

# Qualitative behaviour assessment in intensively and extensively reared lambs

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## Introduction

The **EcoLamb project** (ERA-Net SusAn, [www.ecolamb.eu](http://www.ecolamb.eu)) aims to holistically evaluate lamb production sustainability (meat quality, ecological footprint and animal welfare). **Qualitative behaviour assessment (QBA)**, from the AWIN welfare assessment protocol for sheep relies on the ability of humans to integrate perceived details of behaviour into descriptors with emotional connotation that can be scaled and added to other quantitative indicators.

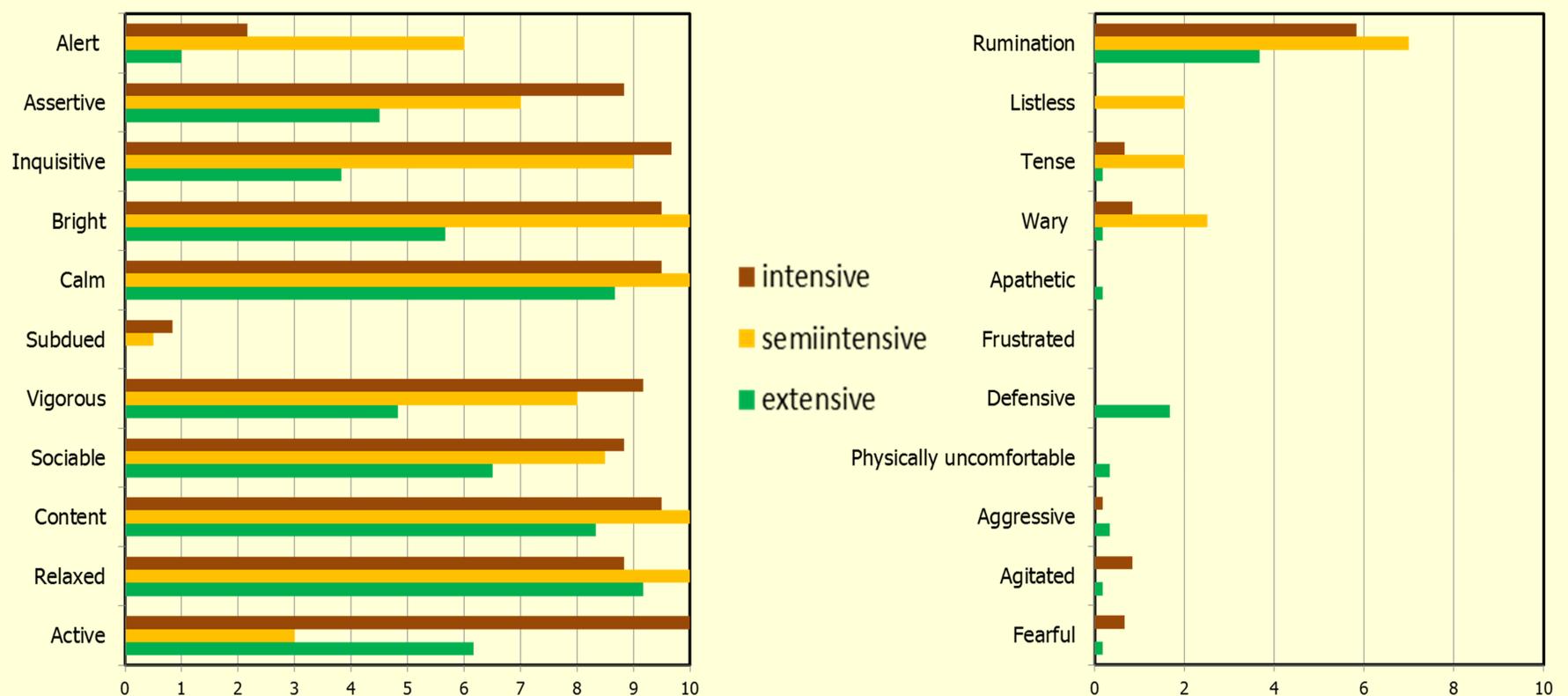
### Objective:

To compare the results from QBA performed in intensive and extensive fattening lambs farms.

## Material and methods

AWIN protocol was performed in 14 groups (**6 extensive**, **2 semi-intensive** and **6 intensive** rearing system) of 15 young lambs (2 months of age) participating in the EcoLamb project. **Data on QBA** (items were being **scaled from 0 – absence- to 10 -all the animals fully expressed the evaluated item-**), familiar approach and fleece quality tests were subjected to descriptive statistics analyses.

## Results



**Extensively** reared lambs scored higher in descriptors such as aggressive, defensive, physically uncomfortable or apathetic.

**Intensively** reared lambs showed higher values in descriptors such as agitated and fearful but also in other as active, sociable, vigorous, subdued, calm, inquisitive and assertive. **Semi-intensively** reared lambs scored in between.

All the animals ruminated to some extent, the quality of the fleece was always acceptable and no stereotypes were recorded. Minor lameness problems were observed only in one extensive farm.

Although animal welfare is a real complex matter to be assessed, **do animals from different rearing systems express different degree of positive emotional state?**