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Prehearing Brief of R-CALF USA

Before the United States International Trade Commission

Lamb Meat

Investigation No. TA-201-80

Remedy Phase

Public Version

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November 23, 2026

Submitted on behalf of R-CALF USA

William Bullard

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R-CALF USA

BEFORE THE UNITED STATES INTERNATIONAL TRADE COMMISSION

Prehearing Remedy Brief of R-CALF USA

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I. Requested relief

R-CALF USA asks the Commission to recommend four years of additional duties on fresh, chilled and frozen lamb meat. The rates below apply to each kilogram imported and vary by cut. They would give American sheep producers time to retain more ewe lambs for breeding and bring their offspring to market. R-CALF USA supports the primary schedule in the Prehearing Brief on Remedy of Protect American Lamb and Cowboy Meat Company, LLC (public version, Nov. 23, 2026) (PAL Brief).

Additional duties in dollars per kilogram. Year 1 equivalents are approximately $1.50, $2.10 and $3.60 per pound. The kilogram rates control. Source: PAL Brief, Table 1.

Tier	Covered lamb products	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
1	Carcasses and half-carcasses; bone-in shoulders and legs	$3.31	$3.24	$3.17	$3.10
2	Bone-in loins; boneless meat	$4.63	$4.54	$4.45	$4.36
3	Other bone-in cuts, including racks	$7.94	$7.78	$7.62	$7.46

The three rates cover twelve statistical reporting numbers in six lamb-specific Harmonized Tariff Schedule (HTS) subheadings: 0204.10.00, 0204.22.20, 0204.23.20, 0204.30.00, 0204.42.20 and 0204.43.20. The written product description governs coverage. To identify lamb entered under another classification, R-CALF USA supports verification by U.S. Customs and Border Protection of entries under the six parallel other-sheep subheadings. It also supports Commission monitoring of those entries and of prepared or preserved lamb under 1602.90.91 by quantity, unit value, cut and country of origin. The proposed duty applies only to covered lamb meat. PAL Brief, Part VII.

The Commission divided 3–3 on injury. The three Commissioners voting in the affirmative separately found that Australian imports were a substantial cause of serious injury or the threat of

serious injury. R-CALF USA requests that the safeguard include Australia. Other free-trade partners should be treated in accordance with the findings concerning them and the applicable implementing statutes. USITC News Release 26-162 (Nov. 13, 2026).

The safeguard should apply in addition to other applicable duties. If the Commission recommends against applying the duties together, R-CALF USA supports PAL's request that the specific safeguard apply at its full scheduled rates. PAL Brief, Part IV.E.

R-CALF USA's first choice is the primary duty schedule on every covered kilogram. If the Commission applies the statutory ceiling separately by tier or tariff line, R-CALF USA supports PAL's alternative rates described in Section III. If the Commission chooses a tariff-rate quota (TRQ), R-CALF USA recommends the terms in Section II.

II. Alternative tariff-rate quota

R-CALF USA recommends a lower-duty quantity of 79.0 million kilograms (approximately 174.2 million pounds) in Year 1 and 84.1 million kilograms (approximately 185.4 million pounds) in each of Years 2 through 4. The table below gives the duties on imports within that quantity. Above it, R-CALF USA recommends the Section I rates, or PAL's alternative rates if the Commission tests the ceiling by tier or by tariff line. See PAL Brief, Part VI (quota terms), and Part IV.B and Exhibit 1, Table 1-E (alternative rates).

Additional in-quota duties in dollars per kilogram. Tiers and product coverage follow Section I. Source: PAL Brief, Part VI, Table 3.

In-quota tier	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
1	$1.50	$1.47	$1.44	$1.41
2	$2.25	$2.20	$2.15	$2.10
3	$4.00	$3.92	$3.84	$3.76

The quota year would begin on the effective date of the proclamation. The annual quantity would be divided equally among four quarters and allocated among Tiers 1, 2 and 3 in shares of 18.3, 43.8 and 37.9 percent, respectively, following PAL's 2023–2025 import shares. Unused quantity would carry forward to the next quarter within the same quota year and expire at the end of that

quota year. Both sets of duties would decline annually according to the schedules in this brief. PAL Brief, Part VI and Exhibit 1, Table 1-D.

PAL uses the average of 2019 and 2020 imports, 185.4 million pounds, as its base quantity. Importers' inventories rose from 28.909 million pounds on June 30, 2025, to 40.119 million pounds on June 30, 2026. Lamb entered before relief begins can be sold in the first year without paying the new safeguard duty. Deducting the 11.2-million-pound inventory increase reduces the first-year lower-duty quantity to 174.2 million pounds. Additional imports may enter at the above-quota rates. R-CALF USA prefers the primary duty because it applies the full scheduled rate to every covered pound. USITC, Lamb Meat, Staff Report (Public Version), Nov. 4, 2026, EDIS Doc. No. 900429 (Staff Report), table 2.12, p. 2.30; PAL Brief, Part VI.

