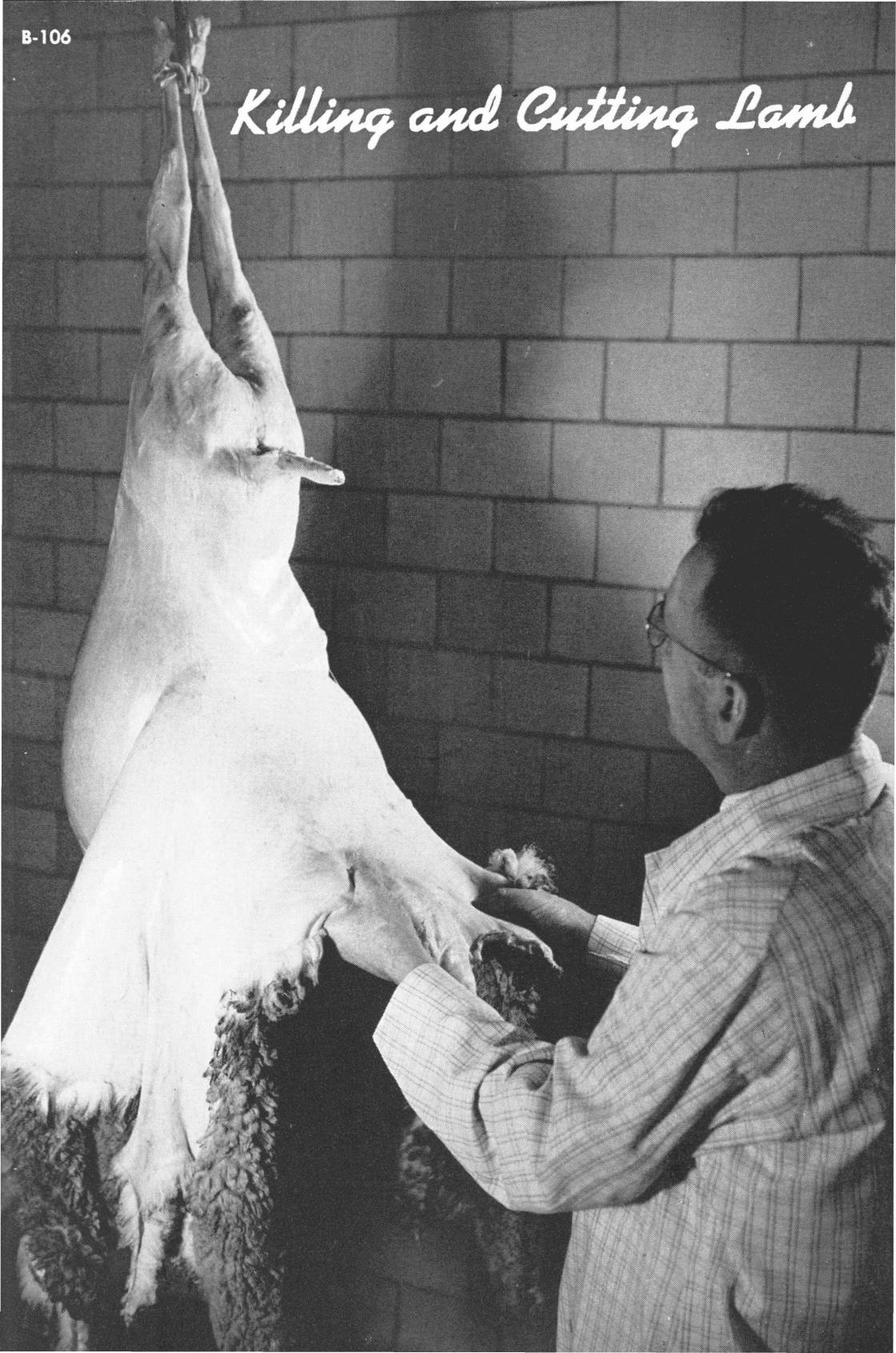


# *Killing and Cutting Lamb*



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# KILLING AND CUTTING LAMB

by

Roy W. Snyder, Animal Industries Specialist

Texas A. and M. College Extension Service

Lamb, one of our most delicious meats, is not commonly used on the farm, nor by many city people in central and southern United States. Probably the major reason why farm people who produce it do not eat more lamb, is because they do not know how to kill it properly. In many cases the professed dislike for the flavor of lamb is mental. If lambs or yearlings are properly handled, most of the objections can be eliminated.

