

Exercising lambs is a necessity. One of the best ways to exercise lambs is with the assistance of a dog. If a dog is used to run lambs, a circular or oval shaped track or a square track with rounded corners should be used. The track path should be 5 to 7 feet wide. If the path is any wider, lambs have a tendency to stop or turn back on the dog. The outside fence should be at least 4 feet tall and constructed of heavy, tightly stretched net wire. The inside fence should be 4 feet tall and made of netwire that has some elasticity and is not tightly stretched. It is important to remove all rocks or obstacles from the path.

Sand, cedar shavings or fresh dirt should be kept in the path to provide a softer running surface. Overall measurements should be no larger than 100 feet by 100 feet and no smaller than 40 feet by 40 feet. The ideal is approximately 70 feet by 70 feet. This is large enough for lambs to get a good workout, but small enough that you can control or stop your dog in case of an emergency. If you do not have a dog, you may exercise your lambs using a bicycle or four-wheel, all-terrain vehicle. You may also chase the lambs yourself, however, this is very tiring for you and the lambs probably will not get enough exercise. Walking lambs with a halter does not give them enough exercise, but it is better than no exercise at all.

To monitor your results, weigh lambs on a regular basis. Know whether your lambs are gaining or losing weight and know how much. Feeding and exercise go hand in hand. Exercise is an excellent way to condition and tone your lambs, and help control fat deposition. Lambs should be exercised extremely hard and fast for short distances of 350 to 450 yards. In an exercise program, your goal is to run the lambs just long enough to get adrenalin running through their bodies. This helps develop muscle. If you exercise the lambs too long, you will pass this point and start to tear down muscle rather than develop it. Exercise programs should begin 2 to 3 months before the show, depending upon the ration fed and the condition of the lambs. Do not make the mistake of exercising lambs before they are properly conditioned.

Information above is from the Texas Agricultural Extension Service [4-H Show Lamb Guide](#)

## Exercising Your Lamb

By: Lyndsey Keller

When it comes to exercising your lamb, there are many ways to go about

doing it. Many people believe exercise should start as soon as you get your lamb. Others believe you should wait until the lamb needs it and recommend exercising when the lamb reaches about 100 pounds. I'm in the middle. I believe a lamb should receive some form of exercise daily, usually in the form of a walk, even if the lamb is underconditioned or ill. I've found that some exercise will boost the spirit of an ill lamb and give them a larger appetite. But, to me, a complete exercise program shouldn't be started until the lamb reaches 100 pounds. Others may disagree. Whenever you decide to exercise your lamb is up to you only.

There are many different ways for you to exercise your lamb. Listed below are the many different ways to exercise your lamb. Those in bold print are recommended the most among top lamb producers.

Chariots

Climbing Hills

Feeding on an incline (not exactly exercise)

Isometrics

Jumping/Using Hurdles

Running (for long periods at a time)

Running Freely

Sprinting

Tracking (with a track dog)

Walking (with or without a treadmill)

## Shaping Up: The Benefits of Isometric Exercise for Your Show Lambs

By: Scott Stebner  
Stebner Club Lambs

While club lamb enthusiasts have been on a quest to increase muscle mass and firmness in their show lambs by chasing after the latest in feed supplements or by looking towards high tech methods of exercise, I feel that we have neglected a very simple, but very productive means to

building maximum muscle tone, shape and volume.

Muscle structure is much the same in any animal. The basic muscle physiology of a cat is similar to that of a horse, and that of our show lambs is akin to our own body. With these close similarities, I see every reason to look towards human exercise techniques, mainly those used by body builders (people who are acutely concerned with muscle size and tone) to further understand and enhance our show lambs' exercise routines.

What I am referring to is a simple program of isometrics. This form of exercise involves muscular contractions, during which no shortening or lengthening of muscle occurs. In other words, there is no movement, but a constant and equal force or strain is placed on the muscles. This strain is achieved through pushing, pressing, or pulling against an immovable object. When performed properly, isometric exercises are capable of producing a deep level of muscular development. They burn calories, strengthen and tone muscle groups, improve the ability to hold a contraction, and increase muscle size. The key to applying the concepts of isometric exercise to our club lamb workout program is finding a way to adapt the techniques of isometrics to the unique needs of our animals. We need to find ways to isolate the target muscles with specific exercises that can be done with sheep.