III. Basis for the rates and four-year term

The record supports substantial protection

Apparent U.S. consumption grew from 261.568 million pounds in 2021 to 301.272 million in 2025, an increase of 15.2 percent. U.S. shipments of lamb meat processed from domestic lambs or domestic lamb meat fell from 70.256 million to 62.891 million pounds, and their market share declined from 26.9 to 20.9 percent. Imports captured the expanding market while domestic-origin sales contracted. Staff Report, table 4.1.

Imported products undersold domestic products in 146 of 156 comparisons, with underselling margins averaging 40.4 percent. Breeding ewes declined from 2.930 million in January 2023 to 2.850 million in January 2026. Over the same interval, the January 1 inventory of breeding replacement lambs under one year old, counting both sexes, fell from 644,000 to 600,000. That decline of 44,000 head shows that fewer young animals were being held as replacements as the adult ewe flock contracted. The requested protection addresses a persistent competitive disadvantage and the resulting difficulty of financing another generation of breeding animals. Staff Report, tables 3.1 and 5.36.

Specific duties preserve the charge per pound

A percentage duty falls in dollar terms when the import price falls. A specific duty preserves the scheduled charge per pound when invoice prices or exchange rates change. Producers deciding whether to sell ewe lambs or keep them for breeding need protection that remains effective while they bear the cost of retention. Three tiers accommodate differences in product values while covering the covered cuts.

Measuring the duties against customs value

The statute limits the duty increase to 50 percentage points above the existing nonpreferential rate. It measures the percentage equivalent of a specific duty using the value of imports of the article concerned during the most recent representative period, applying customs valuation standards to the extent practicable. 19 U.S.C. §§ 2252(e)(3), 2253(e)(3), 2481(4), (7).

R-CALF supports measuring the three rates together against the customs value of all covered lamb meat because lamb meat is the article the Commission investigated. On pooled 2023–2025 customs values, the total duties at the proposed Year 1 rates would equal 49.8 percent of the value of covered imports. The figures for those years taken separately are 50.3 percent in 2023, 52.5 percent in 2024 and 47.1 percent in 2025. Pooling the three complete years accounts for variation in import prices. The figure for January–September 2026 is 39.9 percent. Measured separately on the pooled three-year base, the rates for Tiers 1, 2 and 3 are equivalent to 52.7, 50.9 and 48.6 percent, respectively. PAL Brief, Parts IV.A–B, Table 2, and Exhibit 1, Table 1-A.

If the Commission applies the ceiling separately by tier or by tariff line, R-CALF USA supports PAL's alternative rates (PAL Brief, Part IV.B and Exhibit 1, Table 1-E). Those rates begin at $2.76, $3.86 and $6.61 per kilogram for Tiers 1, 2 and 3 and decline annually by $0.05, $0.08 and $0.13 per kilogram, respectively. Each tier and each of the twelve statistical lines is at or below 50 percent on the pooled 2023–2025 values, on 2025 values, and on January–September 2026 values. The same alternative schedule would apply above quota if the Commission adopts a tariff-rate quota and tests the rates separately.

The requested rates address the persistent underselling documented above. A producer who retains a ewe lamb forgoes the proceeds of a fall sale and pays to feed and breed her before her offspring earn a return. Stronger relief that improves lamb prices at the ranch makes it more likely producers can carry those costs and follow through on their plans. R-CALF USA supports the proposed rates on that basis. 19 U.S.C. § 2253(e)(2).

Protection must last while the investment matures

Annual reductions leave approximately 94 percent of the initial duty in Year 4. A steep early reduction would weaken protection while retained animals are still a cost and later cohorts have yet to produce marketable offspring. The requested initial term is four years. Any extension would depend on the later statutory findings, including evidence of positive adjustment. 19 U.S.C. §§ 2253(e)(1), (5), 2254(c).

IV. Rebuilding the flock while maintaining lamb supply

Gradual retention creates future production

A ewe lamb retained for breeding is unavailable for current slaughter. The producer gives up a sale and pays for feed, grazing, breeding and care before receiving proceeds from her offspring. A planning interval of roughly two years from retention to marketed offspring illustrates how long producers may need to finance that decision. Timing depends on breeding season and management. PAL Brief, Part IV.F, citing hearing transcript at 51. Sustained profitability and confidence in future returns make that investment possible.

