veterinary treatment, feeding, washing, dipping, and transit loading. Individual lambs can only be kept in isolation from other sheep if they are being treated for sickness.

Lambs are typically grain fed for 45 to 70 days. Finishing periods may be increased or decreased based on grass conditions, weaning weights, and body condition and weight of lambs before being fed grain.

The grouping of lambs into the finishing pens are based on similar age, similar weight, and similar body conditions so all lambs have the same opportunities in establishing social order and utilizing food sources. This type of grouping helps minimize unfair social competitions among lambs. This type of grouping encourages all the lambs to leave the finishing pens at approximately the same time so new lambs entering the finishing pens are not commingled with lambs that have been on feed for a length of time.

Feed shall consist of a vegetarian diet of grains, alfalfa, or roughage in some combination, and shall never contain animal by-products of any kind. Salt-mineral mix should be made available at all times.

Water and feed will be provided free choice with a constant flow of fresh water. Troughs should be cleaned regularly.

Pens shall be kept clean to ensure satisfactory hygiene and comfort. Surroundings shall not prevent animals from behaving naturally or be cause for undue stress.

The feedlot should be designed such that it has no negative impact to the environment. Manure should be managed as a beneficial by-product and recycled appropriately as on-farm fertilizer or adequate space should be provided in feed lot such that manure accumulation is not an issue.

### **Rangeland Management**

Ranchers shall treat their rangeland and cropland as a sustainable resource. Proper land management that ensures better resource use and promotes long-term sustainability is basic to future food production and to the economic welfare of rural communities.

Sheep grazing can enhance range and grasslands when managed appropriately. Proper grazing management can stimulate sensitive plant growth and sensitive animal populations. By following proper grazing management that takes into consideration both the well-being of the environment and the well-being of the sheep, each of our ranches are uniquely different and what works for one ranch might not work for another ranch.

Range management techniques such as appropriate fencing, salt placement, feed supplementation during drought, providing additional water sources, improving trails and herding are used to improve the distribution of livestock on the ranges.

Proper land management includes carefully monitoring the quality/fertility of soils, presence of vegetation cover, acidification, plant nutrient status, erosion, organic matter, salinity and salinization (particularly in irrigated systems). Soil water availability must be optimized and used through environmentally safe soil management.