

# **Report of a Lamb and Goat Marketing Tour of NYC**

## **Introduction**

The Cornell University Animal Science Department received a small grant in 1999 to help promote marketing of lambs and slaughter goats from NY family farms. One of the activities proposed in the grant was a marketing tour for producers to the NYC metropolitan area. As another part of the grant, a small ruminant marketing advisory board was established. Members of this board met and were later surveyed as to what marketing issues should be addressed by the grant. A clear majority of the 36 respondents stated simply that the main issue was “pursuing markets”. Cornell staff decided that a marketing tour involving 40+ producers as originally planned might provide a great sightseeing experience for folks but would be prohibitively expensive and not accomplish the goal of actually opening up marketing opportunities. Instead it was decided that a small number of producers and extension educators acting as informal representatives for NY lamb and goat producers would visit NYC buyers with the express goal of establishing potential market contacts. They would then report this information back to other producers. The following report describes the wide variety of businesses we visited and provides information on the type of animals they seek and what slaughter and trucking arrangements they can make. Business names, addresses, phone numbers and contact people are listed in Appendix A. These businesses are aware that individual producers may be contacting them. If one of these marketing situations looks promising to you, feel free to pursue it, either individually or with other producers in your region. This report combines the notes and photos taken by several of the tour participants. We participants hope that other NY producers can benefit from this information either directly or by using it as a tool to seek out similar businesses in other metropolitan areas.

## **Day One**

Monday morning the tour participants met the Cornell van in Ithaca or Binghamton. Participants included lamb producers - Liz Vermeulem and Alan Ritchie, goat producers - Pat Bloomer and Richard Usack, extension educators - Janet Allard (Broome Cty), Tom Gallagher (Albany and Rensselaer Cty), and Cornell staff - Duncan Hilchey (marketing specialist), Joe Regenstein (kosher foods specialist), Tatiana Stanton (small ruminant specialist and goat producer). On the trip down we tried to prepare for some of our visits (and got mildly carsick) by reading 2 papers by Joe’s students on Halal meats and the initial summaries of the goat meat consumption questionnaires collected by the ethnic marketing project in Williamsburg, NY. These papers are included in Appendix B. In talking about our upcoming visits with buyers, we decided that a couple of us would take notes at each site while the remainder asked questions in the hope that buyers would not be overwhelmed by 9 people trying to jot down their every word.

Our first stop was Halal Meats USA, Inc., a slaughter company in Paterson, NJ whose president is Ibrahim Batca or “Abe” as he is often called. The plant manager, a young Ugandan named Sam, and some of Abe’s daughters who hold managerial positions there guided us through the slaughtering process. We were allowed to take photos and were allowed on the kill floor. We were able to talk to inspectors and several

workers despite the busy slaughter schedule. After this we retired to the office to talk with Abe about the business and what role he perceived for NY producers. This was followed by more conversation with the Batca family over a delicious and extremely bountiful lunch featuring lamb and beef at the Alaturka Turkish restaurant and a guided tour by Abe of the numerous Halal meat markets on Main Street in Paterson. Following is the gist of our conversations.

Mr. Batca's tight knit Muslim family is originally from Georgia in the former USSR. His family's exodus from the Caucasus took them first to Turkey and eventually to the United States. Although the family settled initially in Paterson, New Jersey, "Abe" and his wife Nancy, a native born Turk, branched off to Canasota, New York and started a dairy. They fell into selling slaughter goats and lambs almost by accident because of an inquiry about a goat in their front yard. Abe recounted to us tales of selling 300 goats and lambs some weeks at the Mosque on 925 Comstock Street, Syracuse, NY. Their dairy business was expanding and they now owned three dairies but the lifestyle was highly stressful. When the opportunity presented itself they sold their land to the Oneida Indians as the future site of the Turning Stone Casino and returned to Paterson. They purchased an old kosher slaughterhouse and became officially bonded as Halal Meats USA, Inc. with Packers and Stockyards. Last year because of repeated hassles collecting payments from some of his retailers and wholesalers, Abe stopped operating as a packer and instead offers cash only slaughter services to his customers.

