

FITTING AND SHOWING

The 4-H Lamb

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A Word to the Adults...

4-H lamb fitting and showing projects are an important part of a well-rounded 4-H livestock program. While this publication deals with only a small part of 4-H sheep project work, it is the project with which most sheep club members start.

This project requires a comparatively small initial investment and in most cases utilizes home-grown feeds .

Lamb projects place responsibility upon the shoulders of the members and give them experience in handling sheep. Interest in sheep production is stimulated.

Important character benefits are obtained by boys and girls who accept the responsibilities and experience of livestock projects.

Purpose

The purpose of this project is to give useful information and valuable experience in the selection, feeding, fitting and showing of lambs. Some experience in handling sheep is the first requirement listed by most authorities for those wishing to enter the sheep business. Character development is an important result of lamb fattening projects as it is of all livestock projects.

Requirements

Boys and girls who wish to carry this out as a 4-H project must be enrolled in the 4-H Club and meet the requirements for membership as set by the state 4-H Club leader. One or more lambs must be owned by the member. Any lambs that are exhibited must be owned, fed and cared for by the sheep club member.

Lambs fed under this project should be exhibited at a local, county or state show or fair.

Acknowledgement:

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Fitting and Showing the 4-H Lamb

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To have a lamb fattening project that is successful, the lamb should be of the right age and should have desirable mutton type and conformation. The lamb's age should meet the entry requirements for the particular show at which it is exhibited. Proper age is also important because of its influence on the size and weight of the lamb.

In selecting show lambs, the following points should be kept in mind:

Select A Lamb:

- That is well muscled, with a deep-set backbone.
- Whose body is uniformly wide and deep.
- With smooth shoulders and a straight strong back.
- With a long, level rump and a square dock.
- With short, straight legs that are set wide apart (on the corners) both in front and behind.
- Whose leg of lamb is wide, deep and plump with a deep, full twist.
- With a pink skin and a dense, clean fleece.

Do Not Accept Lambs:

That are tight in the heart girth or forerib, narrow, long-bodied, weak-backed or have a very prominent back bone.

No matter how desirable the breeding, not every lamb will end up a top show lamb. However, good judgment in selecting from well-bred lambs will result in better chances at show time.

Feeding the Lamb

Feeding to bring a lamb to its peak in bloom and condition at show time requires knowledge and experience.

The basic facts and rations presented here should help the beginner, and possibly assist those with some experience to understand and correct their problems.

The basic ration below is used with variations by Oklahoma A&M College in feeding show lambs.

60% whole oats	5% dry molasses
30% wheat bran	5% linseed pellets
alfalfa hay	

If lambs are not fattening rapidly enough on the above ration, crimped or rolled barley may be added gradually until it replaces one-half of the oats. Some cracked corn may be used to replace some of the barley, *if* you are able to maintain a firm, hard finish.

For a roughage, lambs should have top-quality legume hay—preferably alfalfa. When on full feed they should be fed about the same amount of hay (on a weight basis) as they are of grain and other concentrates.

The schedule recommended for starting and finally full feeding of an approximately sixty-pound lamb without pasture is given below.

Daily Amount Per Lamb

	Concentrate Mixture (Grain & Supplement)	Hay (Alfalfa)
First 3 days	1/4 lb.	Full Feed 2 lbs.
4 to 7 days	1/2 lb.	Full Feed 2 lbs.
2nd week	3/4 lb.	Full Feed 2 lbs.
3rd week	1 lb.	Full Feed 1 3/4 to 2 lbs.
4th week	1 1/4 lb.	Full Feed 1 3/4 to 2 lbs.
5th week	1 1/2 to 1 3/4 lb.	Full Feed 1 1/2 to 1 3/4 lbs.

Where the club member is raising his own lambs, they should have access to the basic ration as soon as they start eating with their mothers.

Lambs being fitted for late September and October shows should remain on the basic ration until late June. At that time barley or corn can be substituted for part of the oats. Late lambs, being fitted for the spring shows, should be fed the basic ration until approximately the first of October. A gradual increase in barley or corn and a decrease in oats should make the lamb fatten and reach its peak for the spring stock shows.

Keeping lambs “on feed” and gaining is essential if you are to have a top lamb at show time.

Lambs should be fed twice daily. At each feeding, give the amount of feed which they will clean up in 20 to 30 minutes. If they do not clean up their feed, remove it from their trough and decrease the amount of the next feeding. Gradually increase the following feedings until you reach the maximum they will consume each feeding.