## Helpful Suggestions

1. Select thrifty, fat lambs or yearlings to kill.
2. Before killing, keep off feed overnight but allow water.
3. When catching the animal do not pull the wool as it leaves a bloodshot area.
4. Keep carcass clean as it is being dressed.
5. Age the carcass 4 to 7 days at about 38°F. by allowing it to hang before it is cut for cooking.

## Equipment Needed for Killing

Lambs are easy to dress. The minimum equipment is:

1. Sharp knife—preferably a skinning knife.
2. Rope or wire to hang up the lamb.
3. Bucket to put heart, liver and tongue in.
4. Bucket of clean water and a clean cloth.

## Dressing Percentage

Fat lambs or yearlings vary from 45 to 55 in dressing percentages. An 80 pound lamb will yield about a 36 to 40 pound carcass. This variation is caused by:

1. Fatness—the fatter the animal the higher it will dress.
2. Weight of pelt.
3. Fill.
4. Type—the mutton breeds usually dress higher than the wool breeds.

## Ages

Sheep 12 months old or less usually are classified as lamb, and over that age as mutton. When killed, lamb should show a break joint as in picture 17. On mutton, the lower end of the front shank is de-jointed and shows a rounding joint.





## KILLING

### Sticking

Lay on a box or slightly elevated platform, or hang up for sticking. Either way keeps the blood from soiling the fleece and helps keep the carcass clean. Pull the head back against the knee and insert the knife at a point made by the angle of the neck and jaw bone. This is at the base of the ear, as shown in picture 1. Keep the back side of the knife close to the neck bone. Push the knife through so the lower side of the skin also is cut.



Should the main arteries and veins not be cut properly when the knife is pushed down past the neck bone, turn the cutting edge and cut back to the neck bone. It is not necessary to cut out through the skin under the throat. This severs the windpipe and esophagus, which is undesirable.

### Skinner the Front Legs

Lay the lamb on its back in a clean place. Hold the hoof between the knees. Facing toward the head, open the skin down over the front of each knee. Continue this cut to a point in front of the brisket as shown in picture 2. Continue opening the pelt down under the neck and up to the jaw. Loosen the hide just around the knees with the knife. To avoid running the point of the knife into the





meat when opening down over the legs, pull the pelt up and keep the cutting edge of the knife flat.

### Skinning Over the Brisket

The V shaped piece of pelt made by bringing the two cuts together in front of the brisket should be pulled back. By putting the foot on the head and pulling backward, the pelt can be removed from the brisket as shown in picture 3. The thumb must be used to help loosen the pelt on the rear part of the brisket. To simplify opening the pelt down the underline, fist it loose over the paunch by running the hand between it and the flesh. Start at the brisket and go half way back, or as far as possible, or to the navel.

