

Australian sheep industry

Wool production is historically Australia's best known and most successful rural industry. Long regarded as a mainstay of the national economy, income earned from the export of wool underpinned Australia's current account for two centuries.

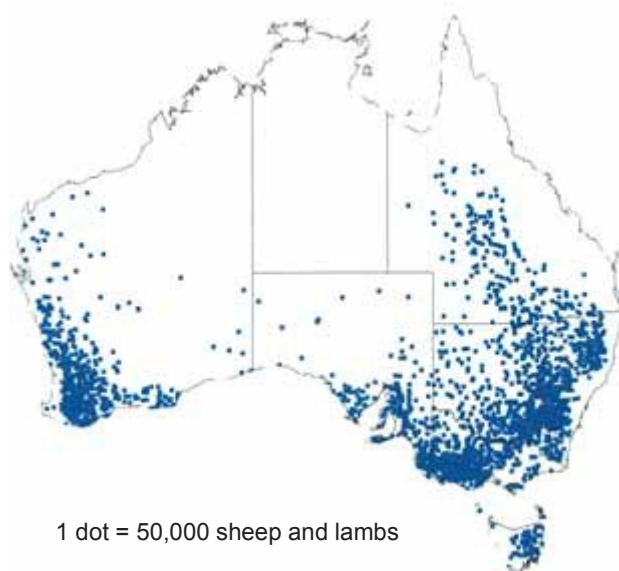
In the past it was often said that the Australian economy "rides on the sheep's back". As we move into a new century, this adage is no longer true. Although wool is still a major export earner, it no longer holds such a pre-eminent position. Wool is now faced with much more direct competition from other fibres, both natural and synthetic.

Marketing efforts over the last three decades have concentrated on the virtues of pure wool, with little emphasis given to wool blends.

As the competition has increased and the quality and versatility of alternative fibres has improved, the value of wool has diminished. The direct result has been a dramatic reduction in the national flock and ABS estimates that there are approximately 108 million sheep in Australia today compared with 172 million in 1989.

The Australian Merino remains the dominant sheep breed, accounting for approximately 75% of the Australian flock.

The wool of the Australian Merino is widely regarded as the best quality in the world and Australian producers remain committed to maintaining this quality which has been established over 200 years. This commitment should see Australia maintain its position as the world's pre-eminent producer of the 'miracle fibre' well into the future.





Prime lamb production

While the Australian wool industry enjoys a high international profile, there is also a significant trade from Australia in sheep meat products derived from wool industry sheep. The lesser known Australian sheep meat industry is equally committed to excellence and is producing consistently high quality product which is the equal of any in the world. Lambs bred and grown specifically for their meat (known as prime lambs) form the cornerstone of the industry. The high quality lean meat produced from these lambs is in high demand both domestically and internationally.

In developing prime lambs, Merino ewes are usually mated to long wool Border Leicester rams to arrive at a first-cross ewe. First-cross ewes are then mated to short wool meat breeds, such as the Poll Dorset or Suffolk breeds, to arrive at the Australian prime lamb. These first-cross ewes and their progeny comprise around 12% or more of the Australian sheep flock. Around 9% of the Australian flock is Merino-derived dual-purpose breeds, bred in higher rainfall areas to produce both wool and a more acceptable carcass than that supplied by the Merino. Such breeds include the Corriedale, Polwarth and Comeback.

The remaining 4-5% is predominantly British breeds, both long and short-wool varieties, whose role it is to produce terminal sires for the crossbreeding sector of the industry. There are also Middle Eastern and African fat tail sheep breeds, maintained for the livestock export industry, as well as several European sheep meat breeds.

The Australian Merino



Captain John Macarthur, regarded as the father of the Australian sheep industry, first developed a flock based initially on British rams and Indian ewes shipped from South Africa to Camden near Sydney in 1797. Later, he introduced Negrette sheep of Spanish Merino type from England. These original sheep were small and did not produce much wool. The average greasy wool weight was then around 1.8kg per head. However, with the application of superior breeding and production methods, production from today's Merino almost triples that of these early Merinos.

The Saxon strain was first imported into Tasmania from Saxony in 1830. The breed was developed as a producer of fine wool and most of the fine and superfine flocks in Australia are based on this strain. The Peppin Brothers of Wanganella Station in New South Wales developed the Peppin strain in the 1860s. This strain incorporates the most desirable characteristics of Saxon, Rambouillet and Vermont Merinos. The Peppin strain flourished in the hot inland areas and provided the basis for the medium-wool Merino, the most common type of Merino in Australia. The South Australian strain evolved from similar breeding to the Peppin, but with an emphasis on a larger body size, strong wool fibres and the ability to survive in harsh, dry areas.