On an average day Halal Meats USA slaughters ~25 cattle followed by ~600 sheep and goats combined. Slaughter charges are \$10/head up to 500 head with price breaks for >500 head. Private customers can also have the carcasses cut up for an additional \$.25/lb. Customers buy their own animals either through regional buyers or from large auctions such as New Holland, PA or Hackettstown, NJ and have them trucked to the slaughterhouse. Abe also arranges weekly shipments of 1,000 to 3,000 animals from Texas for customer purchase. The plant has the capacity to house several thousand animals and tracks animals individually for each specific customer. This year the plant slaughtered 6000 sheep and goats for the peak week of Ramadan and slaughtered 5000 small ruminants for the Festival of Sacrifice (Id al Adha). Abe said that the animals most in demand by his customers year round were 50 to 60 lb. live weight lambs and 60 to 70 lb. kid goats. There was also a strong market for larger sized carcasses as long as they were young and not over conditioned. Animals can be older for Id al Adha but must be unblemished. There followed some discussion on what Muslims perceived as unblemished. Abe said that the opinion varied among different Muslims, but that broken horns, open wounds, any unsoundness, and often castration were considered blemishes while eartags or notches were acceptable. Prices paid are generally based on current market prices at New Holland, Hackettstown, and San Angelo, TX. Because of high death losses and a 3 to 5% shrinkage rate on Texas imports, Abe's customers are generally willing to pay slightly more for New York produced animals especially during holidays when there is a demand for high quality animals. Abe observed that many Texas sheep and goat producers have left the business because of the removal of government price supports on wool and mohair, thus, creating a shortage of animals at the same time Halal demand is increasing.

Halal Meats USA, Inc. also buys some animals direct for their own over-the-counter sales to small private customers. These sales account for 200 to 300 lambs and

goats weekly. The customers select out individual animals, which are then custom slaughtered for them and the meat stamped not for resale. Again, all transactions are on a cash only basis. The slaughterhouse also makes provisions to allow rabbis on the kill floor because of the big demand for kosher kills. They regularly slaughter Kosher beef on Thursday afternoons. Some of Abe's other businesses include purchasing hides for tanning and manufacturing and marketing processed Halal meats.

When asked about roles for NY producers, Abe recounted an experience he had had with a coop in Mississippi that agreed to supply him 500 goats and 200 lambs weekly. After a short time their member supply of animals was exhausted and they had to start buying their animals at auction, thus competing directly with Abe to buy animals that they in turn sold back to him. Abe cautioned that although it would be beneficial to both producers and buyers for New York producers to pool their animals, producer groups should be careful not to promise too much. At one point he offered to pick up a gooseneck load of animals at a centralized point to bring to his plant. At a later point he stated that if NY producers could arrange delivery of groups of lambs and/or goats (100+) to his plant, he would gladly offer up his facilities to house the animals while his wholesale, retail and over-the counter customers looked them over and arranged to buy them. This agreement was contingent on arranging shipment to occur at a time when Abe perceives demand to be high. Abe stated that because of proximity to market and general improved quality of animals, it was important to him to encourage and help sustain NY production despite the extra costs associated with raising animals in NY compared to Texas.

Upon touring the various meat markets in Paterson, we had the opportunity to meet with Omar Mady who operates Mecca-Halal Meat, Inc. Mecca-Halal is bonded with Packers and Stockyards and buys lamb and goat for several halal butcher shops and restaurants in the NYC metropolitan area. We also met with Hasan Orman of Superior Halal Meat Markets. Superior is also bonded with Packers and Stockyards and uses about 300 lambs and goats weekly. Both these buyers indicated that they have a demand for high quality animals at certain times of the year and would be interested in working with NY producers. All their lamb and goat slaughter is done through Halal Meats USA. We visited several small meat shops on Main Street that either do their own buying or buy through Omar or Superior. Lamb and goat carcasses were selling from ~\$2.95 to \$3.50 in these retail shops. Omar and Superior and the other buyers indicated that they generally have representatives at the Hackettstown and New Holland livestock markets and/or contacts at the Lancaster, PA private treaty market. They indicated a willingness to have a list of NY producers with lambs and goats for sale sent to them preceding important Muslim holidays. They also suggested that producers call ahead when sending a nice lot of animals through any of these livestock markets so that their representatives could observe your animals and possibly deal with you direct in the future. Full of food and various containers of guava juice, dried apricots, sheep cheeses and Sultan's Delight (a substance guaranteed to improve libido in your herd sires or...??), we said goodbye to Abe and sought out our hotel in NYC.