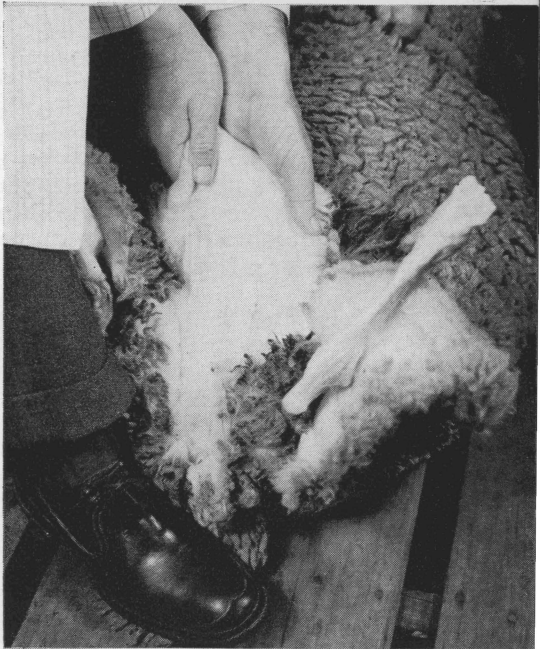
### Skinning Hind Shanks

Hold the hind leg between the knees. Part the wool and pulling up with one hand slip the knife under the pelt, ripping from the fetlock down over the hock to the rectum as shown in picture 4. Cut off the feet at the first joint above the hoof. Where an especially attractive job is not necessary, the skin on the legs may be cut off at the hoof and the foot left on the carcass. Insert the knife between the bone and tendon so that the lamb can be more easily hung up.

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## Skinning Between Hind Legs

The V shaped piece of hide between the hind legs then is pulled back as far as possible as in picture 5, using the hand and sometimes the knife to loosen it over the cod or udder. Continue down the middle by pushing the pelt loose as was done on the front end, making the two openings come together. Fisting the pelt loose down the underline may be omitted if care is taken when it is opened with the knife.

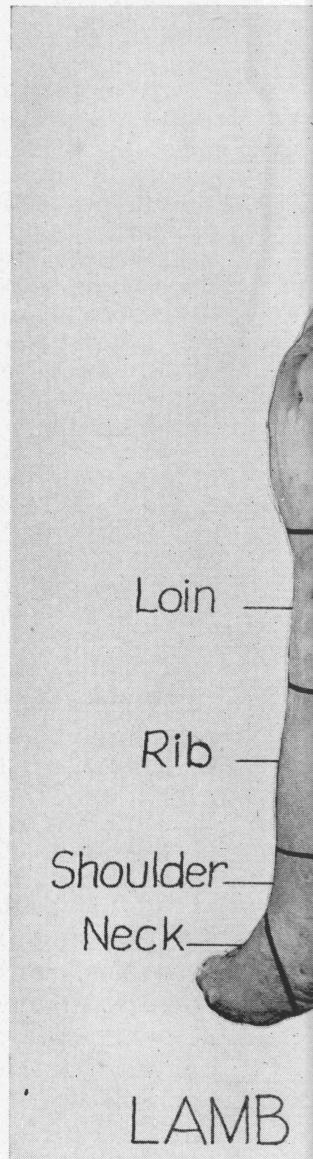
## Removing Pelt

The lamb can be hung up by tying the hind legs together or a wagon single tree may be used for a gambrel. The pelt can be opened down the underline before the lamb is hung up as shown in picture 6, or afterward.

Fist the pelt off by starting at the middle as in picture 7. Run the thumb or forefinger between pelt and meat, but try not to tear the fell—that papery covering between meat and skin. Go up over the legs as in picture 8. Go from the middle down over the front legs as in picture 9.

Fist off both sides of the pelt, then loosen it over the dock as in picture 10, and pull it loose down over the back as in picture 11.

The pelt is loosened around the neck by pulling and using the thumb or finger. Cut the



head off at the atlas, or first joint behind the skull as in picture 12.

Next break off the front feet at the break joint, if it is a lamb, or cut them off if a yearling or older. The break joint in the front leg is just above the pastern as shown in picture 13. The juncture of the two bones should be scored with the knife before the joint will break.