Clean feed troughs and clean, cool water are essential to a good, healthy appetite. These, combined with a good, dry pen, salt and mineral, and a balanced ration fed **regularly**, are some of the musts of a good lamb feeding program.

Listed below are some grains and roughages common to Oklahoma, with some ideas concerning their value for feeding show lambs.

Corn

Lambs will fatten readily, but it sometimes produces an undesirable, soft finish. Preparation by crimping or cracking is necessary.

Barley

A firm, hard finish is produced. It is an excellent wether feed. Rolling is preferred, but it can be coarsely ground or cracked.

Oats

Excellent for starting young lambs. It should always make up a large part of the grain ration for wethers. Oats can be rolled or fed whole.

Wheat

Not much wheat is fed in Oklahoma, but results elsewhere indicate that lambs fatten rapidly with a firm finish. It should be coarsely cracked or rolled.

Bran

Bran in combination with oats and barley is a good conditioner and will help keep lambs on feed.

Corn & Cob Meal

This combination is too bulky for show lambs.

Silage

Other roughages are more desirable for feeding show lambs.

Alfalfa Hay

Probably the best roughage for lambs. It must be of good quality.

Salt

Clean, loose salt should be available at all times.

Grain Sorghum

In most cases, the grain sorghums will not produce the firm finish or trimness that we find on barley-fed lambs. Grain sorghums are recommended for commercial lambs.

Water

Not generally thought of as a feed, but it is one of the most important nutrients. Keep it clean, fresh and cool.

Grains should be rolled, cracked, crimped, or very coarsely ground. Palatability is important; and finely ground, dusty feeds are undesirable.

Remember: "Keep the lamb on feed." Sudden changes in temperature, weather or environment will affect the lamb. Observe carefully and change feed accordingly.

Showing the Lamb

Show-ring performance is the result of prior training. Both the lamb and the exhibitor must be well trained or the performance will be poor. The lamb should stand on straight legs with the feet wide apart but not spraddled. To stand properly and to hold the desired position requires considerable practice by both lamb and trainer. Since sheep judges "handle" the animals in the show ring, it is important for the lamb to "brace". Bracing will tense the back muscles, strengthening the back while being handled. It also accentuates the degree of finish over the top. One method of bracing the lamb is to stand directly in front of the lamb and cradle the head between the forearms. The hands are placed against the front of the shoulder with the middle finger against the point of the shoulder. When pressure is applied to the shoulder point the lamb will push forward or brace. Since bracing is tiring, it should be done only when the lamb is being handled.

Another step in training lambs for show is to let strangers handle them. An excessive amount is discouraged, but getting the lamb accustomed to strangers is desirable.

In addition to handling, judges will observe the exhibit from the side, rear and front.

When the lamb is set for the side view, the exhibitor should be on the side of the lamb opposite the judge. The feet should be squarely under the lamb and the back level. The head should be held in a normal position.

In the rear view, the position of the lamb should indicate thickness. The legs should be as wide apart as they will stand naturally. However, a spraddle-legged lamb will appear cut up in the twist and light in the leg.

As the judge inspects the front, the front legs should be set wide but not spraddled. The head should be rested in the exhibitor's hand and the exhibitor should stand to the side of the lamb so the judge's view will not be obstructed.

Equipment Needed

Facilities and equipment for lamb fattening projects are simple and inexpensive.

The pen should be dog-and wolf-proof. The shed may be open on the south and should provide plenty of ventilation for summer feeding but free of airy drafts in winter. Dirt floors well-bedded and dry are preferred.

Portable feeding and watering equipment is very desirable at the show. This same equipment can be used at home.

Fitting the Lamb

Fitting lambs consists mainly of preparing the fleece and teaching the lamb to show, with some attention being paid to feet and legs. It is the responsibility of the exhibitor to prepare the lamb so it will show to its best advantage.

