

SOUTHDOWN STANDARD OF EXCELLENCE



HEAD

The head gives any breed its distinguishing character. It should be carried high. The muzzle should be moderate in length. The hair on the muzzle should be gray to brown, not white and not approaching black. Any wool covering in front of the eyes should be short, so that at no time can the sheep be woolblind. It should be emphasized that the modern Southdown should have a moderate amount of wool about the face and eyes. The tear ducts should be free of wool just below the eyes. Ears are moderate in length, should be level, and proportionate to the head size. The optimum ear should be medium thickness and covered with wool. Short hair is acceptable. Slick ears are discriminated against. It is not uncommon to have black or brown pigmentation on the ear. The optimum color of the tip of the nostril should be black, color blue or purple is acceptable and some speckles are not uncommon. Solid pink is to be discriminated against.

FOREQUARTERS

Shoulders should be muscular with well laid in spring of the rib. Shoulders and neck that are not too thick, and head not too wide between the ears to facilitate easy lambing. Flat, wide-topped shoulders should be discriminated against. Forelegs should not be set too wide apart nor should the brisket be so prominent as to indicate wastiness of carcass. Neck should not be overly short and should be well set up on the shoulders and be free from wrinkles.

BACK AND LOIN

Back is long with more than one half the overall length in the hindsaddle as measured from the dock to the thirteenth rib, and level from front to rear. Loin is wide with well developed loin eye. Animals that exhibit unnatural muscling of the rack and shortened loin associated with the callipyge mutation should be discriminated against.

HINDQUARTERS

Hindquarters are wider than the forequarters and carry good width to the pin bones. Dock is carried high with an absence of patchiness. There should be good bulge on the outside of the leg to indicate heavy muscling. Depth of the twist due to muscling is desirable. Animals that exhibit a tendency toward a steep hip and unnatural muscling of the leg associated with the callipyge mutation should be discriminated against.



FEET AND LEGS

Feet and legs should stand wide behind, with correct set of the hocks and pasterns. We should be encouraged to select sheep with less wool on the inside of the upper foreleg and the upper inside back leg, around the crotch and scrotum. Southdowns with longer legs should indicate growth potential. The hoof color should be black, or black with a few white stripes. Total white hooves are discriminated against. A moderate amount of wool on the legs below the knees and hocks is desirable. The hair color on the legs should be similar to the muzzle but could be darker.



SIZE

Southdowns have always been considered a moderate framed sheep that is well balanced in conformation. Keeping the conformation Southdowns are noted for, the optimum size of a yearling ram in moderate flesh is 225-250 pounds. Optimum weight on yearling ewes should be 160-200 pounds. Breeding stock should be well proportioned, being longer than they are tall. Selecting sires and replacement ewes by measurement of overall length and height at weaning or as yearlings should encourage the genetic development of large Southdowns that are still easy keepers.

FLEECE

Fleece should be dense and uniform over the entire body. Black spots in the wool are discriminated against. Wool of 1/2 to 3/8 blood, 54-60 and 24-28 microns is preferred. Skin should be light in color, but some speckling on the hide is acceptable. A nice smooth skin is optimum. Wrinkles on the hide are not recommended.

GENERAL

Ewes should have a large udder, but not pendulous. She should be capable of producing and raising twins, particularly after the first year. The ewe should normally be active and productive under average care through her eighth year and often through her tenth year. Rams should be free from stiffness and remain active and vigorous for a similar length of time. Ewes and rams with proper management should require no grain in order to maintain a thrifty condition with the exception of lactating ewes and young, rapidly growing lambs. Southdowns need to produce an optimum size lean carcass.

DISCRIMINATIONS

- Slick ears
- Solid pink tip of the nostril
- White hooves
- Solid scurs or horns
- Mottling or brockling of head or legs
- Pronounced Roman-shaped nose
- Any evidence of crossbreeding
- Inverted eyelids
- Rectal or vaginal prolapse
- Incisor teeth not meeting dental pad correctly



DISQUALIFICATIONS

- Scrotal rupture
- One or both testicles not descended
- Ectodermal Dysplasia (Hairy lambs)
- Hereditary Chondrodysplasia (Spider lambs)
- Calligype lambs

AMERICAN SOUTHDOWN BREEDERS' ASSOCIATION

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