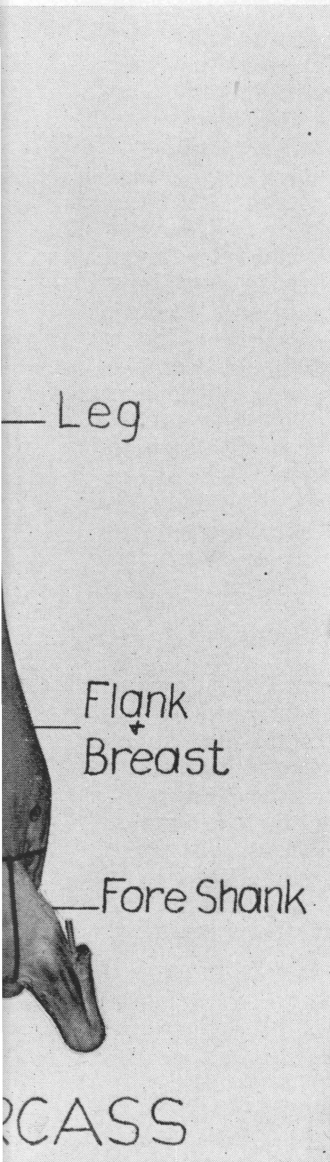
Now is the time to wipe the outside of the carcass with a wet cloth and remove any stains of blood or dirt.

### Removing the Viscera

First cut around the rectum. Pull out 4 to 6 inches of the bung gut or colon and cut it off as in picture 14. If necessary the attached end can be tied. If a wether, cut off the penis by running the knife between the legs and turning it sideways as in picture 15.

Open down the middle from the cod or udder to the breast bone. Allow the paunch and intestines to roll out and hang, as shown in picture 16, and remove the caul fat, the thin layer of membranous fat attached to paunch and intestines. This is most suitable for soap grease, although if clean, it can be rendered and used for cooking.

Find the loose end of the colon which was cut off before the lamb was opened, and pull the intestines down