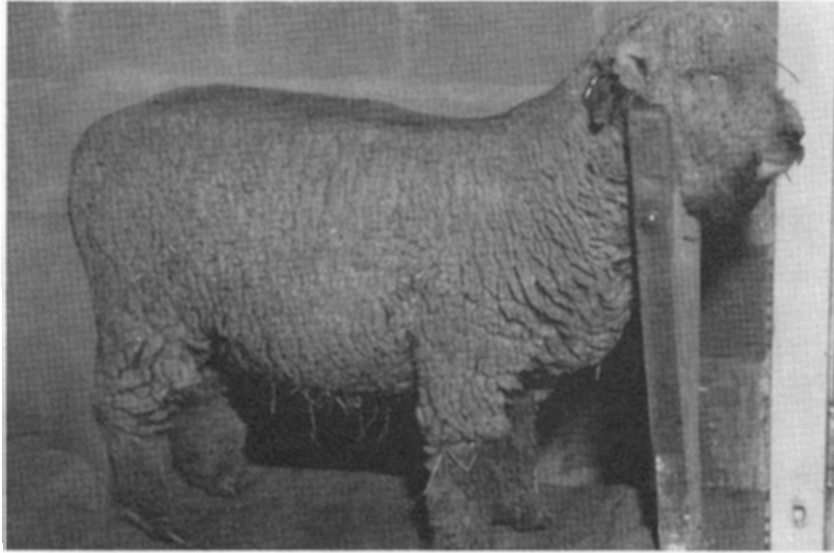
Different showmen have various methods of preparing lambs for exhibition. However, the various steps which are illustrated in the following pictures are basic and very satisfactory.



Equipment needed for trimming and blocking is pictured above. The use of these tools is explained in the following pictures.

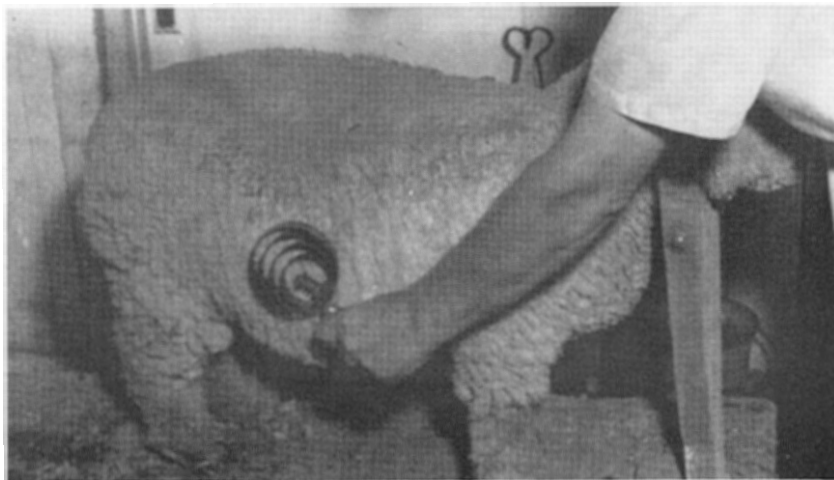
Proper hoof trimming is step number one. This should be done several weeks before the show so the lamb will have time to overcome any lameness or tenderness that results. Hoof trimming can best be done with special sheep hoof trimmers, but small hand pruning shears are satisfactory. If a pocket knife is used, be very careful to avoid cutting too deep. Proper trimming will improve the lamb's appearance by straightening the leg and allowing the lamb to stand more squarely with a stronger back.





For most of the trimming and cleaning operation, the lamb should be on a blocking stand similar to the one pictured above. The size and height of the stand will vary with the size of the sheep and the person doing the trimming. The neck yolk should be adjusted for height, and the floor should be long enough for larger, longer sheep. Very long floors make trimming more difficult. The width of the floor should allow the lamb to move about a little without stepping off. More width allows the lamb to move too much and the trimming suffers. The floor should be covered with burlap to prevent slipping.

To prepare the fleece for scrubbing, a spring type curry comb should be used to remove dirt, burrs, hay and other foreign matter. This makes washing and clipping easier, and also adds to the appearance of the finished lamb.

