



FAQ's

(Dorper/White Dorper Sheep)



What is the difference between the Dorpers and White Dorpers?

The Dorper has a white body with a black head, while the White Dorper is all white. Otherwise the two types are identical but considered separate breeds. The coloration is a preference as all other traits are basically equal. Often a White Dorper ram is used in cross-breeding programs with solid white ewes. The resulting offspring tend to be solid white. Out crosses using Dorpers may be colorfully spotted for the first few generations.

Are all Dorpers polled?

Most Dorpers are without horns but many rams have scurs, and some will have horns, but this should not disqualify a Dorper ram from being stud quality. Experience has shown that horned rams tend to be more masculine and have a stronger libido.

How much does a Dorper weigh?

Mature rams typically average around 230 pounds. Mature ewes range between 180-210 lbs. However, one should not be obsessed with mature weights. Feed efficiency is more important than mature weight. The Dorper breeds excel at producing fast growing lambs.

What is the productive life of a Dorper?

Under good management, a Dorper ewe should produce lambs for 7 years or more.

Do they have a lot of twins and triplets?

This depends on available nutrition and genetics. Under good range conditions, a 150 percent lamb crop is typical and rates more like 180 percent with improved nutrition can be achieved.

Can you breed Dorper ewes any time of year?

Yes. Again, available nutrition has a major role in conception rates. Lambing intervals of 8 months, three lamb crops every two years, is a common practice.

At what age can you start breeding ewe lambs?

Depending on the time of year, ewe lambs between 6-8 months may cycle, but better conception rates will be achieved at 9-12 months and the later bred ewes will grow out better.

How many ewes can a Dorper ram cover?

Ram lambs can frequently cover 20-25 ewes in a 51-day exposure. Yearling rams can usually cover 50 ewes.

Do Dorpers have to be sheared?

No. A Dorper should shed its covering each summer. Shedding ability is a trait that should be selected for in your breeding stock. Because Dorpers are a meat breed, they are shown fully shorn to emphasize their meat traits and excellent skin.

Are Dorpers parasite resistant?

Studies have shown that Dorpers tend to tolerate a parasite burden better than other breeds. Many other factors influence parasite problems but with proper management techniques, deworming can be minimized even in higher rainfall areas.

How is the taste of Dorper meat?

Superb! Dorper lamb does not have the "mutton taste" that causes so many Americans to avoid eating lamb. It is succulent and fine textured. The purpose of the Dorper breed is to produce prime lamb.

What about crossing a Dorper ram with wool-type ewes?

Early university trials have shown that the Dorper influence will improve the meat qualities and growth rate of lambs from popular commercial ewe breeds. However, the F1 lambs will have a diminished wool conformation.

What about crossing Dorper Rams with hair-type ewes?

The Dorper has been very effective in increasing the growth rate, carcass size and quality of all the typical hair-type breeds such as the Barbados, Katahdin, St. Croix, the Mexican Pelibuey and other breeds that are considered exotic types. Typically, the 75 percent Dorper crosses will exhibit the Dorper coloration and conformation.

What is the Difference between Purebred and Fullblood?

The term "fullblood" means the sheep can trace its genetic background only to sheep originally imported from South Africa. "Purebred" means the sheep has been upgraded

from American stock and is at least 93% or 15/16ths Dorper genetics. Upgrading was allowed in order to increase the numbers of Dorper sheep after South Africa experienced an outbreak of hoof and mouth disease and importation was no longer possible. The sheep are shown together in the show ring with no preference for either designation.

Can percentage Dorpers be registered?

Yes. The Dorper registry regulations allow for a “breeding-up” program. Ewes and rams are considered purebred at 15/16ths (93%) Dorper.

What is Typing?

American Dorper Sheep Breeders Society members can have their Fullblood (100% South African genetics) and American Purebred (upgraded to 94% Dorper genetics) sheep officially inspected under the Breed Standard of Excellence. Under this system, five types of quality are judged:

- Type 5- Very Good-Stud Quality
- Type 4- Above Average, Stud Quality
- Type 3- Commercial Quality - First Selection
- Type 2- Commercial Quality - Second Selection
- Type 1- Cull

An animal is typed based on the evaluations of the following:

- Conformation (Head, Forequarter, Barrel, Hindquarter, Sexual Organs)
- Size or Growth
- Distribution of Fat
- Color Pattern
- Covering

The ADSBS periodically holds judging courses, however; at this time the Society relies on South African certified inspectors. Upon inspection, qualifying animals will be ear tagged with appropriate color coded and sequentially numbered tags. Type 5 - Blue, Type 4 - Red, and Type 3 - White. The inspector will apply the tags as the animals are being judged.

Note: The term *Stud Quality* comes is derived from South African breeding farms stud farms. Hence animals that qualify as “stud quality”, both ewes and rams, are of sufficient quality to be placed on breeding farms and used to enhance the breed. Commercial quality animals accurately represent the breed and possess the traits valued in commercial operations. Cull animals possess one or more faults serious enough that they should not be used for breeding purposes.