After collapsing for a short time, we steeled ourselves to eat more food and took off for the Halal Indo-Pak restaurant in the Bronx. Our dinner guest was Shana Berger, the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) coordinator for Just Food. Just Food is a non-profit organization founded in 1995. Its mission is to develop a just and sustainable

food system in the New York City region by fostering connections between the diverse groups concerned with farming, hunger and sustainability issues. One of its programs is to link up members of low-income communities in NYC with Northeastern US farmers through CSAs. In a CSA arrangement, city dwellers pay a farmer in advance for season-long shares in his vegetable harvest. The farmer in turn delivers family shares of fresh vegetables weekly to a centralized distribution point where CSA members pick them up. Benefits of CSAs are that farmers receive money at the beginning of the growing season when it is most needed to buy seeds and supplies, and members get an assortment of fresh, organic produce throughout the growing season with a minimum of money going towards packaging, retailing, marketing and advertising costs. Communication between growers and consumers is enhanced so grower and consumer needs and requirements can be easily communicated.

For the year 2000 growing season, Shana Berger is coordinating 17 CSA groups in the NYC region supporting 12 diversified vegetable farmers. Many CSAs are interested in providing extra items to their members. These might include fruits, honey, maple syrup, dairy products, eggs, meat, etc. Shana presented us with guidelines she has written for farmers who would like to offer their extra items through one of the established CSAs. She also provided us with examples of the promotion sheets and order blanks that producers who have already established extra item meat contacts with some of these CSAs are using. These papers are available in Appendix C. Extra items are not necessarily handled the same as the vegetable produce. Deliveries are generally not weekly and payment is at time of delivery of the meat rather than in advance of the growing season.

There are some problems in dealing meat through these CSAs. Many people in NYC have only small refrigerators and minimal freezer space available to them. Thus, they generally want to buy small quantities of meat that have already been cut up into individual cuts. The farmer must be able to arrange processing of the carcasses at an economical cost and have an economical way of transporting small quantities of meat to NYC on a regular basis. Initially some of the producers tried to sell whole and half carcasses to their CSA members but this met with little demand. Pickup time span at the centralized distribution points is generally around 3 to 4 hours. Therefore, the farmer not only needs to have a way to keep the meat frozen or refrigerated during transport but also while it is awaiting pick-up. In many of the low income communities inexpensive frozen lamb and goat imported from New Zealand and/or Australia is available. Shana said that in communities such as these few families would be motivated or even able to pay more for fresh NY grown meat. Keep in mind that the limitations described here for CSAs in the NYC metropolitan area may not hold true for CSAs in other NY cities. You may want to explore the possibilities of selling cutup half and whole carcasses as extra items to CSAs in your local vicinity. Shana Berger can help provide you with names and addresses of some CSAs in other parts of NY State and even in Montreal. If you would like to market meat through the CSAs in NYC contact Shana Berger by surface mail at Just Food, 307 7th Avenue, Suite 1201, NY, NY 10001 or at shana@justfood.org, or (212) 645-9880.

Upon inquiring to the staff of Halal Indo-Pak about the source of the excellent lamb and goat dishes we consumed we were told that they buy their meat fresh from a Halal packer in New Jersey and do not use imported meat. Duncan located this

restaurant by and then asking for a search of restaurants that had both lamb and goat on their menus. This method may be a useful way to locate restaurants that are potential buyers of lamb and goat in other large cities.

## Day Two

Tuesday morning John Nettleton from Cornell Cooperative Extension, NYC, joined us. John had scouted out potential businesses to visit in the weeks preceding and also gave our visit a tourist flavor by pointing out numerous interesting spots to us on our van ride to the Bronx. We visited two well-known Italian Meat Markets on Arthur Avenue, Vincent's Meat Market and Biancardi's. Both markets retail hothouse lamb and kid goat and also handle wholesale accounts. In contrast to the carcasses generally desired by Muslim markets, hothouse carcasses are smaller and are from lambs and kids prior to weaning age (i.e. usually less than 3 months old).

