

## International Breed Standards for Dorper Sheep

The South African Dorper Society have developed a set of standards for the classing of Dorpers and White Dorpers that are the most comprehensive that are applied to any breed throughout the world.

The system provides for the classing of Dorpers into 5 “Types” where Type 1 is a cull and to be classed officially as a “stud” animal it must conform to the standards to the extent that it is classed as Type 4 or Type 5.

Type 3 is a good average Dorper sheep that can be registered with the Dorper Sheep Society of Australia (DSSA) and is often the minimum standard of sheep that is retained in a stud breeding operation

To be **classed** as a stud sheep the Dorper will be either Type 4 or Type 5 where Type 4 is a good quality sheep that conforms to the standards at a higher level than a Type 3 and Type 5 is a stud, elite, quality sheep.

Whilst Type 2 sheep are not officially culls they are not permitted to be registered with the DSSA and therefore are of little use to stud breeders and are usually treated as culls.

### How are the classes determined?

Each sheep is examined by an officially appointed, qualified Breed Inspector (Breed Inspectors may not officially class their own sheep).

Five physical components of the sheep are assessed and the overall combination of each is used to determine the “Type” that is attributed to the sheep.

The Inspector will apply points to each of the components and the manner in which the points combine will influence the final decision on the “Type” the sheep scores.

1 point indicates poor with culls faults; 2 points indicate below average; 3 points indicate average; 4 points indicate good and 5 points indicate excellent.

Each of the physical characteristics is scored using the above pointing system.

The physical characteristics that are assessed are:

1. Conformation
2. Size
3. Fat Distribution
4. Colour Combination
5. Covering (this is the term used for the “fleece” of the Dorper)

The Breed Standards provide for a number of variations in the mix of scores that each sheep has when used to determine the final decision on the “Type” the sheep is classed into.

An ideal score for an Elite Stud Dorper would be: Conformation 5; Size 5; Fat Distribution 5; Colour Combination 5 and Covering 5.

Such a sheep would be classed as a Type 5 stud Dorper.

There exist some further combinations of some of the individual components that are scored that provide for a Dorper to be classed as Type 5 even though it may not score 5 points in every section.

The South African Dorper Society publishes a magazine entitled “Dorpers into the new century” which is used as the reference for the training courses that provide individuals with the opportunity to qualify in the recognition and application of the Breed Standards. Copies of this reference book may be purchased from the DSSA or from the South African Dorper Society. The magazine fully lists the various combinations of points for each component that are applied to the determination of “Type “and reference should be made to this publication for more detailed information.

### What is considered when pointing “Conformation?”

**The head** is extremely important when assessing the Dorper.

“A good Head” is an expression often heard amongst Dorper people when describing a sheep.

The head should be long and strong and the eyes should be spaced widely to the outside of the head and protected by the skull.

A strong, Roman, nose with a well-fitting strong jaw (not overshot or undershot).

The teeth should contact the upper gum as precisely as possible. The standards allow for the teeth to be 2mm shorter than the upper gum in adult sheep and 3mm when assessing lambs.

Ears should be in proportion to the head; not too big or too small.

A developed horn base or small “scurs” are desirable in rams.

### **Neck and Forequarter**

*With all these various components we are looking for proportion and balance.*

A medium length of neck that is well fleshed, broad and properly coupled to the forequarter is required.

Strong, firm and broad shoulders with a brisket that has a reasonable protrusion in front of the shoulders with moderate width and depth. Strong, straight and properly placed forelegs with good straight pasterns and good hoofs are required.

Loose shoulders will downgrade the sheep as will faults such as X-legs, crooked legs, weak pasterns and poorly shaped brisket.

### **Barrel**

The main body of the sheep is referred to as the 'barrel' which should be long, wide and deep with a good spring of ribs. The loin should be full and broad. The back should be straight and long; there may be a slight dip behind the shoulders as the full loin manifests.

The shape of the barrel should vary with the sheep's gender; the female has a wedge shape (feminine) that tapers towards the front, whilst a ram has a masculine shape with a broader, deeper chest. Again the balance and proportions are extremely important.

### **Hindquarter**

Good hindquarters are synonymous with Dorpers. They must be long (along the length of the sheep) and wide. When viewed from behind the muscling on the hind legs, which must be strong and properly placed, may be referred to as the inner and outer twist.

The inner twist is the muscling between the legs and the outer twist is the muscling on the outside of the leg bones and particularly at the top of the legs (giving width across the top of the hindquarter). Both inner and outer twists should be full and deep.

The hocks and pasterns must be strong and straight.

### **Reproductive Organs**

Ewes should have well developed reproductive organs and udders.

Rams should have testicles that are even in size and not too small; the scrotum should not be too long. Abnormalities in testicles are cull faults.

There are minimum size requirements for rams' testicle circumference when measured in a sitting position:

10 months of age 30cm

2 tooth 32cm

4 tooth 33cm

6 tooth or older 34cm

A split of up to 1.5cm is permitted on the scrotum.

Prolapses of the anus or vagina are faults.

## **Balance**

As stated previously all of these components of the “Conformation” should be in proportion and balanced. This means that the height, width, length and depth of the sheep are in proportion and that the head, neck, forequarter, barrel, hindquarters and reproductive organs all “fit” properly in combination.

## **What is considered when pointing Size?**

Yet again this is matter of balance; the sheep should be of a good size and weight for its age.