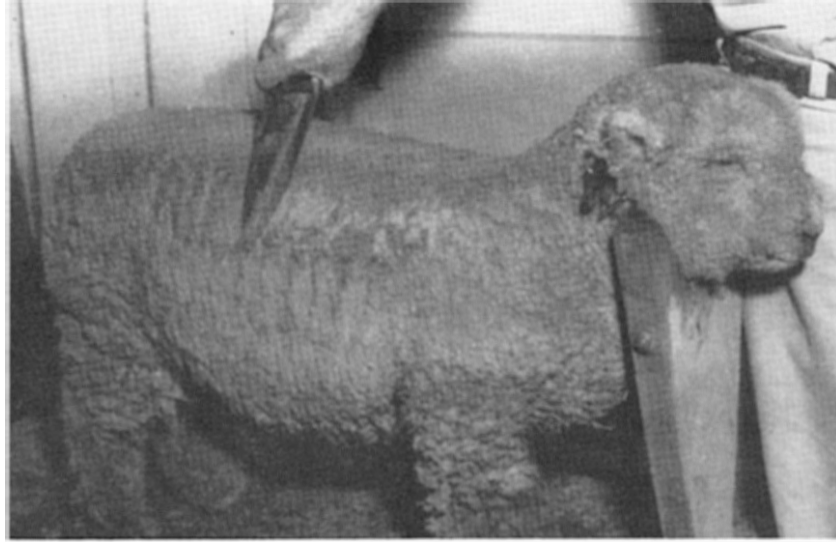




Dampening the wool with luke-warm water, applied with a scrub brush, is the next step in readying the lamb for the show ring. This helps soften and clean the wool to prepare it for scrubbing and clipping.

For scrubbing the wool, a piece of wool blanket is best. However, a piece of clean burlap will do. Clean, lukewarm water should be used for frequent rinsing of the scrubbing cloth. Most of the water should be wrung from the cloth each time it is rinsed. Scrubbing in this manner cleans the wool and softens the tips for clipping. Plenty of "elbow grease" is needed. Soaps and detergents should not be used. Complete immersion and washing with soap or detergent removes the wool fat and leaves a dry, fluffy fleece which is very difficult to trim. It also leaves an undesirable appearance.

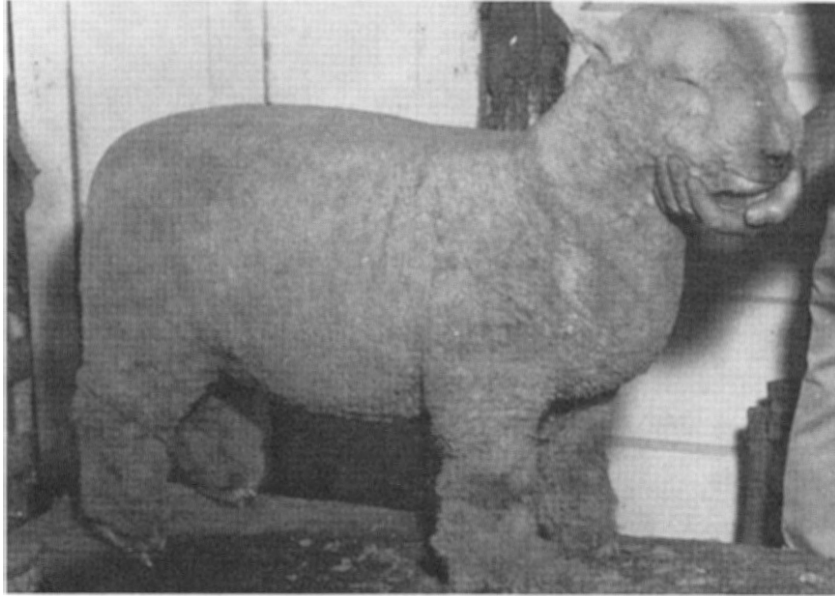




Hand shears are used for trimming the wool to improve the blocky appearance of the lamb. A good "blocking job" will require going over the lamb several times. Considerable scrubbing and carding will accompany each trimming. Clipping a small amount of wool each time produces a smoother fleece with fewer gaps than taking fewer, larger, cuts.

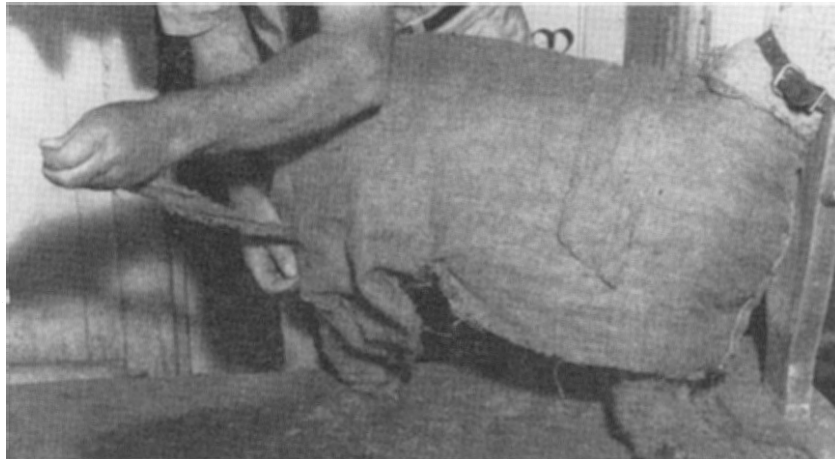
The wool card is used to pull wool tips out into position for trimming. Proper carding and trimming results in a smoother, more even fleece. The card should be used lightly; strong pressure should **not** be applied. Hard pulling hurts the animal and may cause skin bruises, and is not necessary to accomplish the purpose of carding.