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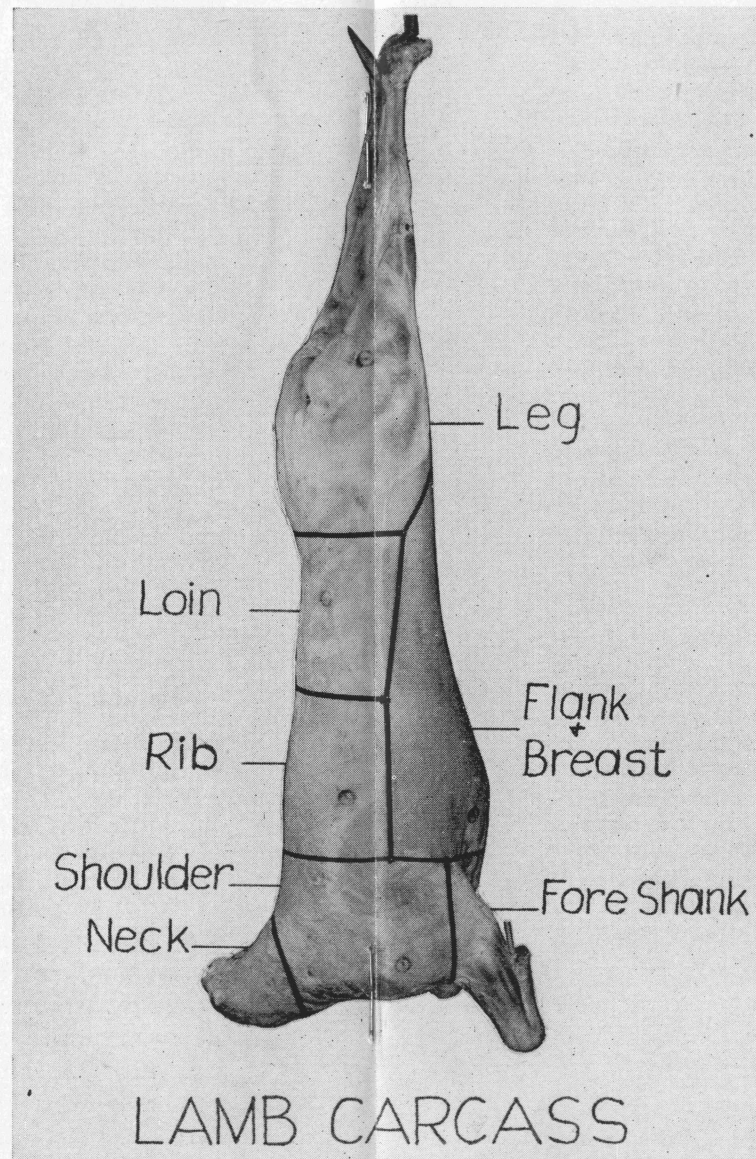
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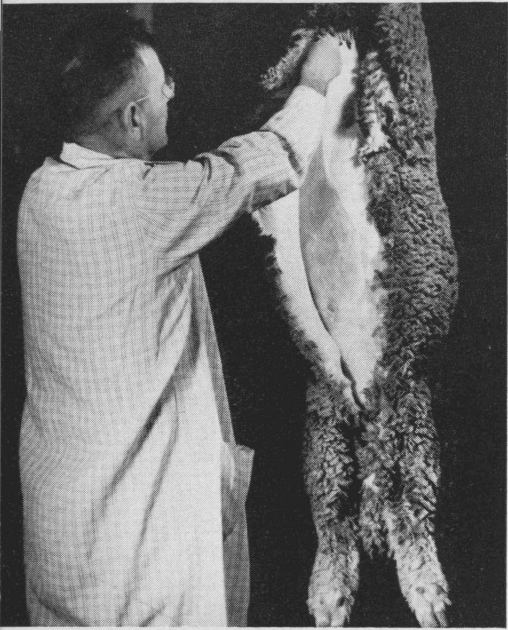
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carefully so as not to tear loose the kidneys or fat. If the paunch and intestines are pulled out the hands may be slipped under the liver and all of the viscera lifted free. The only remaining attachment will be the esophagus. By pulling upward steadily it will come out with all that part lying above the diaphragm. Next cut the diaphragm and also the large blood vessel which lies along the back bone, and remove the lungs and heart by a steady upward pull. Remove the bladder by cutting it loose with a knife. The liver should be removed from the viscera and the gall bladder pulled off, but in doing so hold up the liver so that the gall will not spread over it. Wash the liver and put it in a clean container along with the heart which should be cut loose from the lungs.

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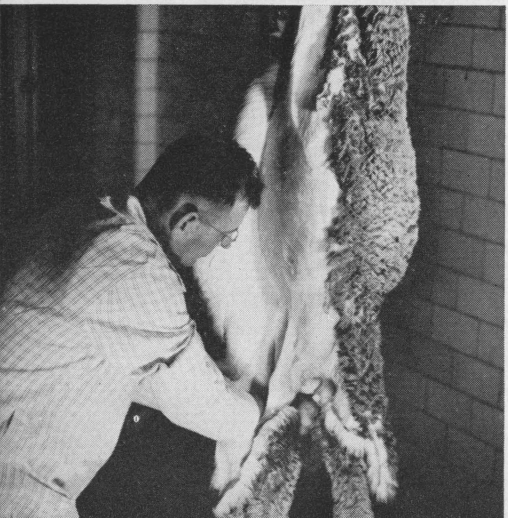


The tongue is removed by cutting on the inside of the jaw bone, and the brains by skinning the head and splitting directly in the center with a saw. An ax will work almost as well. The breast may be split at the time the lungs and heart are removed, or it can be left as shown in picture 17.

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Often a small quantity of blood may be found in the chest cavity. Use a clean cloth and wipe all blood stains or other foreign matter off the carcass, inside and out.

