

# **DORSET STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE**

## **(A Guide For Selection and Judging)**

### **“The Breed For All Seasons...The Breed For All Reasons”**

#### **Overview**

Dorsets are adaptable to all types of sheep enterprises, from the large, full-time commercial producer to the small, part-time purebred farm flock operation. The Dorset breed was originally developed as an extremely versatile sheep that thrived and excelled in a variety of environments, under various nutritional and management regimens. The versatility of the breed is most readily apparent in their ability to serve both maternal and terminal aspects of sheep production.

The maternal superiority of the Dorset breed is readily accepted by both commercial and purebred producers due to the breed's out-of-season lambing (fall and spring), prolificacy (approaching 200% lamb crop), mothering instinct and milking ability (heavier lamb weights at weaning).

The terminal attributes of the Dorset breed are comparable to other purebred breeds due to their rapid and efficient rate of growth in extensive (pasture-based feeding) and intensive (feedlot and dry-lot feeding) programs, and carcass characteristics that excel in both yield and quality grade with a high percentage of rack, loin and leg.

#### **General Appearance**

Dorsets are medium sized sheep that have good body length and exceptional muscle. A variety of frame sizes and mature body weights are acceptable within the breed due to the various nutritional and management regimens in which the breed is expected to excel. Dorset ewes should weigh between 150-225 pounds and should not exceed 34 inches tall at the shoulder. Dorset rams should weigh between 225-325 pounds and should not exceed 37 inches tall at the shoulder. The Dorset is an ewe breed with fall lambing characteristics, femininity, prolificacy and great mothering ability.

#### **Score Card**

##### **Head- 25 points**

The head should be neat and well covered with wool on the crown and under the jaw. Face should be smooth and open with a moderately broad muzzle of medium length. They should have large nostrils and pink nose and mouth lining. **Mouth or nose showing any colors other than pink or black constitutes a highly objectionable trait.** Eyes should be bright and prominent. Ears should be small to medium in length and size. Ears should be covered with white hair and a small amount of white wool is acceptable. Pure Horned ewes' horns should be small, but sturdy that are based in front of the ears and curve forward and downward close to the jaw. Pure Horned rams' horns should be heavy, based in front of the ears with a spiral curve downward and forward. Horns should not touch the face or jaws. Scurs in polled sheep should not be a point of discrimination. The tear ducts should not be large or very pronounced, and should have white hair covering them. Dark pigmentation on the rims of the eyelids and small freckles inside the ear are acceptable. The woolled and haired portions of the head should be free from any brown, liver, or reddish colored spots. **Such spots in these areas are highly objectionable traits.** A black spot on the nose, **septum** or mouth **and/or ear** is acceptable not exceeding the size of an eraser head on a standard sized pencil (**0.25 inches**). However, solid pink noses and lips, **and solid white haired ears** are preferred.

## Neck-Shoulder-Chest 10 points

A Dorset's neck should be moderate in length, trim and well set with head erect and alert. Rams should show masculinity with a good crest. **The neck should be free of wrinkles and or dewlaps.** Any dewlaps, wrinkles, and or skin folds should be heavily discriminated against and are considered highly objectionable traits. **(A Dewlap is a pendulous fold of skin under the throat of an animal.)** Shoulders should be smooth, oblique, and well laid into the ribs. The chest should be deep ribbed, well sprung, and with width to the chest floor.

## Back-Loin-Rump-Leg 30 points

The back should be strong, straight, level and it should carry out to the dock with the tail head fairly high set. The loin should be long, wide, and deep. The rump should be long, wide, level and very **well muscled**. The leg should be thick through the center extending well into the stifle area and carrying low towards the hock. Emphasis should be placed on total body length in relationship to height at the shoulder. Dorsets should be as long or longer than they are tall. The loin, rump, and leg are three important parts of the sheep. Dorsets must excel in these areas having at least 50% of their length in their hindsaddle

## Feet-Legs-Pasterns 20 points

Legs should be well set under the corners. They should be straight, strong, and of **ample bone**. The forearm area as well as the rear leg should show good expression of muscling. The upper leg should be well woolled and covered with white hair below the woolled area. The leg below the hocks and knees should be covered with white, dense hair and may have a moderate amount of wool with the majority of this wool being on the front of the legs. There should be no shading off to dark color on the legs or dark colored spots on the legs. These are considered highly objectionable traits, **and if present on two or more anatomical regions with hair is a disqualification.** The feet should point straight ahead and not turn out at an angle. Sheep should have short, strong pasterns. All these skeletal parts should move with strength and correctness when the animal is on the move. **A Dorset with a completely black hoof is disqualification.** A Dorset with pearl colored hooves with some black striping is acceptable but hooves with excessive striping is highly undesirable.

## Fleece-Skin 8 points

The fleece should be medium fiber, 26 to 32 microns which relates to 1/4 to 3/8 blood, and without tendency to mat together. The fleece should not shade off into hair or dark fiber. The fleece should be **white** and the hair covering on other portions of the animal should be short, white, of medium texture, and free of dark colored spots. Dark colored spots in the wool are a disqualification. The skin should be free of any large wrinkles and loose folds. Skin should be pink in color, soft and attractive.

