

# farm and home

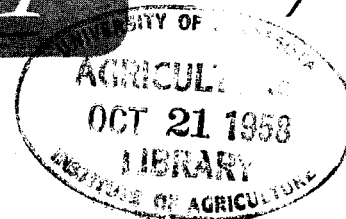
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
*Agricultural Extension Service*  
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# FACT SHEET

ANIMAL  
HUSBANDRY

No. 4

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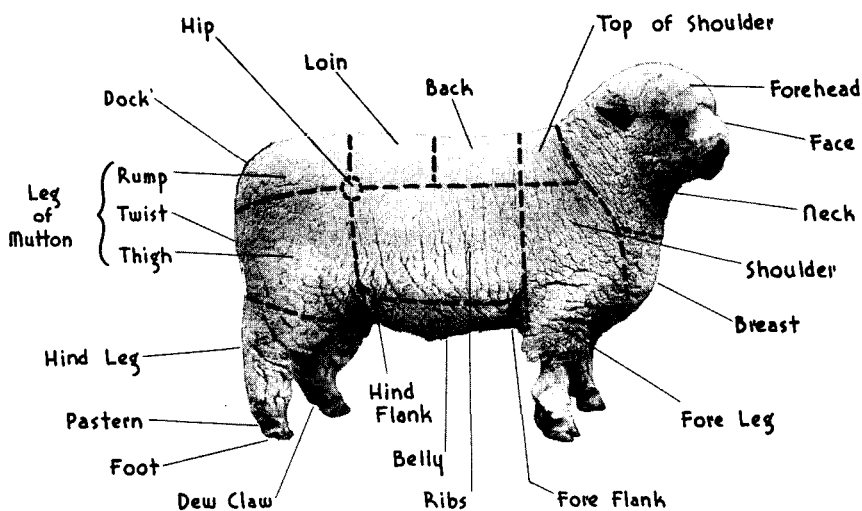
## Judging Sheep

R. E. JACOBS

Sheep produce two crops: lambs and wool. About 80 percent of the value produced by the breeds on Minnesota farms comes from the sale of lambs, about 20 percent from the sale of wool.

The first step in judging sheep usually is to view the animal from the front, side, and rear at a distance of at least 10 feet to get an impression of general appearance and conformation. Finish, fleshing, quality of fleece, and final consideration of conformation is determined by handling the sheep.

The beginning sheep judge should be come thoroughly familiar with the names of the body parts of the sheep. The picture above shows an excellent type market lamb. Study it well.



LONG-WOOL -- Lincoln, Leicester, Cotswold, Romney.

Purebred sheep breeds most common on Minnesota farms are: Mutton type -- Hampshire, Suffolk, Southdown, Shropshire, Oxford, Cheviot; mutton-wool type -- Columbia, Corriedale.

### METHOD OF HANDLING

- Use a flat hand (keep fingers close together) to determine fleshing and finish on the back; apply gentle pressure with the finger tips.
- Never punch into the wool with your fingers. To examine the fleece, open it on the shoulder, side, and thigh -- never on the back!
- Use both hands to determine spring of rib; width and depth of loin; plumpness of leg; width of shoulder; and flat cover or finish over these parts and over the point of the shoulder.
- To get a first impression of the amount of finish a lamb is carrying, open the hand and place your thumb on the backbone with the fingers on the ribs.

### CLASSIFICATION OF BREEDS

FINE-WOOL -- American Merino, Delaine Merino, Rambouillet, Targhee.

MEDIUM-WOOL -- Southdown, Shropshire, Hampshire, Oxford, Suffolk, Dorset, Cheviot, Corriedale, Columbia, Panama, Romeldale, Tunis.

### POINTS TO CONSIDER IN JUDGING

SIZE. Proper size for the age and breed. Dwarf, undersized animals are not desirable.

TYPE. This is the ideal or standard of perfection which combines all the features that contribute to the animal's usefulness for a specific purpose. Desirable type for mutton and mutton-wool sheep is a compact, broad, deep-bodied animal set on legs of medium length.

CONFORMATION. This constitutes form or build. Check the body parts for the following features.

Head -- medium in length; broad, wide muzzle. Neck -- short, thick, neatly blended with the shoulder. Chest -- wide, deep, well-sprung fore rib. Shoulder -- full, wide, compact on top, well-blended with neck and body. Back -- wide, straight, strong. Loin -- wide, level, thick. Ribs -- well-sprung, long.

## SHEEP JUDGING TERMS

Flank -- well let-down.

Hips -- smoothly laid in. Rump -- long, wide, level. Thighs -- deep, wide, plump. Twist -- deep, heavily muscled.

CONDITION. Shoulders, back, loin, ribs, and rump well-covered with firm, springy flesh. Flanks well let-down, dock large and thick, brisket plump, and leg-of-lamb (or mutton) thick and plump.

QUALITY. Clean, smooth bone, not coarse in shoulders; flesh firm, no soft gobby fat on ribs or at the dock.

SUBSTANCE. This deals with ample bone and muscular development.