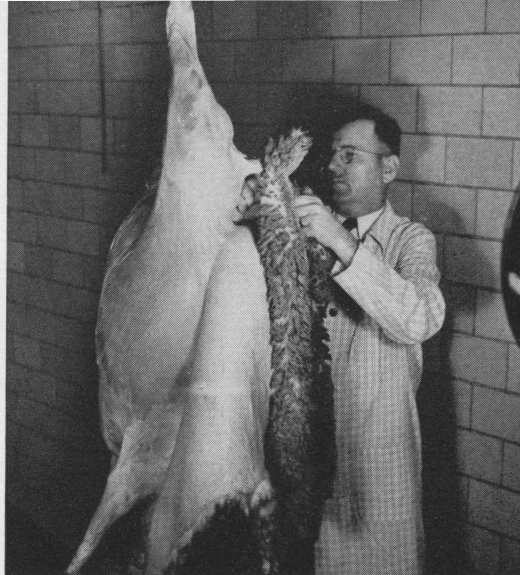
The final operation is to tie up the front shanks, as shown





in picture 17. This can be done by using a rubber band, string or stick, or the tendon of the fore arm can be pulled out and hooked over the end of the shank. A cut in line with the fore arm must be made to expose this tendon.

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### CUTTING THE LAMB

Cutting a lamb carcass to get the most ideal pieces is easy and simple. Lamb should age from 4 to 7 days by hanging in a temperature of 38 degrees to improve its tenderness and flavor. If this temperature is not available, the time should be shortened to avoid spoilage.

#### Remove the Neck and Shoulder First

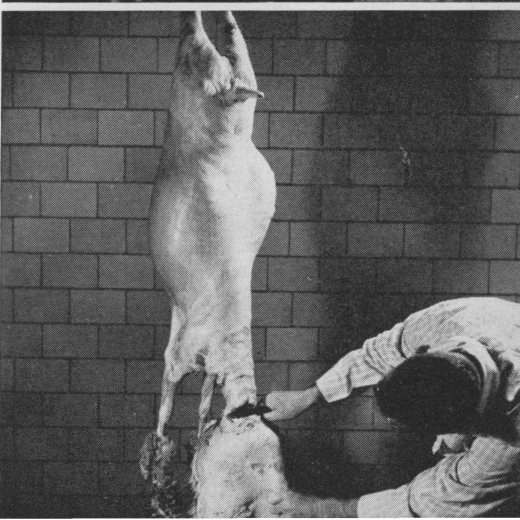
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Cut off the neck on a line about parallel with the back. This piece may be used for stew, or if boned can be ground for lamb patties.



Next cut off the shoulder at a point between the fifth and sixth rib, dividing directly across the whole lamb as shown in the marked lamb carcass picture. Trim the shoulder by cutting off the fore shank and the brisket at a point just above the elbow joint. Next split the two shoulders by sawing through the center of the back and neck. The shoulder may be used with the bone in, or boned and rolled as in picture 18.

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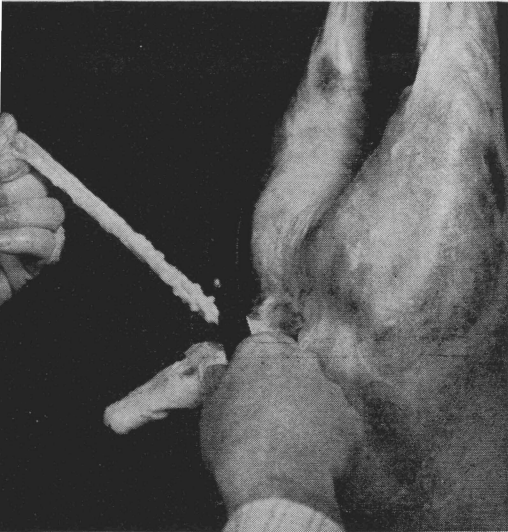




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### Boning the Shoulder

To bone a shoulder, divide the top and bottom equally at the thin corner of the lower rib side. Then, using the edge of the shoulder blade and the round bone of the fore shank as a guide, cut back through the center and expose the shoulder blades as in picture 19. Cut around the edges of the bone, then double the meat back and scrape the feather bone as shown in picture 20. Take hold of the bone and pull it away from the meat. Roll the boneless shoulder with the muscles running the long way and tie with a strong cotton string. If a roll is not desired the boneless shoulder may be sewed together along the two cut edges and dressing put in the center for a stuffed boneless shoulder or cushion style roast.