Peter DeLuca operates Vincent's Meat Market. His customers generally want hothouse lambs weighing ~40 lb. live weight and kid goats weighing 25 to 30 lb. live. These carcasses are sold whole, half or quartered. Last Easter he sold about 5000 carcasses (1/2 goat, 1/2 lamb). The rest of the year the demand drops to about 25 to 30 hothouse carcasses weekly. Retail price for these carcasses ranged from \$5.49 to \$5.99/lb. hanging carcass last Easter and was \$4.99/lb on the day we visited his store. He also has a strong demand for larger, finished lambs with 40 to 50 lb. hanging carcass weights. These are generally cut into chops, racks, etc. for customers. He generally purchases these finished lambs through Zrile Packing in PA (note, John Zrile is interested in buying lamb from NY producers as long as you can economically truck to him. He will buy Dorset/ Finn crosses but is not interested in carcasses from straight Finns or fine wool breeds). Peter does use some boxed lamb from IBP.

Peter's hothouse lambs and kids have been purchased through J.C. Leone and other buyers in the past but Peter wants to increase his direct purchases from producers. He uses Crasco Trucking for trucking and can generally arrange slaughter through Miller's in Red Hook, NY, Greenville Packing in Greenville, NY, Hemlock Hills and Bobbi Kimberly Farms (**does anyone know if Miller's, Hemlock Hill and Bobbi Kimberly's are still operating and if so where they are located??? I have no listing for them in our directory**). He is eager to work with more producers and plans to purchase a warehouse and expand his wholesale accounts. Some of the price break downs he gave us were that if he purchased a hothouse lamb for \$1.20 live, he must be able to sell the carcass for \$3.50 with hide on, for \$4.10 with hide off, and retail it for \$4.99 in the store. **Tom records in his notes that Vincent would like to pay \$60/head or \$1.20/lb. live weight for hothouse lambs year round. What do the rest of you recall???**

Our next stop was Biancardi's just a few doors down. There we talked with Tony Biancardi Sr. Ideally, Tony is looking for hothouse lambs, 8 to 9 weeks old and weighing about 40 to 50 lb. live. These are generally sold as half carcasses. He views smaller lamb than this as being uneconomical because he has a cost of \$12 per slaughter and \$5 trucking cost regardless of size. Hothouse lamb and kid carcasses were retailing in the store at \$4.49/lb. the day we were there. Most of his hothouse lambs are slaughtered through Cobleskill, NY or Jeff Nichol's Slaughterhouse in Rutland, VT. A limited

amount is slaughtered through Joseph Meiller's Slaughterhouse in Pine Plains, NY. When he cannot find enough lambs, he buys from the Cornell flock. If you want to know more about selling to Biancardi's, Brian Magee at Cornell can probably summarize his requirements for you. Generally he does not buy finished lambs, rather he buys IBP boxed cuts from Boston Lamb & Veal, citing that the smaller Dorset that Cornell has bred are not ideal for the finished lamb trade. Producers interested in selling hothouse lambs to Tony can contact him directly. He is particularly interested in working with producers who can supply him with lamb off and on throughout the year at a year round price. The year round price he threw out at us was \$60/head with an increase for Christmas lambs.

The majority of Biancardi's kid goats are purchased from one producer who buys newborn kids from some of the large NY goat dairies (note, Boer bucks are often used as clean-up bucks in these herds) and raises them on lamb milk replacer. Tony feels this producer gets whiter meat and a better dressing percentage than your typical meat goat producer. His dressing percentages on these kids are 70% from live to dressed, and 87% from dressed to hide off, resulting in a total dressing percentage of 61% from live to hide off-head on with liver and heart included. He also viewed their large hearts and livers (combined weight of ~1 1/4 lb) as a positive attribute. As a note here, let me say that a dressing percentage of ~60% is also what most of our meat goat producers using Boer/dairy crosses and managing kids to gain 1/2 lb/day are getting. Producers managing their kids for lower gains probably do have lower dressing percentages. Goat kids weighing 30 to 35 lb. live are what his market desires. He has also bought some kid goats recently out of Vermont that he felt had good pale meat and dressing percentages.

