

Shincracker Icelandic Sheep Farm

Curt Peterson

P. O. Box 477, Hartland VT 05048

Mobile: 802.291.2112 (Phone or Text)

shincrackerfarm@gmail.com

23 March 2022

Senator Robert Starr
Chair, Senate Committee on Agriculture
Representative Carolyn Partridge
Chair, House Committee on Agriculture and Forestry

RE: 24 March 2022 Joint Hearing of House and Senate Agriculture Committees

Dear Senator Starr and Representative Partridge,

We have been harvesting thoroughbred Icelandic sheep using on-farm slaughter for eight years, relying on H420 and the “personal exemption” provision.

Our sheep are raised on grass and local hay, protected from predators, provided fresh water, have weather shelters and veterinarian care when necessary.

Our twelve ewes and one ram produce approximately 20-22 healthy lambs each spring. We sell a half dozen or more as breedstock. Buyers say we operate “a clean farm” – our animals are unlikely be susceptible to disease or parasites.

Each year we sell about a dozen “lamb shares on a “whole lamb” basis, when the lambs are born. Customers are repeat buyers, saying “Best lamb I’ve ever eaten!”

We raise their lambs, make sure they get healthcare, and have them harvested humanely in the fall by a professional on-farm slaughterer. I receive the skins for salting and drying, provide a tractor, and dispose of the offal, all as prescribed by VT law.

Carcasses are bagged in plastic, and I deliver them to a USDA inspected butcher for cutting, shrink-wrapping, labeling, hard-freezing and boxing. When ready, I put them in our freezer for owner pick-up.

We charge \$300 per lamb, about \$11/pound. The slaughter costs \$40, and the butcher costs another \$80. Maintaining the flock and raising the lambs cost us close to the selling price.

Any margin comes from tanned skins. Processing and shipping costs close to \$100. If we sell them for \$300, we have grossed \$200 to cover labor and collateral farm expenses.

\$2,400 gross margin isn't a lot of money. If we can't employ on-farm slaughter, that would be cut in half, and only if we find a USDA slaughter that isn't disgusting and is willing to process lambs.

The current system has worked well for customers, for us, for the harvester, and for the butcher. Who would gain from the change. Lamb production from boutique OFS farms can't threaten the big meat producers, slaughter houses are already so busy they won't process lambs. The quality, cleanliness and humaneness of our operation is far cleaner than many slaughter houses I've seen. Is changing our status driven by some struggle between the federal and state authorities?

It certainly isn't the result of logic or public interest, and will probably cause quite a few small farms to stop raising high-quality local meat.

Respectfully submitted,
Curt Peterson
Shincracker Icelandic Sheep Farm
Hartland, VT 05048
802.291.2112 (phone or text)
curtcpeterson@gmail.com