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### Remove the Flank

Cut in a line with the leg starting at the rear flank and going forward. Just where the lower ribs should be cut off may vary with the individual. A good point is where the meat becomes very thin on the lower side. The flank with the neck and other part of the breast and shank can be used for stew, or ground lamb.



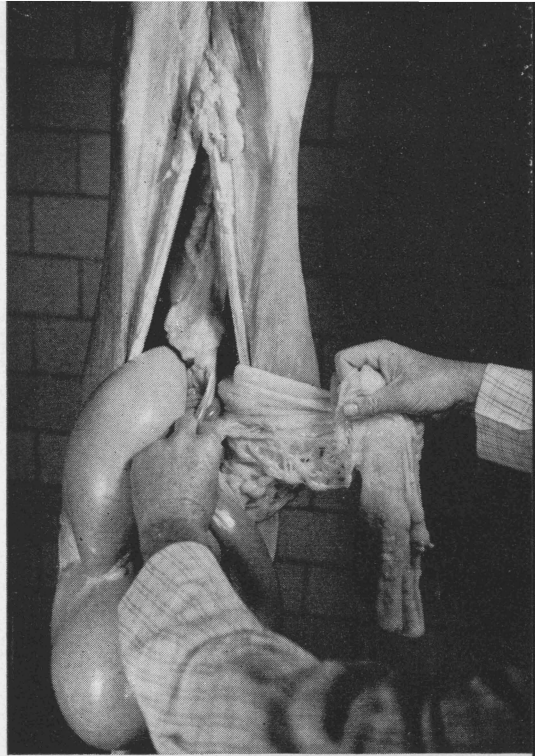
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### Divide the Rib, Loin and Leg

The rib section is cut off leaving one rib on the loin. It is easier to cut the rib chops by first splitting this piece

down the center of the back bone. The loin is cut off at a point about one inch behind the hip bone, or where the leg raises above the loin as shown in the carcass picture. Chops may be made by cutting across the full loin but generally the loin first is split down the center.

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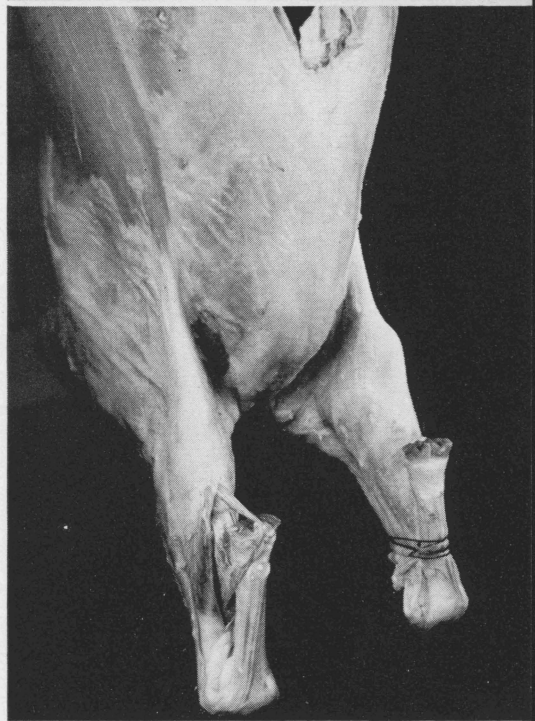
### Remove the Fell

The thin paper-like membrane that covers the lamb carcass may be removed from the rib and loin before it is cut, as in picture 21. This membrane pulls off easiest when the pieces are cold and firm. It may be pulled off in large sheets, or sometimes very shallow cutting in parallel lines helps to remove it in strips.