Where isometrics differ from our usual exercise and strength training is that instead of repetition (isotonic exercise), duration is emphasized. For example, instead of performing ten push-ups, one would push off the floor to a bent arm position and hold for ten seconds. We are looking for equal and sustained resistance.

So how does this apply to your lamb and your program? How do you get your lamb to perform isometric exercises? I believe our exercise programs need to be two tiered; the first involves conditioning and calorie burning, the other is more focused on building and defining muscle. Since the muscle groups should be warmed up before performing

isometrics, we suggest that you focus on calorie burning and conditioning as your "warm-up". Whether you track, treadmill, or walk your lambs, isometric exercises should be performed after your usual workout. The reason is that isometrics deals with a constant pressure on the muscles, and since it is the tearing of these muscle fibers and the rebuilding of them that leads to increased bulk and definition, we want the muscles of our show lambs to be stretched and warm before we put this force on them. As with any athlete, after strenuous exercise, there must be a cool down period. This could be as simple as a leisurely walk home, allowing the lamb's respiration and heart rate to return normal.

Now that we know when to perform isometric exercise, how do we do them and which muscle groups shall we target? The exercise that I describe targets the loin and leg. I suggest that you find a hill, slant, (or for those of you in Nebraska, a lamb stand) at about a forty-degree incline. Place the lamb's front legs on level ground at the top of the incline. Gently push the lamb's hind end down the incline so that he is now facing uphill. Be sure that the lamb is not overextending his hind legs or that he is "breaking" at the loin, as this can damage the muscle group over the loin.

To start off, we push on the lamb's brisket with one hand while holding the head in the other. Allow the lamb to drop its head somewhat, as this helps to tense the muscles over the top line. At this point, the lamb should be pushing into your hand, wanting to get to the top of the hill or incline. Offer just enough resistance to hold the lamb steady in its place.

When starting out, push for a count of five to ten seconds and then release. Keep in mind, we are teaching the lamb at this stage as well as working the muscles. Try ten "sets" of this, with short rest periods in between, then allow the lamb on its final set to make its way up the hill and return to level ground.

Each day you should increase the duration of each set and decrease the number of sets. For example, after a week or two you could be working on three or four sets of a minute or two each. These numbers are not set in stone but will vary somewhat with the strength and condition of each

lamb. Notice how your lamb's heart and respiration rates increase as he works against the static pressure of your hand. Just as your muscles may "quiver" as you reach muscle fatigue, so will the lamb's. This is your indication to stop the set and provide a rest period. When we were still showing, we would be working several lambs, alternating them so that each lamb would have a rest/recovery period back on level ground of a minute or two. After your last exercise, a short walk of three to four minutes should cool him down and stretch his muscles.

Once you understand the concept of working isolated muscle groups through isometrics, you will find new ways to work selected muscles that you target. Some experimentation and close observation on your part will allow you to tailor an exercise program to your lamb's specific needs.

One word of caution should be mentioned here. Lambs that may be prone to prolapse need to be watched carefully when trying these exercises. Not only are you on a slant, which can put pressure on the rectum, but you are asking the lamb to strain his muscles in this position.

If you are at all concerned that your lamb may have this tendency to prolapse, you can perform these exercises on flat ground, and ask for less effort with each set. Again, adapt these exercises to your unique needs and situation.