Did you know that there are live animal markets in the Bronx where you can pick out your own chicken, rabbit, goat or lamb to have butchered for you? Our next two stops were two such markets in what first appeared to be transmission shops. Saroop & Sons hail originally from Trinidad where the family farmed. They sell about 150 sheep and goat combined every week. Demand increases over Muslim holidays and during conventional US holidays such as Memorial Day and 4th of July. Their most popular animals are lambs and young male goats weighing 50 to 80 lbs. However, because of the wide diversity of cultures they service, they have a demand for almost any kind of sheep or goat. The price is already marked on the animal and includes free, mandatory Halal butchering in their custom slaughterhouse. We saw prices from \$115 to \$170 on the day we were there. The customer looks animals over in the pens and then points out the one he wants. The animals are taken through a door into the slaughterhouse and slaughtered and quartered or whatever on a band saw. The meat is then returned to the customer in large black plastic bags. This all occurs in about 10 to 15 minutes. Some customers take the meat home and chill it and then return to have it cut into chops, etc. These slaughterhouses are operated under the same constraints as any custom plant. Customers come from Queens, the Bronx, Long Island, Connecticut, etc. Saroop buys his sheep and goats at both Hackettstown and Lancaster. He either attends the auctions himself or pays an order buyer \$5.00/head to represent him. Producers can also contact him directly. At one point he stated that he pays about \$.90 to \$1.20/lb. for a 70 lb. lamb live. **Was this that particular week or what??**

The second live animal market was Mr. Musa's Carniceria. Both places had lots of hay, ample fresh water and bedding on the days we visited. However, Mr. Musa stated

that no matter how healthy an animal was when it first arrived, it was exposed to all sorts of health problems from mingling with animals purchased from so many different places. Because we went to Mr. Musa's both on Tuesday and Wednesday, we were able to observe this firsthand. Despite the good feed and water, there were animals that were fine the first day and had sore mouth or diarrhea on our second visit. It is important to Mr. Musa to purchase animals that are in high demand and will be quickly selected by customers after their arrival. He said most animals stay at his market from 2 days to 2 weeks. Prices are not marked on the animals. Rather, signs on the walls say that baby lamb is \$2.00/lb. live and bigger lambs are \$1.50/lb live. Some bargaining does take place. Again, all slaughtering is Halal. Mr. Musa stated that high insurance rates, etc. for live markets cause the overhead to be quite high. He has had troubles dealing direct in the past with producers because of not having the number of animals originally quoted to him there when his truck arrives. He buys at Hackettstown, New Holland and Lancaster. By the time we left he was acting more positive about dealing with producers. He said he was willing to send trucks to pickup points with at least 100 lambs and/or goats, especially before important Muslim holidays. His main interest is in 50 to 80 lb. young goats and lambs. However, like Saroop he has customers seeking all kinds of animals.

All the places we had visited thus far had close-by competitors. We saw differences in prices among the Paterson Meat Shops, between the two Italian stores, and between the two live animal markets. However, it was clear even at Saroop's and Musa's, which were a few miles apart, that customers were going back and forth between the two places to compare animals and prices. Granted, all of these places develop their own loyal clientele and have particular strengths and weaknesses, hence their price variations. However, competition pressure must be an always-present factor in their price setting.

Lunch was a fiery goat soup of intestines, reticulum etc. (with lots of water refills and a starchy dish called Banku) at Kowus African-Caribbean Restaurant. The Ghanan staff at Kowus indicated that they use fresh lamb and goat and that producers can contact them directly. At lunch, we urged Tom Gallagher to discuss his experiences helping to run the NY State Lamb and goat teleauctions from 1985 to 1992. These teleauctions were started by Kathy Harris when she was a NY State Agriculture & Markets intern. The impetus for the auctions was the realization that several small producers were selling their animals at below market price because of limited access to markets. Some producers perceived their only marketing opportunities to be brokers and dealers who drove by their farms or bought at small local auctions. In these situations, supply of buyers was not always sufficient to encourage price competition among them or communication between producers was minimal so that some producers were unaware that they could hold out for actual market price and even sold below their actual costs of production. The teleauction project attempted to educate producers about actual market prices at different seasons of the year and to help producers evaluate how well their animals met buyer demands at the more lucrative seasons (for example, Easter).

The teleauctions were successful. About 4000 lambs and goats representing producers in three Northeast states were sold at the peak teleauction and about 10 buyers consistently participated in the bidding. However, Ag & Markets Graders and Cornell Cooperative Extension Educators staffed the teleauctions. When Ag & Markets discontinued hiring graders, the teleauctions disappeared. The hope that CADE and various producer associations could continue them never materialized. Tom suggested

that if the teleauctions were ever reinstated it might be a good idea to pool animals in two separate regions (North of Albany, South of Albany) for sale at Easter time and possibly Ramadan.