Flock growth requires retention beyond ordinary replacement of culls and losses. Each producer can phase that investment according to resources and cash flow. The additional females must survive, reproduce and raise lambs to market. Progress should therefore be measured by both breeding-flock additions and subsequent marketed offspring.

What growers and feeders intend to do if relief is granted

Growers and feeders in 33 states submitted 171 commitments describing what they intend to do if relief is granted. The commitment form specified no tariff rate. The 169 signers reported 185,124 breeding ewes, about 6.5 percent of the 2.85 million U.S. breeding ewes reported for January 2026. Of the 171 commitments, 86 indicated that the operation would pay down operating debt, 135 that it would retain more ewe lambs, and 150 that it would invest. An operation could select more than one action. For a grower who needs the fall lamb check to pay down an operating note, debt repayment can make it possible to keep replacements in a later crop. Investments in grazing land, lambing facilities and fencing can help carry those animals through to production. PAL Brief, Part V.B and Exhibit 3, Part A, tables 3-A, 3-B and 3-E. Staff Report, table 3.1.

In all, 143 commitments specified a number of additional ewe lambs: 132 of the 135 that selected the retention option and 11 that supplied a number without selecting it. Those operations intend to retain 20,879 additional ewe lambs per year if relief is in place. Those same operations kept 21,732 ewe lambs from their last crop. That comparison shows the size of the investment participating operations are considering. Some retained lambs will replace ewes that leave the flock, and marketed offspring follow only after breeding and lambing. Whether these intentions produce a larger flock and more American lamb can be assessed from the completed actions producers report during relief. PAL Brief, Exhibit 3, Part A, table 3-C.

Productive older ewes can contribute sooner

Producers may be able to keep otherwise-culled, still-productive older ewes for one additional breeding season and reassess them for a second. An established breeding ewe can produce another lamb crop before newly retained ewe lambs contribute marketed offspring. Her daughters may also become replacements. This provides a practical option for supporting early lamb supply while the younger breeding cohorts mature.

As part of its annual outreach during the initial relief period, R-CALF USA will share extension-based educational information and encourage each producer to evaluate independently whether otherwise-culled, still-productive older ewes can be retained for another breeding

season. Evaluation will consider reproductive history, body condition, sound teeth, udders and feet, available feed, animal welfare and the operation's economics. A second additional season would require reassessment. Each producer will make that decision animal by animal.

Susan Schoenian, University of Maryland Extension, Replacement Ewe Selection and Culling of Underperforming Ewes, American Sheep Industry Association webinar, Oct. 3, 2017.

Tariff relief preserves access to additional supply

The primary tariff places no numerical ceiling on imports. Additional lamb can enter upon payment of the duty as market conditions warrant. This flexibility supports a strong producer remedy during the biological transition. PAL's alternative tariff-rate quota also permits entries above its lower-duty threshold at the higher scheduled rates.

Gradual ewe-lamb retention and selective older-ewe retention can improve the industry's ability to serve customers while it rebuilds. Monitoring should track domestic lamb availability, marketed head and meat output alongside import volumes and prices, so that the Commission can evaluate how adjustment is proceeding during the first two years and thereafter.

Available packing capacity can accommodate growth

In 2025, reporting firms produced 85.956 million pounds of lamb meat, using 37.0 percent of their 232.003 million pounds of practical capacity. At 85 percent utilization, those firms could produce about 197.2 million pounds, or 111.2 million pounds above their 2025 output. The figures include production from domestic and imported inputs. Realizing that increase through domestic flock rebuilding would require substantially more American lambs for slaughter. Staff Report, tables 3.10 and 3.11.

One example of capacity that went idle is the Double J Lamb plant in San Angelo, Texas. The staff report states that the plant had reportedly ceased operations by October 2025 and was designed to process roughly 200,000 lambs annually. The calculation above uses only the practical capacity reported in table 3.11. Staff Report, p. 3.13, table 3.7.

V. Measuring adjustment during relief

Commitment to education and annual progress surveys

For each year that initial safeguard relief is in effect, up to four years, R-CALF USA will conduct a voluntary survey of participating producers about completed adjustment actions and report aggregate results annually to the Commission. R-CALF USA will also provide annual educational outreach on retaining productive older ewes for an additional breeding season. R-CALF USA's separate commitment statement accompanies this brief.

R-CALF USA will invite its members to participate and coordinate invitations to all respondents to PAL's commitment form through PAL's counsel. PAL's counsel retains the original confidential commitments. R-CALF USA will use self-reported survey responses and will not match them to individual commitments or audit individual performance. Access to individual responses will be limited to the designated R-CALF USA staff administrator, who does not raise sheep.