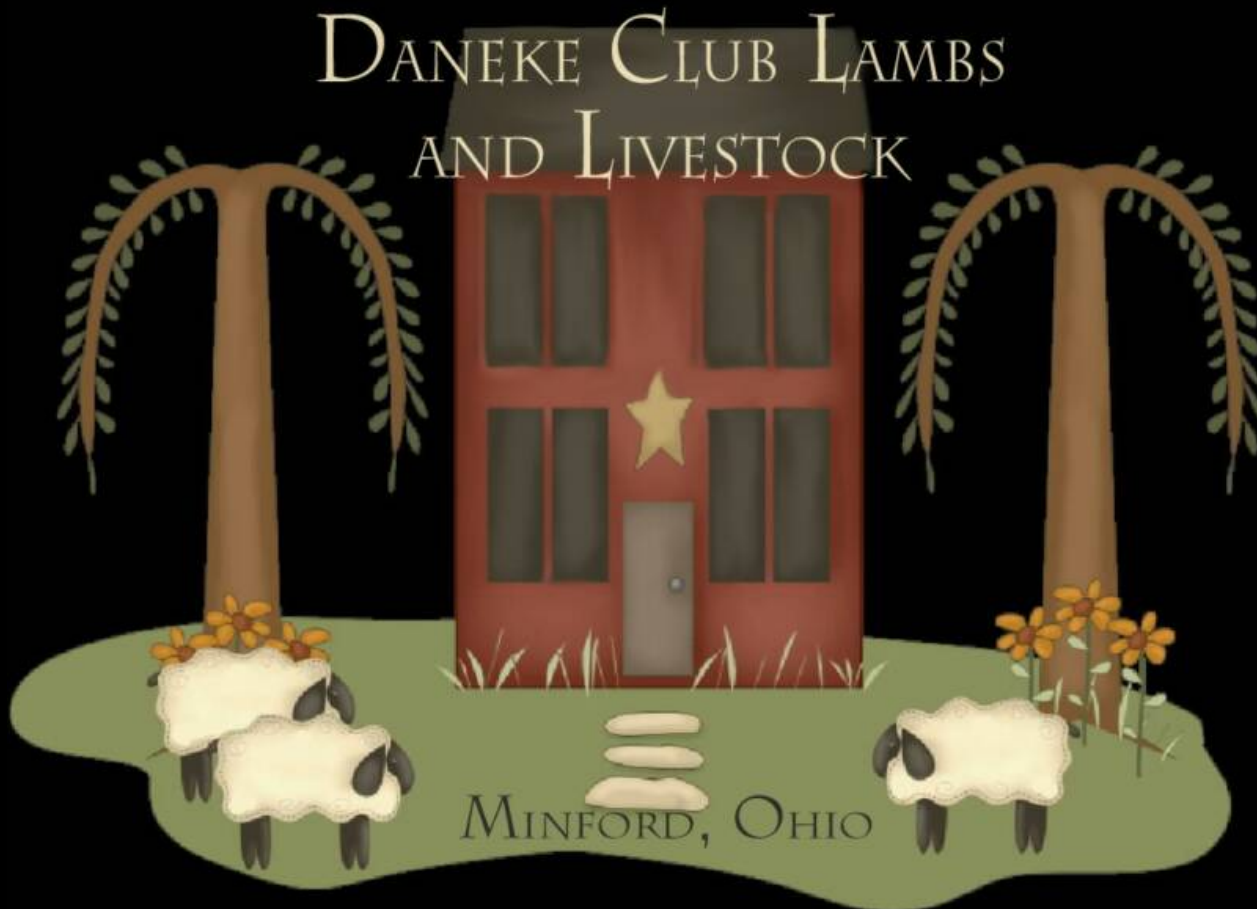
In addition to building muscle mass and increasing definition, isometrics have other benefits. Since the heart and respiratory rates are increased, extra calories that would ordinarily be converted to fat and extra gain will be burned. It will also prepare your lamb for the work to be done in the show ring. In the ring, your lamb must be able to sustain a hard brace for long periods of time. As with any exercise, when muscle groups are strained there is a lactic acid build up. (Lactic acid is what causes the burning in your muscles that you feel during exercise). Isometrics teaches the body to handle this lactic acid build-up so your lamb will be able to push harder and longer, and will show less fatigue in the show ring.

So what are the benefits of integrating isometrics into your daily exercise program? With time, you will notice increased definition and muscle

mass. You will find the lamb converting feed into lean muscle instead of additional fat. And finally, after a long day of showing, in that final drive your lamb will have the endurance to keep a hard brace when it matters most.

## EXERCISING YOUR LAMB

DANEKE CLUB LAMBS  
AND LIVESTOCK



MINFORD, OHIO