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## FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

**BILL NUMBER:** Senate Memorial 25

**SHORT TITLE:** Study NM Dahl Heritage Sheep

**SPONSOR:** Stefanics

**LAST ORIGINAL**  
**UPDATE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE:** 2/13/26 **ANALYST:** Davidson

### ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT\*

(dollars in thousands)

Agency/Program	FY26	FY27	FY28	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
DGF	Choose an item.	\$100.0	No fiscal impact	\$100.0	Nonrecurring	Other state funds

Parentheses ( ) indicate expenditure decreases.

\*Amounts reflect most recent analysis of this legislation.

### Sources of Information

LFC Files

Agency or Agencies Providing Analysis

Department of Game and Fish

## SUMMARY

### Synopsis of Senate Memorial 25

Senate Memorial 25 (SM25) requests the Department of Game and Fish (DGF) to conduct a historical study on New Mexico Dahl Heritage Sheep, a herd of livestock identified by Chavez y Gilbert, a rancher who has noted the sheep are of unique cultural heritage to the state.

The bill requests DGF to present its recommendations on management and preservation of the sheep to the appropriate interim legislative committee by October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2026.

## FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

Memorials do not contain appropriations and are not enforceable as state law. The study requested in this memorial is likely to result in some additional costs for the agency, requiring the agency to potentially utilize more of its internal funds. To conduct the historical study, DGF will possibly need to contract out the work, resulting in the fiscal estimate for additional funding estimating the agency would need roughly \$100 thousand from its game protection fund to contract for services to perform the study.

## SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The New Mexico Dahl Sheep is officially recognized by the United Horned Sheep Association, has been recognized as a heritage breed by the state of New Mexico and has multiple breeders in the state who are working to cultivate it. Cultivators of the Dahl sheep notes its appeal stems from its meat and trophy size horns for hunting, with horns of the rams potentially growing to between thirty to forty inches in length.

According to Winifred Kupper, author of *The Golden Hoof*, a chronicle of the sheep of the Southwest published in 1945, New Mexico's historic principal export was sheep. This estimation is also echoed by research done by the University of New Mexico, noting during the state's territorial period, sheep and wool were the state's leading industry. An 1890 census expanded on this point, finding that New Mexico was the largest producer of sheep and products cultivated from them in the country, with an estimated 5 million sheep residing in the state. For context, the 1890 census for the state put New Mexico's total population at 160,282, resulting in a 1 to 31 person to sheep ratio. Around 1920, it was estimated that the annual earnings from live sheep and cattle in the state was \$370 million, earnings worth roughly \$5.9 billion today.

The same 2014 scholarship documenting the history of sheep's impact on New Mexico's economy notes a lack of rigorous detailed documentation and work specifically on sheep and their economic and historic impact on the state.

Details of the history of the sheep in the United States, catalogued by the Terra Patre Farm and Ranch, a breeder of New Mexico Dahl sheep, notes an early example of Spanish livestock being brought to the states is by Ponce de Leon and the livestock his ships brought over. During a battle with Native Americans, Leon was hit by an arrow and thus retreated to Cuba, leaving his flock behind to try to survive in the jungles and marshes of Florida.

One possible way Dahl sheep made it to New Mexico is through expeditions by the Spanish in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century. Due to the Spanish noting the harsh climate of the territory and the possibility of hostilities, breeders, such as Terra Patre Farm and Ranch, noted Dahl sheep would have been an ideal expedition livestock due to its speed, durability, and meat. Another possibility is that sheep were brought over precisely for the Coronado Expeditions. In planning their search for gold and silver, the Spanish expedition had over 1,000 people and included hundreds of livestock, including sheep. Estimates place the amounts of livestock at 500 cattle and up to 5,000 sheep. Among these sheep there were Xisqueta and Ripollesa breeds, varieties of sheep that New Mexico's Dahl sheep have a close relation.

## **TECHNICAL ISSUES**

DGF cautions, due to New Mexico Dahl Sheep being deemed domestic livestock, and not wildlife, they are beyond the jurisdiction of the agency and the requested study.

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