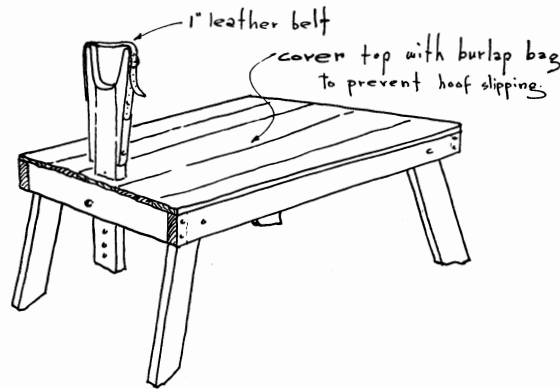
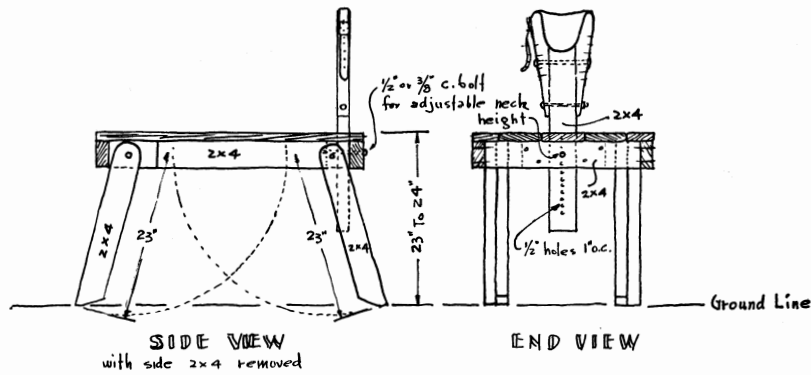




The appearance of the finished lamb can be compared to the un-trimmed lamb in the third picture of this series.

After the "blocking job" is completed, a sack blanket should be put on the lamb to keep it clean. A clean burlap bag is satisfactory. The size of the lamb will determine the size of sack to be used. To use a sack for the blanket, rip out the long, sewed side. In the remaining solid corner, cut an angling hole for the head and neck. Cotton twine or strips of burlap can be used to tie the sack under the lamb.





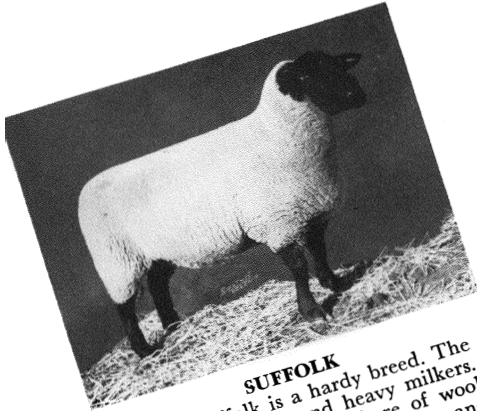
LAMB BLOCKING STAND

An average blocking stand is 24 inches wide, 30 inches long and the floor height is 24 inches.

Breeds

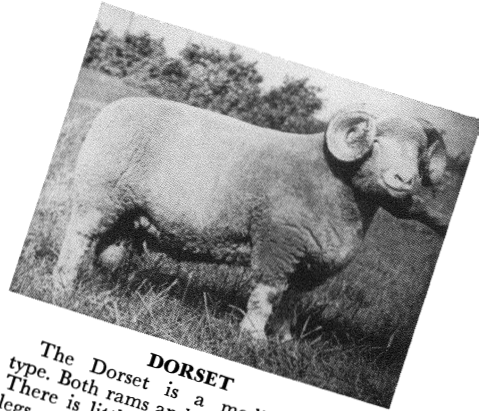
Several breeds are important to the sheep industry in Oklahoma. While most commercial producers use Southwestern females, which are primarily of Rambouillet breeding, a purebred sire of one of the mutton breeds is used. This provides a sales outlet for the registered breeders.