First reports in Australia of British meat breeds were of Cheviot and English Leicester sheep imported to Tasmania in 1829. Later, in 1839 Border Leicester and Dorset Horn breeds were introduced to the mainland.

The prime lamb industry comprises approximately 4 million purebred Merino lambs, 8 million 1st cross lambs (either terminal or maternal sire x Merino) and 6 million 2nd cross (terminal x 1st cross ewe).

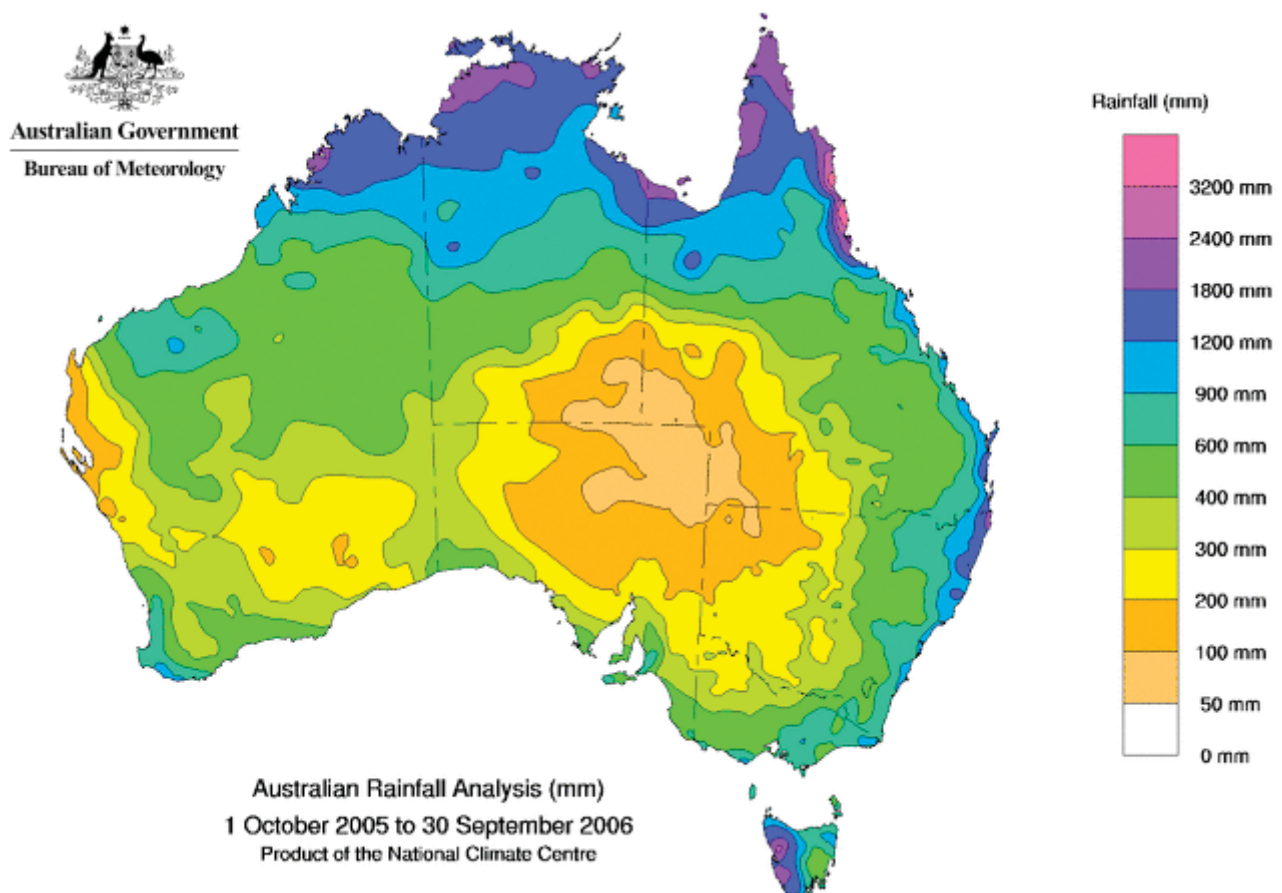
The traditional production of first-cross Border Leicester/Merino ewes has become an important industry segment.