## Frame 7 points

Dorsets are **medium size** sheep that have good length of body and exceptional muscle. Dorset yearling ewes should weigh between 150-225 pounds and should not exceed 34 inches tall at the shoulder. Dorset yearling rams should weigh between 225-325 pounds and should not exceed 37 inches tall at the shoulder. The majority of the ewes and rams body length should be from the 13<sup>th</sup> rib back. Emphasis should be placed on length from the 13<sup>th</sup> rib back rather than the height of the sheep.

## Serious Defects

The following defects are very undesirable. They should be discriminated against in shows and sales, and in the flock selection process. ***(After each defect the section(s) of the scorecard in which that defect is found and the total points assigned to that section are listed.)***

1. Inverted eyelids ***(Head 25 pts)***
2. Abnormally large tear ducts ***(Head 25 pts)***
3. Absence of hair covering in typical areas ***(Head 25 pts and Feet-Legs-Pasterns 20 pts)***
4. Lack of muscling ***(Back-Loin-Rump-Leg 30 pts)***
5. Weak pasterns ***(Feet-Legs-Pasterns 20 pts)***
6. Post legged ***(Feet-Legs-Pasterns 20 pts)***
7. Sickie hocked ***(Feet-Legs-Pasterns 20 pts)***
8. Cow hocked ***(Feet-Legs-Pasterns 20 pts)***
9. Splayed footed (Badly turned out front feet) ***(Feet-Legs-Pasterns 20 pts)***

## Highly Objectionable Traits

The following traits are highly objectionable as traits #1 thru #8 relate to the possible influence of outside genetics in the Dorset breed, and traits #9 thru #10 affect the basic functionality of the breeding animal. These traits will be vigorously discriminated against in shows and sales. In addition, the CDC Board of Directors strongly encourages you to display a high level of integrity when selecting animals in your flock for registry in the Continental Dorset Club displaying any of these traits. ***(After each trait the section(s) of the scorecard in which that trait is found and the total points assigned to that section are listed.)***

1. Large ears and/or droopy ears ***(Head 25 pts)***
  - A. Ears should be small to medium in length and in total size.
  - B. Ears should be at least 5 degrees above horizontal when alert.
  - C. Ears should relate to the size of the animal.
2. Fine textured silky hair covering ***(Head 25 pts and Feet-Legs-Pasterns 20 pts)***
3. Dewlaps, excessive loose skin or large wrinkles and folds. (Dewlap is a pendulous fold of skin under the throat.) ***(Neck-Shoulder-Chest 10 pts)***
4. Hooves with excessive black striping ***(Feet-Legs-Pasterns 20 pts)***
5. Any color other than pink on the nose, **septum** or mouth ***(Head 25 pts)***  
Exception:

A black spot on the nose, septum or mouth equal to or smaller than the size of an eraser head on a standard sized pencil (0.25 inches) is acceptable.

6. Any dark colored spots in the haired portion of sheep (**Head 25 pts and Feet-Legs-Pasterns 20 pts**)

Exception:

A black spot on an ear equal to or smaller than the size of an eraser head on a standard sized pencil (0.25 inches) is acceptable.

Highly objectionable dark color on the haired portion of two or more anatomical regions of the sheep (on two or more legs OR on one or more legs and head) will result in a disqualification. See Disqualification #3.

7. Height – Yearling ewes over 34 inches tall at the shoulder. Yearling rams over 37 inches tall at the shoulder. (**Frame 7 pts**)

8. Pure horned ewes with horns that curve backward, grow in a backward curve, or the tips of the horns grow inward and close to the neck. (**Head 25 pts**)

9. Incisor teeth slightly missing dental pads

10. Abnormal testes:

A. Scrotal circumferences less than 30 centimeters for one year and under and 32 centimeters for yearlings and older. (Reference: S.I.D. Sheep Production Handbook, pg. 936)

B. Testicles unequal in size.

## **Disqualifications**

Any animal having any of the following characteristics will be disqualified from shows and sales, and are ineligible for registry in the Continental Dorset Club.

1. Sheep with a completely black hoof. (A hoof is defined as both toes. Area to be examined is the outside wall that is visibly exposed, not between the toes.)
2. A completely black or dark colored lining of the mouth or nose.
3. The presence of highly objectionable dark color (as defined in Highly Objectionable Traits #6) on the haired portion of two or more anatomical regions. The head (nose, face and ears) is considered one anatomical region and each individual leg is considered an anatomical region. (ie: Highly objectionable dark color on two or more legs OR on one or more legs and head will result in a disqualification.)
4. Dark colored spots in the wool.
5. Solid black fleece animals, badger, or Hereford fleece (black body with white head or legs, and belly)
6. Holstein fleece pattern (black with white spots)
7. Spilt scrotum exceeding more than ½ inch in split length

8. Obvious parrot mouth (undershot bottom jaw) or monkey jaw (overshot bottom jaw)
9. Cryptorchidism (rams lacking two or one testicles)
10. Pure Horned sheep that have been dehorned.
11. Any signs of surgical alterations or any mechanical alterations (other than tail docking, and horn and/or scur care to protect the health of the animal or for management purposes) and/or use of substances to camouflage coloration as described in #1 thru #5 under disqualifications and #4 thru #6 under highly objectionable traits.\*

***\*Violators will be subject to disciplinary action as outlined in the Continental Dorset Club Constitution and Bylaws.***