Some conditions of the teleauctions were:

- 1) Producers consigned their animals 10 days before the auction and identified them by weight, age, breed and grade. The grade designations of THICK or THIN were very simple but quite sufficient to meet buyers' needs for information, and easy for producers to implement. If producers could make up a "lot" (25 animals of one type class) they were allowed to declare their own floor price.
- 2) Teleauction staff grouped lots of 25 animals into a catalog. They assigned floor prices based on projected market prices at large, popular auctions in Pennsylvania and Virginia, etc. for producers who had not included floor price. If producers had less than 25 animals to form a uniform lot, their animals were combined with another producer's to form the lot. Catalogs were mailed out to a large number of buyers telling them to phone in at a specific time the day of the auction. Buyers throughout the Northeast US were aggressively sought after by Cornell Cooperative Extension and Ag & Markets staff through phone solicitations etc.
- 3) On auction day, buyers phoned in 15 minutes before the start of the auction and were assigned a number to allow them to be anonymous. Buyers remained on line during the bidding. Hothouse animals went first followed by larger carcasses and cull adult females. Buyers who were interested in only the older animals could phone back when bidding started on those animals. Approximately, 6 to 7 phone lines were needed.
- 4) Three days later, producers delivered animals to a centralized auction facility where Ag & Market graders verified that they matched their description, weight and numbers. Producers were allowed to bring in 10% over their quota in animals. Upon unloading at the auction grounds, animals became the property and responsibility of the buyer.
- 5) Facilities owned by Empire Livestock Markets were used for the transactions. Empire Livestock Markets' bonded status was also used to financially guarantee the transactions. Initially Empire was paid a nominal "put thru" charge by producers. Later, producers also paid a \$2.00 fee per animal for bonding.

Initial problems with the program were getting producers educated and gaining their trust so that they would actually bring the animal numbers that they had originally consigned. The first year some producers got cold feet and sold their consigned animals to on-farm buyers at less than the price their actual lot received in the teleauction. A decision was made to penalize producers who brought less than 90% of their consigned numbers or were significantly off on animal weights by not allowing them to participate the following year. This eliminated the problem.

Felise Gross, the Kosher Food Director for NY State Department of Ag & Markets, graciously accompanied us to our next site, Alle Processing. Alle produces processed kosher foods under several brand names including New York Deli, Meal Mart, and Mom Cuisine. Mark Bergman, Alle's talked with us and led us on a tour of their facilities.

Although Alle uses both beef and lamb, they do almost none of their slaughtering in the Northeast US. Most of their beef is imported from Argentina and Uruguay. These animals are usually lean. They also purchase a small quantity of well-conditioned steers from Aurora in Chicago, Illinois. Their lamb is purchased and slaughtered in Rowena,



Texas. However, they do have a demand for 100 to 150 red veal calves per week that they are having trouble filling. These calves would have to be raised Kosher (for example, on soy fat and milk powder, no mixing of meat byproducts with dairy products) and Alle would only purchase the forequarters.

Mark Bergman said that the main reason they do not buy and slaughter in the NE US is the low supply of animals and the lack of a modern, high capacity kosher slaughterhouse. Arrangements they have tentatively set up with Halal Meats USA, Inc. and other Halal plants have never been acted upon, possibly because these older plants are already working at full capacity. In contrast, high capacity plants like Taylor's handle too many cattle too fast for rabbis to keep up with them. In order for Kosher processing to be economically viable for Alle, a plant would need to slaughter a minimum of 150 lambs/day or 500 to 1000 lambs weekly. It would need to be designed for 2 rabbis to be on the kill floor at all times. The modern Rowena plant can process 150 lambs daily. However, the disadvantages of it are that Alle must fly its rabbis there every week from NY, as there are no qualified rabbis residing in the region. A plant near NYC or even Montreal would be much easier and cost effective to have qualified rabbis commute to. Earlier talks about setting up a large, modern kosher plant in NY State never got off the ground financially. Felise Gross stated that one reason for this was that these plants were aimed strictly at slaughtering cattle and that there were concerns that the majority of the cattle slaughter population in NY are cull cows and surplus males from the dairy industry and hence "bologne" cows. Mark Bergman stated that ideally a plant would slaughter up to 1000 lambs and 500 to 700 beef cattle weekly. These cattle would need to be well conditioned and would gradually supplement the cattle butchered in Illinois. Other advantages foreseen by Alle are that a Northeast plant would provide them with a source of fresh lamb casings for their hotdogs rather than the synthetic casings they currently use. Alle has no problems with having a qualified Muslim say the proper Muslim prayer over the carcasses as they are killed. This would permit the hindquarters to be marketed as Halal (Remember, only forequarters can be marketed as Kosher). Ideally, Alle is looking for finished lamb carcasses that yield a 25 to 30 lb forequarter (up to the 12th rib) and are graded yield 2. **However, Tom wrote down that they were looking for 100 to 120 lb. liveweight lambs with a 40 lb. forequarter which doesn't really make sense. Also did the carcasses Mark show us seem fleshier than yield 2??**