FEET AND LEGS. Straight, even toes; short, straight, well-placed legs. Weak pasterns and crooked hocks are undesirable.

SEX CHARACTER. For ewes -- refined feminine head; roomy middle; neatly laid in shoulder; vigorous, sound udder. For rams -- strong, masculine head; heavy bone; vigorous.

BREED TYPE. Head, color markings, conformation, and fleece characteristic of the breed; proper size.

FLEECE. Wool dense. Uniform fiber fineness; no black fibers; covering consistent with the breed being judged. No kemp or hair in fleece. Fleece not matted, stained, or dead in appearance.

SKIN. Pink and healthy in appearance.

### JUDGING MARKET LAMBS

Slaughter grades for market lambs are: prime, choice, good, utility, and cull. Finish (condition or fat covering) is the most important factor in determining grade; it should be the same in placing market lambs being judged. Conformation and quality are next in importance.

Handle the back, loin, ribs, rump, shoulder, thigh, and twist to determine degree of finish and natural muscling. The thigh and rump combined make up the leg-of-lamb. This cut, the loin, and the back are the most valuable parts of the lamb carcass; they must be well-muscled and carry an adequate fat cover. In a close placing, choose the lamb with the well-covered shoulder and shoulder vein.

Lack of quality consists of coarse bone; large heads; rough shoulders; heavy pelts and paunchy, wasty middles; and flabby fat over the ribs and at the dock. Quality of fleece, soundness of feet and legs, and breed type are of little importance in fat lamb judging.

### JUDGING BREEDING CLASSES

In most Minnesota contests, classes to be judged are made up of the mutton breeds common in our state. The same compact, well-muscled conformation described under "Points to Consider in Judging" is wanted in breeding sheep. But pay particular attention to sex character, breed type, feet and legs, and fleece quality. The various pure-breed associations will give you their official score-cards covering these features.

Commendable terms are: More finish; more uniform cover of finish over back, loin, ribs, rump, and shoulder. A deeper, plumper leg-of-lamb; deeper in the twist; more width of rump; more width and depth of loin; more spring of rib; a deeper body. More width at the chest floor; more substance of bone; more masculine head (ram); more feminine head (ewe); straighter legs; straight, even toes; stronger pasterns. A more dense fleece; heavier shearing fleece; more compact; lower set.

Terms of criticism are: Shallow-bodied; narrow-bodied; long-legged; lacks substance; under-finished; lacks quality and breed type; coarse-shouldered; long-necked; poorly muscled; coarse, kempy fleece on lower thigh (or leg); black fibers in fleece; weak back; narrow rump; poorly muscled leg; shallow in the twist.

### SAMPLE SET OF JUDGING REASONS

FAT LAMBS -- "I placed this class of Southdown fat lambs 2, 3, 1, 4. I placed 2 over 3 because he is carrying more finish over his back and loin and over his ribs and shoulders. He is also a firmer handling lamb than 3, with more width and fullness at the shoulder and with a shorter neck that blends more smoothly with his shoulder. I grant that 3 is a more compact, lower-set lamb, with more muscling in his rump and leg; but because of his lower degree of finish I felt justified in placing 2 first in this class.

"I placed 3 over 1 because of his advantage in conformation. He is lower set and more compact. In my opinion these two lambs are equal in degree of finish, but 3 has a deeper, plumper leg of lamb with more depth at the twist. He also has a wider, thicker loin, more depth and muscling in his shoulder, and a stronger back than 1. I placed 1 over 4 because he has more finish and better conformation. He is a deeper-bodied, heavier-muscled lamb; he is trimmer in the middle with more quality of bone, and would therefore hang up a higher dressing, better balanced carcass than 4. I placed 4 last in this class because he lacks finish. He is rather upstanding and shallow-bodied and wasty in his middle."

BREEDING EWES -- "I placed this class of Hampshire ewes 4, 3, 1, 2. I placed 4 over 3 because she is a larger, stronger ewe, standing on a straighter set of legs with more strength in her pasterns and more substance of bone. She is also deeper bodied, with more width and fullness at the shoulder, more width over loin and rump, and more depth and muscling in her leg. I grant that 3 is more feminine and refined in her head than 4, that her shoulder blends more smoothly with her neck and body, and that her fleece is more dense and has more fineness of fiber.

"I placed 3 over 1 because she shows more Hampshire breed type and has a more desirable fleece. These two ewes are nearly of the same size, but 3 is more refined and feminine in her head and cleaner about her face -- 1 having a heavy wool covering which interferes with her sight. Also, 3 has a more dense, more uniform fleece than 1, in particular showing more fineness of fiber on the lower thigh.

"I placed 1 over 2 because she is a lower set, more compact ewe. She has more depth of heart girth and more depth of rear flank; she also has more muscling over her back and rump and in her thigh than 2. She has more width of chest floor and is a heavier boned, stronger footed ewe. However, I grant that 2 is more refined in her head and is free from the objectionable wool covering which 1 has on the face."