Other breeds such as the Finn, , East Friesian, Coopworth, Dohne, Samm and maternal composites are also becoming popular as sires for this first-cross breeding segment. An estimated 12 million first-cross ewes are mated annually to 'terminal' sires from a third, short-wool breed. This produces fast growing, large, lean prime lambs for both the domestic and export markets.

Poll Dorset the most common terminal sire breed, with Dorset, Suffolk, White Suffolk and Texel also being used. The Wiltshire Horn, South Suffolk, , Cheviot, Ryeland, Shropshire, Lincoln and Southdown breeds are used to a lesser degree.

Prime lamb production requires fast, uninterrupted growth achieved in the improved pasture, higher rainfall areas of southern and eastern Australia. New South Wales' tablelands and slopes regions, Victoria, south-east South Australia, south-west Western Australia and Tasmania are the major areas for prime lamb production in Australia.

An increasing focus is being given to strategic finishing , or lot feeding of lambs. The aim is to produce consistent carcasses that are large and relatively lean for sale in the domestic and export markets.





Composite breeds

A number of Australian sheep breeds have been based on the Merino. The two main composite breeds are Corriedale and Polwarth, both of which evolved as dual-purpose breeds in the late 1800s. There are three other Merino-based composite breeds: Bond, Comeback and Cormo. The Gromark, and Perendale are composite dual-purpose breeds based on established meat breeds, and have gained only limited popularity. Carpet-wool sheep, the Tukidale, Drysdale and, to a lesser extent the Elliotdale from Tasmania, are creating some farmer interest.

Fat tail sheep

An exciting development in recent years has been the introduction of fat tail sheep breeds to produce animals specifically destined for the live sheep trade to the Middle East. This market has a preference for the meat from fat tail sheep and the Australian industry has responded by developing a segment dedicated to this trade. The most common of these breeds is the Awassi (very few in Australia) well-known to both Middle East consumers and the domestic ethnic consumers. The Karakul, an Iranian breed, is also expanding in numbers. The newest of these breeds is the African Damara, a large framed, long tailed, fat tail sheep.

A constantly improving industry

The genetic improvements made in the Australian sheep industry are remarkable, particularly in the prime lamb sector.

Sheep Genetics Australia has been created to allow the selection of rams on their genetic merit.

Sheep Genetics Australia

Meat & Livestock Australia and Australian Wool Innovation have developed SGA to deliver Australian Sheep Breeding Values (ASBVs). ASBVs are available for a comprehensive range of traits including growth, carcass, reproduction (number of

lambs weaned), wool quantity and quality components and internal parasite resistance.

SGA has established a standardised national currency for across-flock genetic comparison. These tools, used in conjunction with the visual elements not currently described by breeding values, can help producers develop their flock to meet particular market and environmental requirements.

SGA brings together MLA's LAMBPLAN for the terminal and maternal sire industry and MERINOSELECT for the Merino industry. SGA evaluates over 2.5 million animals for up to 57 difference traits.

Wool sheep breeds



The Australian Merino

The modern Merino can be classified into four types according to the wool. It produces – superfine, fine, medium and strong. Each is bred to suit a particular set of climatic conditions, and is characterised by a large quantity of soft-handling wool grown on an angular frame. Poll Merinos are represented in all categories.

Further information is available from:

The Australian Merino Centre
Level 2 RAS Admin Building
1 Showground Road
Homebush Bay NSW 2127
www.merinos.com.au



Superfine and Fine-wool Merino

These sheep are found mainly in the northern, central and southern tableland areas of New South Wales; the western districts of Victoria; and the midlands district of Tasmania. Superfine and Fine wool Merinos have a small frame and produce a special wool of excellent colour, which is soft-handling and dense.

Superfine has a fibre diameter of 18 microns or less and Fine-wool is 19 microns. They have a staple length of about 70mm and 75mm respectively. Both Superfine and Fine-wools are used for high quality worsted suiting and fine knitting yarns. The Australian flock has 'fined up' considerably over the past few years, ultrafine wool (less than 15.6 micron) is also produced in reasonable quantities.



Medium-wool Merino

This strain is found in large numbers throughout New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia. They are large framed and relatively plain bodied, giving them a dual-purpose role. Grown primarily for wool production, the medium-wool merino also has an acceptable carcass form, giving them an additional meat producing role.

The medium-wool Merino produces a wool that is almost totally absorbed by the textile trade, where it is turned into high quality apparel wool. It produces a heavy fleece which is soft-handling and of good colour, with a fibre diameter of 20 to 22

microns and a staple length of around 90mm.