Alle is content with purchasing their lean cattle from South America. Ground beef from these cattle is mixed with trimmings from the Illinois cattle to produce Alle's all beef hotdogs. Some meat from Uruguay is also marketed as "grass fed, raised on open range, no hormone" beef products. The largest beef buyer in Argentina is Israel, hence Israel has helped finance several plants there that can do rapid Kosher kills. In Mark Bergman's opinions the plants they work with in Uruguay and Argentina are exceptionally clean with *e.coli* ranging from 100 to 1000/count for raw meat. The plant they use in Uruguay is very modern with automated washing and salting baths that carry the forequarters immediately onto a deboning table. It is equipped with very large inline freezers. The frozen meat is sent directly to Alle.

Cattle are slaughtered by throwing them on their backs in the South American, Israeli funded slaughterhouses. The only alternative there is hoist and shackle. Joe Regenstein made the point that both of these methods are highly stressful and essentially

cruel for large ruminants and suggested that any modern kosher plant in the Northeast should be designed to use Temple Grandin's plans for humane butcher cradles, etc.

Alle requires its meats to meet Glatt Kosher criteria. **Glatt Kosher means \_\_\_(Joe can you help me out here?)**. In order for a carcass to be accepted under Glatt Kosher, the lungs of the slaughtered animal must be so free of adhesions that the lungs can be blown up after slaughter. Mark Bergman cited that 30 to 40% is the average Glatt Kosher acceptance rate in the US for carcasses, while the plants he works with in Argentina and Uruguay are obtaining acceptance rates of 45 to 50% and 60 to 65% respectively. The Rowena, Texas plant is obtaining an acceptance rate of 80% on its lambs? (is this what he said?). This led to a talk of what management techniques lead to high acceptance of meat as Glatt Kosher. There has been a link between Vitamin E deficiencies and increased lung adhesions. The Israelis have found that if they reject for slaughter any animal that has received antibiotics (i.e. any animal that has looked sick enough to need to be treated), this substantially increased acceptance rates. Joe Regenstein added that Don Lyons at the Cornell Diagnostic Laboratory is interested in working with producers to manage their herds for high acceptance.

Tuesday night we ate at the Herban Garden, a small restaurant in Manhattan. The chef there would like to feature lamb more regularly on their menu. She would also like to try out some goat. **Folks, I need some info here on name of chef and restaurant owner**. Our guest speaker that night was Dr. John Addrizzo who operates New York State Meat Goat Associates, which wholesales and retails goat meat. The company also maintains their own doe/kid operation in NY, and two holding sites for purchased animals in New Jersey and North Carolina. Dr. Addrizzo is a strong proponent of goat meat. He cites that the fat in goat meat has an excellent polyunsaturated to saturated fat ratio. Goat meat contains less fat than lamb and Mr. Addrizzo related to us that the fat is ~30% saturated as opposed to ~50% for lamb. He aims at a sophisticated customer who is willing to pay more for a quality animal. The company has a part interest in a Halal slaughterhouse in NJ. They have been able to hire rabbis through OK Laboratories to do kosher slaughters at the plant. The forequarters are then sold as Kosher for \$4.25/lb while the hindquarters are sold as Halal for \$3.25/lb. Dr. Addrizzo has a market for both Boer cross suckling kids and older kids weighing 40 to 60 lbs. live. He would like to see goat producers in the Northeast and Southeast US coordinate their production. He cites that producers in the Southeast have problems with kids born late in the season because of excessive summer heat and high parasite loads while Northeast producers have extra costs associated with kids born early in the season because of needing to protect them from extreme cold and the cost of winter feeding does that are in late pregnancy and/or lactating. Ideally he would like to see North Carolina farmers kid in early spring and New York producers kid later. He did not make it clear whether he envisioned similar prices being paid for these animals at slaughter time. Traditionally, the prices for suckling kids and lambs drop after Easter and plummet after July 4th with a sharp revival at Christmas.