Extremely large or extremely small sheep that have been running under the same environment and nutritional conditions as those considered to be normal sized are not wanted and will be given less points.

## **What is considered when pointing Fat Distribution?**

The sheep should be firm and muscular when handled. Dorpers should have an even distribution of fat over the carcass with fat between the muscle fibres.

Localised fat will lose points. Areas where it may occur include the tail, brisket, behind the shoulder and the back of the head.

Dorpers should not be too lean. As a maternal breed, it is important that they retain a good covering of fat as this helps the ewes to maintain condition when feeding lambs.

Good eating qualities require intra-muscular fat.

## **What is considered when pointing Colour Combination?**

A Dorper is a white sheep with a black head and neck. Some black spots are also permitted on the body and legs. Totally white or predominantly black sheep are faulty.

Brown or white hairs around the eyes are undesirable as is brown on the face.

Pink teats, pink under the tail (not associated with tail-docking) and totally white hooves are faults.

Colour is the main difference between White Dorpers and Dorpers.

For classing purposes the sheep is divided into above and below the “cut-off line”. The cut-off line runs from just below the point of the hock on the rear leg, along the underside of the barrel and through to a point just below the knee on the foreleg.

This underbody line runs through between the back legs of a ram to the rear on the junction of the scrotum; to the front, it runs up to the back of the front legs.

In ewes, the underline includes the reproductive organs.

The colour pattern will determine the points that are given to the sheep for classing purposes.

The Inspector will use a system that denotes the colour pattern under the letter P (for pigment).

When you consult the “Dorpers into the next century” magazine you will see that there are several combinations of colour that can be attributed to “stud” class sheep.

Sheep with P5, P4 and P3 colour patterns may be eligible to be classed as stud sheep provided certain other classing conditions are met.

It is important that it is understood that a Dorper can still be a Type 5 stud sheep with some white on its head, provided the white parts comply with the breed standards.

**P5** is the ideal colour and will be attributed to a Dorper that is white with a black head and neck. The black must not extend further than where it may touch the neck or the breast bone at the front (just the neck). The anus or the reproductive organs of the ewe, and the hooves must be completely pigmented.

**P4** provides for a small amount more colour. The Dorper will be a white sheep with black on the head and neck and may also have a few loose spots on the neck so long as they don't touch the shoulders or the breast bone.

A white patch or blaze is allowed as long as it doesn't extend beyond the horn base.

A few specs constituted by black hairs that don't actually form spots are permitted on the underline.

A 10cm square of black on the sheath of a ram, or a 10cm square of black on the reproductive organs of a ewe (and the anus of a ram) are permitted. This is the equivalent of roughly the area covered by the palm of the hand.

**P3** Dorpers can also qualify to be stud class sheep.

They are permitted to have black on the head, neck and forequarter provided that the black doesn't extend behind the shoulder (it may cover the front part of the shoulder) or below the cut-off line.

Loose patches on or above the knee and on the forearm are considered to be on the forequarter.

Loose patches that fall on or below the knee are considered to be below the cut-off line and

are limited to a total area of 10cm. Patches on the hock must be below the cut-off line. If the Dorper has a black forequarter it may also have more black on the forelegs but there must be a division that coincides with the cut-off line.

The sheep may have a limited number of spots on the body and underline.

For stud qualification the Dorper must have a minimum of 50% pigmentation of the hooves, reproductive organs and anus. This doesn't include the sheath of a ram, where black is not a requirement.

Provided there is no other black below the cut-off line, a 10 x 20 cm patch is permitted at the sheath of a ram or the reproductive organs of a ewe.

A white patch on the head or neck is permitted (for example white on the bottom jaw) this doesn't mean white around the eyes, which is undesirable.

A white blaze is allowed as long as it doesn't completely split the head with white.

Ears must be at least 50% black.

**P2 and P1** coloured sheep are not desirable and carry different combinations to those described above; refer to the "Dorpers into the new century" magazine.

### What is considered when pointing Covering?

The Inspector will use the letter H when recording Covering.

**H5** is the most desirable covering and is defined as a "short, loose, light mixture of hair and wool with a natural clean kemp underline. The head should be covered in short clean kemp". (The Dorpers into the next century publication is acknowledged as the source of this definition).

Like the colour combination section, the covering section also has combinations that provide for the inclusion of differently pointed sheep to qualify as stud class.

**H4** is an appealing cover that should also shed well and is defined as "a short, loose, light covering of hair and wool with wool predominating on the forequarter and with a natural clean kemp underline. Wool is permitted up to the crown of the head (up along the back of the neck). (The Dorpers into the next century publication is acknowledged as the source of this definition).

**H3** Dorpers may also qualify for stud class.

H3 is defined as a short loose covering of predominantly wool or soft fine hair with perceptible kemp on the outer thigh. A soft light mane or apron is permitted and wool is permitted forward of the crown of the head. (The Dorpers into the next century publication is acknowledged as the source of this definition).

The covering of Dorpers should ideally be made up of a mixture of 50% hair and wool.

### What is considered when pointing Type?

Type is determined by the degree to which the sheep conforms to the Breed Standards. The relevant combinations of points in each of the characteristics are taken into consideration.

The sheep's general appearance, balance, muscling and vigour are evaluated and the degree of masculinity in rams and femininity in ewes is important.