### Trimming the Legs

Divide the legs by sawing through the back and pelvic bones, and trim by removing any excess fat. Cut off the shank at the stifle joint as indicated in picture 22.

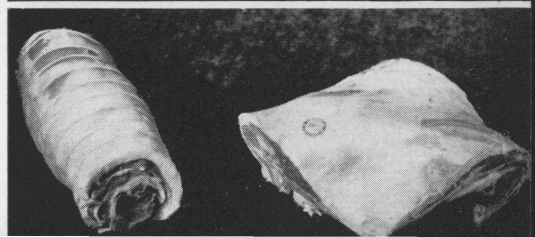
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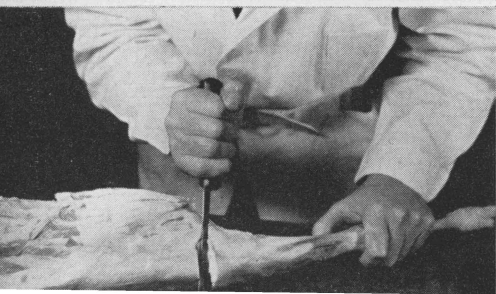
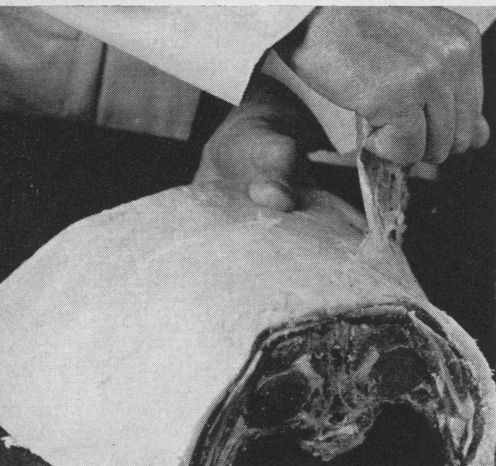
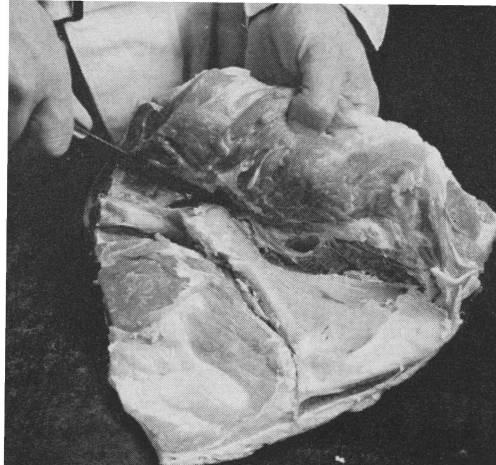


### Use of Trimmings

All the trimmings, such as the brisket, fore shank, flank and neck, may be boned and ground for patties. Persons who enjoy lamb stew may want to use some of these pieces for that dish. The ground meat also makes good meat loaf or chili.

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The following list of bulletins may be helpful in a good sheep production program for home eating:

**FARMERS' BULLETINS**

- 576 Breeds of Sheep for the Farm.
- 810 Equipment for Farm Sheep Raising.
- 1181 Raising Sheep on Temporary Pastures.
- 1199 Judging Sheep.
- 1330 Parasites and Parasitic Diseases of Sheep.
- 840 Sheep Raising for Beginners.
- 1134 Castrating Docking Lambs.
- 713 Sheep Scab.
- 798 The Sheep Tick and Its Eradication by Dipping.
- 1155 Diseases of Sheep.
- 1710 Range Sheep Production.
- 1807 Lamb and Mutton on the Farm.

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**LEAFLETS**

- 13 Sheep and Goat Lice and Methods of Control and Eradication.
- 28 Lamb as You Like It.
- 74 Boning Lamb Cuts.
- 89 Controlling Stomach Worms in Sheep and Lambs.
- 122 United States Graded and Stamped Meat.

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**EXTENSION SERVICE CIRCULAR**

- C-145 Starring Lamb.

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