Dr. Addrizzo would like to see Cornell Cooperative Extension take a stronger role in goat marketing. He has recently been buying goats from North Carolina where the cooperative extension agents look over the goats at a centralized pick up point and grade them for him. They act as a buffer between him and the producers. When telling a producer why his animals do not meet the desired grade, they are also able to check out the

producer's management system and give him/her advise on how to improve their animals growth and carcass qualities. Dr. Addrizzo proposed that we should have 3 regional pools in the Northeast supplied with goats that have been graded by either the Cooperative Extension Service or USDA. Note - in past discussions of this at Cornell it has been felt that for young lambs and goats, if a producer **accurately** reports the lamb or kid's age, weight, and breed, a buyer should be able to assign his own grade to the animal sight unseen. However, Dr. Addrizzo felt that web page listings etc. of producers with animals for sale were very risky for buyers unless cooperative extension educators would view and assign a grade to the animals.

### **Day Three**

On Wednesday morning we returned to New Jersey to visit Dartagnan's in Newark, NJ. Dartagnan's was founded in 1984 and wholesales and retails many gourmet or hard-to-obtain produce and meat items to its customers. They are famous for their fresh Foie Gras. Their customers include many restaurants, delis, supermarkets and the Whitehouse! They also have a new retail business on the web where private customers can order direct from their catalog. They had a big response to their web page this Christmas and mailed 2000 boxes/day from their Newark facility via UPS Overnight Air.

Our guides at Dartagnan's were Liz Guenther, marketing director, and Kris Kelleher, purchasing director. Kris was able to tell us a great deal about where each item in the warehouse is procured and what sort of product is desired. She also stated that she would be happy to work with producer groups that are formulating brands or labels for NY grown products to give them an idea of what sort of criteria her customers are looking for.

They sell both suckling lamb and kid. Ideally they are looking for lambs and kids that will dress out at 22 to 25 lb and 16 to 20 lb. hanging carcass weights respectively. They buy some of their kids from NY State Meat Goat Associates but are looking for more lamb and goat producers to buy from. Right now most of their lamb and goats are slaughtered at a packer in Green Village, NJ. However, Kris said that she is happy to work with producers to work out the logistics of having animals slaughtered and quickly transported to Newark. Producers must be very reliable and able to promptly fill orders. Kris needs carcasses delivered about 3 days after the order has been made. It is company policy to freeze no meat. Carcasses are Kryovaxed and shipped to their customers in insulated boxes with frozen gel-packs.

Dartagnan's also sells cuts from larger finished lambs but these lamb carcasses are imported from Australia. Their Kryovaxed lamb has a shelf life of 6 to 7 weeks, while their venison has a shelf life of 12 to 14 weeks because of its lower fat content. They are exploring the possibility of selling fresh, boned, cubed goat meat because of some interest from Haitian immigrants in Florida.

Prepared products are the biggest sellers on their web page. However, they sold ~140 lambs/wk and ~40 kids/wk during Easter. They were selling ~12 to 15 lamb and kids weekly at the time of our visit. Producers can contact Kris directly if they are interesting in selling animals to Dartagnan's. Kris states that the exotic factor is not of prime import. The most important factor is how the animals are raised and cared for. They prefer healthy, growthy animals that are pasture raised and if at all possibly,

organically reared. Kris likes to visit the farms if possible. She can also help with the sale of middle meats and byproducts. As well as lamb and goat, they buy game birds, ducks, emus, rabbits, buffalos, ostriches, poultry, and pork. All their venison is currently imported from New Zealand. Their web page is [www.dartagnan.com](http://www.dartagnan.com).

Exhausted and all too aware of the duties we had waiting for us at home we sped back to Binghamton and Ithaca. We did take note that the mileage from Hackettstown to Ithaca is 180 miles for those of you willing to brave the 10% commission at the Hackettstown Livestock Market. As participants parted, we shared the view that all the buyers had treated us with a great deal of courtesy and interest and had been willing to give us much more of their time than anticipated. The tour reminded us that while we may be hesitant to approach buyers it is in our best interest to do so and sometimes less arduous than expected.