

Trait preferences of sheep keepers in Jordan

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Abstract

The survey was conducted in Mafraq Governorate in Jordan during the period from March to June 2010. Sheep keepers were raised their animal under semi-intensive, semi-extensive, and extensive production systems. Awassi breed was the main sheep breed in the three production systems. The average flock size was 202.3, 248.7, and 259 heads in semi-intensive, semi-extensive, and extensive systems respectively. The main sources of feeds for the sheep and goat flocks in the study area are barley grains and wheat bran which bought by the farmers with subsidized price. The performance of ewes was lowest in extensive system with an average daily milk yield of 0.52 kg /ewe, and in prolificacy and prolificacy alive with an average of 1.06 LB/EL, and 1 LBa/EL respectively. In selection a breeding ram, blonde face color and big body size traits in order were the most important selection criteria in both semi-extensive and extensive systems. On the other hand, big udder size and balanced position, blonde face color traits in that order were the most important selection criteria in chosen a breeding ewe. In three production systems, stockowners are kept sheep for milk, capital, savings, emergency, cultural and religious, and wool in different order between systems. In extensive systems, herd size as capital assets was the most important production objective for keeping sheep. Sale or consumption of milk was the most important reason for keeping sheep in semi-intensive and semi-extensive systems. Herd management, market demand, ecological conditions, economical situation of stockowners and their experiences, are the main factors affect the breeding objectives of sheep keepers for a specific Awassi breed. Policy makers targeting sheep sector and stockowners livelihood need to incorporate herding management, breeding practices, trait preferences, and multiple functions of sheep.