The state-wide shows and fairs in Oklahoma provide classes for fat wethers and/or breeding classes for the breeds most common to Oklahoma. All shows do not have classes for all of the following breeds, but any can be exhibited at one or more of the state shows.



SUFFOLK

The Suffolk is a hardy breed. The ewes are prolific and heavy milkers. The face and legs are bare of wool and very black. Wide demand among commercial producers for Suffolk rams has resulted in the establishment of several registered flocks in Oklahoma. Most of the major shows have a classification for Suffolks.



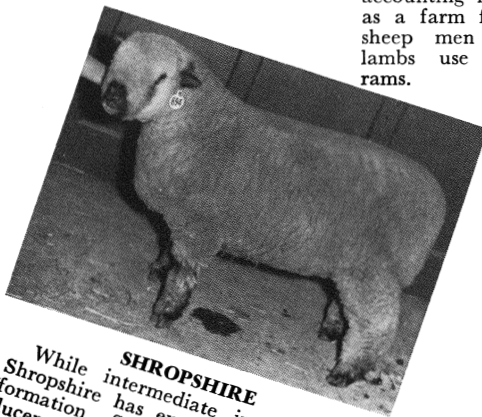
DORSET

The Dorset is a medium wool type. Both rams and ewes have horns. There is little wool on the face and legs, which are white in color. Dorsets and Dorset crossbreeds are popular with commercial producers.



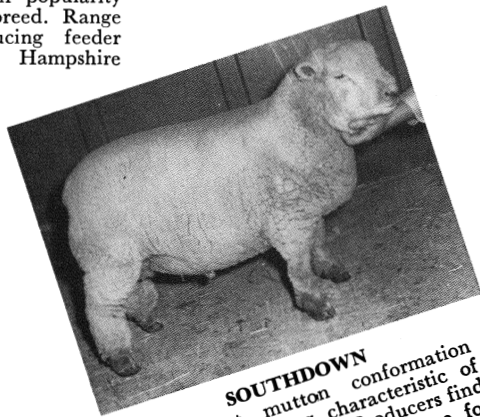
HAMPSHIRE

Size, rapid growth, and good mutton conformation are characteristics of Hampshires thus accounting for their popularity as a farm flock breed. Range sheep men producing feeder lambs use many Hampshire rams.



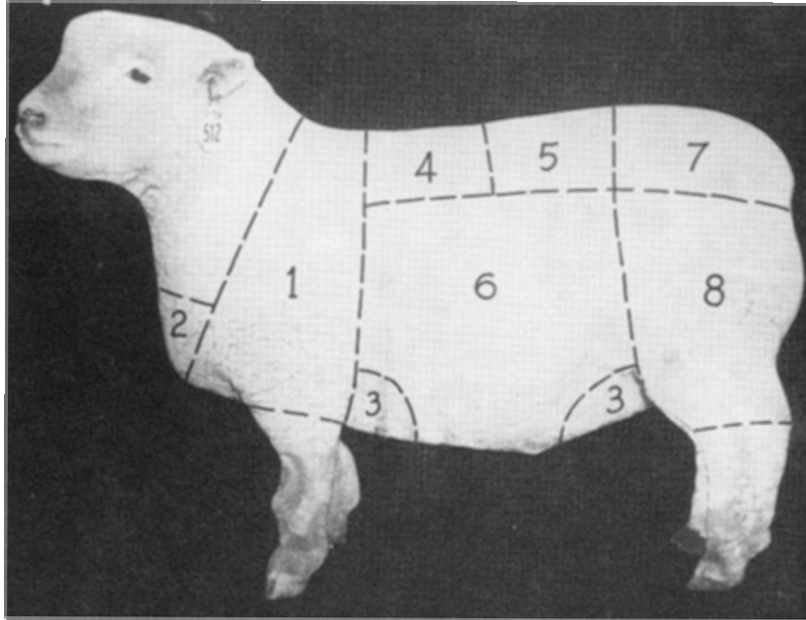
SHROPSHIRE

While intermediate in size, the Shropshire has excellent body conformation. Some commercial producers dislike the excessive wool covering on the face.



SOUTHDOWN

Excellent mutton conformation is the outstanding characteristic of the Southdown breed. Producers find their small size a disadvantage for commercial production.



Location of important parts of a market lamb.

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------|
| 1. Shoulder | 5. Loin |
| 2. Breast | 6. Rib |
| 3. Flank (fore and rear) | 7. Rump |
| 4. Back | 8. Leg |

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