The survey will ask about ewe lambs and productive older ewes retained, lambs marketed, investments made, and operating debt paid down during the reporting year. Respondents may provide breeding-flock counts at the beginning and end of that year. The survey will collect no price data.

R-CALF USA will report survey results only in aggregate, identify the reporting period and number of responding operations, and explain material changes in coverage. It will withhold totals covering fewer than five operations and any other total that could reveal an individual operation's information, including through a dominant contribution or comparison with another total. R-CALF USA will also document its educational outreach.

This annual report will complement the Commission's monitoring and PAL's individual grower commitments. 19 U.S.C. §§ 2252(a)(6)(B), 2254(a); PAL Brief, Part V.F.

Measure the costs now and the output that follows

The Commission should also track producer profitability from public price and cost data. Comparing changes in the prices producers receive for lambs with changes in feed, grazing and other production costs will help show whether returns are improving enough to finance replacement animals. Reporting the periods and costs covered will help the Commission distinguish a rise in lamb prices from an improvement in margins. This analysis belongs in the Commission's monitoring and requires no price or profitability questions in R-CALF USA's survey.

In the first two years, evidence should include completed retention, continued productivity of selected older ewes, breeding results, investment and the ability to carry the associated costs. In Years 3 and 4, evidence should increasingly include marketed offspring from the additional retained cohorts and resulting domestic throughput. Recording both stages gives the Commission a basis for evaluating progress throughout the relief period.

A larger productive flock can supply more American lamb. Better lamb survival can increase output from the existing flock. Paying down debt can lower interest costs, and processing more lambs can spread a plant's fixed costs over more pounds. Monitoring these changes can show whether the industry is better positioned to compete when relief ends.

Requested recommendation

R-CALF USA requests the four-year duties in Section I, including coverage of Australia, with the enforcement and monitoring measures described above. If the Commission chooses a tariff-rate quota, R-CALF USA supports Section II. If the Commission applies the statutory ceiling by tier or tariff line, R-CALF USA requests PAL's alternative rates either as the duty on all covered imports or, under a tariff-rate quota, as the above-quota duty. PAL Brief, Part IV.B and Exhibit 1, Table 1-E. Sustained relief would give producers time to rebuild their flocks and market additional American lamb.

Respectfully submitted,



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Factual certification

In accordance with 19 C.F.R. § 206.8(a), I, William Bullard, certify that the factual information contained in this brief and the accompanying R-CALF USA commitment statement is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge. I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America that the foregoing is true and correct. 28 U.S.C. § 1746.

Executed on November 23, 2026.



William Bullard, Chief Executive Officer, R-CALF USA

R-CALF USA Commitment to Producer Education and Annual Surveys

Lamb Meat | Investigation No. TA-201-80
Commitment under 19 U.S.C. § 2252(a)(6)(B)
No confidential version filed

For each year that initial safeguard relief is in effect, up to four years, R-CALF USA will conduct a voluntary survey of participating producers about completed adjustment actions and report aggregate results annually to the Commission. R-CALF USA will also provide annual educational outreach on retaining productive older ewes for an additional breeding season.

Through annual outreach, R-CALF USA will share extension-based information and encourage producers to assess independently whether to retain productive older ewes that would otherwise be culled for one additional breeding season. Producers who retain those ewes would be encouraged to reassess them after that season before deciding whether to retain them for a second additional breeding season. Evaluation will consider reproductive history, animal soundness, feed, welfare and economics. Each producer will decide animal by animal. R-CALF USA will document its educational outreach.

R-CALF USA will invite its members to participate and coordinate invitations to all respondents to PAL's commitment form through PAL's counsel. PAL's counsel retains the original confidential commitments. R-CALF USA will use self-reported survey responses and will not match them to individual commitments or audit individual performance. Access to individual responses will be limited to the designated R-CALF USA staff administrator, who does not raise sheep.

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R-CALF USA will report survey results only in aggregate, identify the reporting period and number of responding operations, and explain material changes in coverage. It will withhold totals covering fewer than five operations and any other total that could reveal an individual operation's information, including through a dominant contribution or comparison with another total. R-CALF USA will also document its educational outreach.

I submit this commitment on behalf of R-CALF USA. I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America that the foregoing statement of its intended actions is true and correct.

Executed on: November 23, 2026



William Bullard
Chief Executive Officer, R-CALF USA

Certificate of service

Upon transmission of this packet by email from my R-CALF USA account on November 23, 2026, I certify that I am serving the public prehearing remedy brief and the accompanying R-CALF USA adjustment commitment by email on the recipients listed below.

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November 23, 2026