



GUIDE FOR JUDGING BLUEFACED LEICESTER SHEEP

(Applies to both white & black animals)

GENERAL APPEARANCE (10 Points)

Overall appearance is a proud animal with a bold carriage, purposeful stride and commanding presence. Rams to appear masculine and ewe to appear feminine.

CONDITION (10 Points)

Animals should be in working condition, well muscled and not overly fat or thin; this is a very athletic breed of sheep.

HEAD & NECK (10 Points)

Head: Broad muzzle, good mouth, roman nose, alert eyes. Black nose and lips (dark mottled with grey acceptable) and long erect ears. Both sexes polled.

Neck: Good length, laid into broad shoulders.

FOREQUARTERS (5 Points)

Shoulders: Broad shoulders, well rounded.

Legs: Straight, wide apart, strong boned, free of wool. Black hooves and no evidence of low pasterns. No rust-colored hair.

BODY (15 Points)

Chest: Deep and wide.

Ribs: Well sprung. "A good spring of rib".

Back: Long, strong and level; with no weakness behind the shoulder. Hindquarters should be one-third or less in proportion.

Wool Cover: Even, consistent fleece on the body. Free of wool on the head, neck, legs and belly. On a white animal the head skin should be dark blue showing through white hair.

HINDQUARTERS (10 Points)

Hips: Level, smooth and wide apart.

Thighs: Broad and deep.

Legs: Well positioned, strong boned, clean and free of wool below the hock. Black hooves.

Udder & Scrotum:

Rams – Testicles well developed and hanging down a distance from the body.

Ewes – Udders should show evidence of two good teats.

WOOL (40 Points)

1. Tightly curled, fine, and opening cleanly to the skin.
2. Semi-lustrous, 56-60s (24-28 microns), 3"-6" long.
3. Free from kemp and hair.
4. Uniform fleece.
5. No black spots in white, no white spots in black wool, on the body. Small black spots are permissible on the face, ear, neck and legs.

FAULTS

- ~ Evidence of weakness behind the shoulder.
- ~ An over or undershot mouth.
- ~ Weakness in the pasterns.

BLUEFACED LEICESTER BREEDERS ASSOCIATION Membership

~ Annual BFLBA Membership: \$15

~Junior or Associate Membership: \$10

~ Make checks payable to:
Brenda Lelli, 'BFLBA'.

Send to: BFLBA c/o Brenda Lelli,
17496 88th Ave., Coopersville, MI 49404.
(616) 837-1872, BFLBA@aol.com.



THE BLUEFACED LEICESTER



History of the Bluefaced Leicester

Bluefaced Leicester sheep evolved near Hexham in Northumberland at the beginning of the 1900's. They are descendants of Robert Bakewells' improved Dishley Leicester. They were bred to produce top quality crossbred ewes from the 'native' Blackface and Swaledale draft ewes. It was found that a darker coloured ram, with a finer skin 'fleece' produced a better cross ewe from the blackfaced hill ewes, a cross traditionally called the 'Mule'. From its original home in the Northern Pennine's, the Bluefaced Leicester has spread through the upland areas of England, Scotland, Wales, and into Northern Ireland. In the 1970's there were two importations into Canada thanks to the joint efforts of Dr & Mrs. Nettleton, and Andy Richardson.

The Bluefaced Leicester Breeders Association (BFLBA) is a dedicated group of American breeders, intent on the preservation and expansion of this magnificent breed since its introduction to the USA. The original rescue and preservation work began in 1995, with a handful of breeders and the purchase and division of two North American flocks, one from Nova Scotia, the other from Virginia. Then came the task of tracing lineage and crossing the two flocks until new genetics could be obtained and imported. From a handful of small flocks in the late 1990's collectively numbering less than 60 Bluefaced Leicesters, there are now over 305 owners on record, and the breed will mark its two thousandth registration in 2008.

In 1997, the first Bluefaced Leicester ewes underwent Laparoscopic Artificial Insemination at Michigan

State University using frozen semen from two of the original three UK collected sires. The following year a 'natural colored' UK Bluefaced Leicester ram was collected and added to the imported gene pool. There have been several 'breeder' visits to the UK for the purpose of bloodline selection with subsequent semen collections and imports. Thus far twelve UK sires have been imported to expand the genetic base of the Bluefaced Leicester in the USA, with several more awaiting the final passage of new import regulations. These continual imports will insure a diverse semen supply for the future generations of Bluefaced Leicesters.

With the reopening of the USA-Canadian border to live sheep in 2007 the task of restocking Canada with the Bluefaced Leicester has begun. Multiple exports of foundation breeding groups to several Canadian providences in 2007 and 2008 will firmly establish the Bluefaced Leicester's presence across North America.

General Appearance

The Bluefaced Leicester should have a broad muzzle, good mouth, a roman nose, bright alert eyes, and long erect ears. The color of the head skin should be dark blue showing through white hair, with no wool on the head, or neck. Both sexes are polled. There should be a good length of neck laid into broad shoulders, a good 'spring of rib', a long strong back, with no weakness behind the shoulder. The hind-quarters should be broad and deep, the legs clean, well positioned and strong boned. The rams have a proud, stately carriage and the ewes exhibit a feminine look. The wool should be tightly purred, fine semi-lusterous, and opening cleanly to the skin.

Color: The Bluefaced Leicester, though predominately a white wool breed, does carry a recessive black gene and natural colored lambs do appear. On a white animal, small dark spots are permissible on the face, ears, neck and legs. Lips and nostrils are preferably black, mottled grey is acceptable.

Wool: The Bluefaced Leicester is classified as a Longwool breed with a staple length of 3- 6", a fleece weight of 3 to 6 lbs., and a fiber diameter of 56s – 60s count, or 24-28 microns, creating high quality luster yarns with beautiful drape.

Size: The adult Bluefaced Leicester has one of the largest body weights of the British breeds, some rams having been weighed at over 3 cwt. In spite of this size, when mated to the smaller hill type ewe, the ewe is able to carry and lamb its crossbred progeny without the slightest difficulty. A ram at maturity should weigh 250-300 lbs. They have an excellent disposition and are quite manageable despite their size. Ewes will typically weigh 170-220 lbs. at maturity.

Lambing Percentage: The Bluefaced Leicester is the most prolific of all the native British breeds of sheep. It is quite common for registered flocks to achieve a lamb crop in excess of 250 percent. The ewe has the milking ability to match these multiple births.

Health: In the United Kingdom there has never been a recorded case of scrapie in a purebred Bluefaced Leicester. Because of their genetic resistance to scrapie, many Blackfaced Hill sheep are being crossbred with the Bluefaced Leicester to improve the scrapie resistance of the 'Mule' population, which is the backbone of the UK sheep industry.

Interest: The increasing popularity and demand for the Bluefaced Leicester is a reflection of its success as a purebred sire, as a fleece flock sire for the hand spinner, as well as a maternal crossing sire for the production of crossbred 'Mules'. The Bluefaced Leicester is proving itself to be a truly multi-purpose breed.

