

Youth livestock exhibitors experience sampling lamb, goat and beef

AT A GLANCE

Youth explore new protein options after sampling lamb, goat and beef samples in a blind taste test.

The Situation

Lamb and goat production has increased in popularity both in commercial operations and at livestock shows. However, the average U.S. consumption of lamb is merely two lamb chops per year, and goat consumption is so low that it is not recorded. While consumption of these meats is likely higher than average in farming and ranching populations, a limited number of youth livestock exhibitors at county shows had previously sampled lamb or goat. Following previous programming that included sampling beef steaks and bacon, a need was identified to sample other species.

Our Response

An opportunity was identified to educate a large group of sheep and goat exhibitors at the 2023 Youth Sheep/Goat Field Day through the meat science workshop. “The Meats We Eat” was developed that incorporated education regarding the consumption of meat in the U.S. and sampling of beef, lamb, and goat. Each youth was served one sample of each species and asked to identify the species, rate likeness on a scale of 1 to 10, and if they would eat it again. After sampling, the species order was revealed, and another sample of lamb meat balls and shredded goat meat was provided.



The Meats We Eat included serving samples of beef, lamb and goat to youth livestock exhibitors.

Lastly, various recipes were shown as examples of how to include lamb or goat in meals at home.

Program Outcomes

Throughout the four rotations, 71 youth completed the taste panel with parent/guardian consent. The average age of the participant was 11 years old. When asked which specie(s) participants exhibited, most exhibited goats, followed by sheep, beef, poultry and swine (Table 1). Due to the workshop being held at the Youth Sheep/Goat Field Day, it was expected that a majority of the youth would be sheep and goat exhibitors. Nearly all the participants had sampled beef, chicken and pork previously, but less than half had sampled lamb and around a quarter had sampled goat (Table 1). Again, this is likely higher than the average population,

but it validated a knowledge gap in the youth exhibitors regarding the final product of their animals. Participants were also asked to select their favorite meat. Nearly half chose beef, followed by chicken, pork, goat and lastly lamb (Table 1). This trend follows the national consumption trend for the most part.

Table 1. Demographics of youth prior to taste panel.

	Cattle Beef	Poultry Chicken	Sheep Lamb	Swine Pork	Goat Goat
Specie(s) Shown	14%	14%	27%	13%	41%
Previously Ate	100%	99%	46%	94%	27%
Favorite Meat	48%	25%	2%	19%	6%

The order youth sampled the meats was lamb, beef and goat. Youth consistently incorrectly guessed which species they were consuming (Table 2). Most thought the lamb sample was beef, and that the beef sample was goat, which left lamb as the guess for the last sample. When youth evaluated how much they liked the sample, all three species were rated similarly in the middle (Table 2). It was unsurprising to see middle-ranged evaluations as the samples were prepared without any seasonings unlike how meat would be consumed at home or at a restaurant. When evaluating willingness to eat again, it appears that lamb was rated the highest (Table 2). However, this may be linked to the assumption that the lamb sample was beef by over half of the youth (56%) and that beef was nearly half of the youth’s favorite meat.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Table 2. Taste panel responses to samples.

	Lamb	Beef	Goat
Correctly Identified Species	23%	15%	31%
Like (one dislike, 10 like)	6	5	6
Willingness to Eat Again	61%	44%	39%

Once the sampling order was revealed, many youth and parents were surprised by how much lamb and goat were enjoyed. One parent stated, “My daughter’s favorite sample was the goat. Now she wants more for dinner. Where do I even purchase goat meat in this area?” Once the stigma and previous beliefs were separated from the evaluation of the meats, youth were able to expand their palate and enjoy other proteins. As a result, parents were interested in experiencing sampling other proteins, as well. All youth and adults present voluntarily sampled lamb meat balls and shredded goat meat and further expanded their palates and future protein options.

The Future

While more offerings of the Meats We Eat are desired in the area, access to lamb and goat meat harvested under USDA inspection can be difficult and, therefore, expensive. Working with local producers to secure product is crucial to future programming. At the request of parents and leaders in the area, an adult taste panel is planned for 2024. This will allow for more in-depth questions to be asked during the sampling.

A common deterrent to lamb and goat consumption is lack of cookery knowledge. Implementing more cooking demonstrations utilizing recipes from international cuisines, such as Indian and Moroccan, can increase the confidence for families to cook these proteins at home.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

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