The medium-wool Merino is extensively used in the production of F1 crossbred ewes by mating long-wool meat rams to the Merino ewe. The Border Leicester in particular is used for this purpose, although the Romney, Perendale, East Friesian and others are also used.



Strong-wool Merino

This strain is most prominent in western New South Wales, South Australia and Western Australia. The strain is particularly well adapted to the hot, dry, semi-arid areas of Australia.

The strain is very large framed, plain bodied and open-faced, making it a particularly 'easy-care' sheep for semi-arid areas. It produces a heavy 7-8kg fleece of approximately 100mm staple length, with a fibre diameter of 23 to 25 microns.



Poll Merino

Poll Merinos are a more recent development in the Merino breed, with some producers selecting for this recessive gene. Poll Merino wethers are less prone to fly-strike in the poll area than those with horns and are easier to handle at shearing and crutching time. The Poll Merino is scattered throughout all Merino producing areas and is represented within all strains of Merino.



Corriedale

The Corriedale is a fixed Lincoln Merino cross. The initial crossbreeding and upgrading program using these breeds began in Australia around 1874. The breed has gained worldwide popularity, now being the most populous breed in South America and thrives throughout Asia, North America and South Africa. It is claimed to be the second most popular sheep breed in the world after the Merino.

The Corriedale is a large framed, plain bodied, polled, dual-purpose sheep. It produces premium prime lambs when mated to terminal sires of a meat breed. In addition, it produces excellent prime lamb mothers when mated to Merino ewes. Purebred Corriedale lambs are also achieving solid recognition as prime lambs. It thus produces good quality carcasses of lamb, hogget or mutton. A bonus is its high value skin.

The Corriedale produces bulky, high yielding wool of around 27 micron diameter (range 25 to 30). Staple length is long at around 150mm. The breed is found in most sheep areas of Australia, but mainly in the temperate, higher rainfall zones supporting improved pastures.

Further information is available from:

The Australian Corriedale Association Inc
GPO Box 75B
Melbourne VIC 3001
www.corriedale.org.au



Polwarth

The Polwarth is a dual-purpose, easy-care sheep developed in Victoria in 1880 from 75% Merino and 25% Lincoln breeding. Polwarths are run successfully throughout Australia's sheep areas, ranging from high rainfall regions to semi-arid pastoral areas. They have been exported to over 20 countries, particularly to South America where there are now more Polwarths (or Ideals) than in Australia.

Polwarths produce a stylish, white, long stapled, soft-handling and high-yielding wool of between 21 to 25 microns in diameter and a staple length of 110 to 120 mm. Fleeces weigh on average around 6 to 7kg per head. The sheep are plain and straight bodied, with few wrinkles and a high resistance to fleece rot. These attributes combine to minimise the potential for fly-strike.

The Polwarth produces a uniformly lean carcase suitable to a number of lamb and mutton export markets. Mated to selected meat breed rams, Polwarth ewes make good prime lamb mothers, or ideal first cross mothers to mate to a third breed ram to produce large, lean lambs. Polwarths are available for sale in reasonably large numbers.

Further information is available from:

The Polwarth Sheep breeders' Association of Australia

PO Box 108

Goodwood SA 5034

Bond



The Bond has been in existence since 1909 and is derived from crossing Peppin strain Merinos with imported Lincoln rams. It produces a bulky, long stapled, bright wool of 22 to 28 microns in diameter. Bonds are a dual-purpose breed, producing good prime lamb carcasses. A small number of flocks still exist, mainly in the south-east of Australia and South Australia.

Further information is available from:

The Secretary
Bond Sheep Society
PO Box 52
Lockart NSW 2656
www.bondsheep.org.au

Dohne



The Dohne is a dual purpose breed developed by the South African Department of Agriculture using Peppin strain merino ewes and German mutton merino sire. The progeny were interbred and selected for high fertility, rapid lamb growth and fine wool. The first Dohnes were imported in 1997 and have impressed Australian breeders with their high fertility and ability to produce faster growing prime lambs without compromising wool production. In 2004 there were around 4,300 ewes in the national flock.

Further information is available from:

Australian Dohne Association
PO Box 108
Goodwood SA 5034
www.dohne.com.au



South African Meat Merino

Originally from Germany, the South African Meat Merino was exported to South Africa in 1932 and came to Australia in the mid 1990s. It is a dual-purpose breed, giving slightly more emphasis to meat than to wool. It is highly fertile, mates at most times of the year, and is said to achieve an eight- month breeding cycle. It produces ample milk enabling lambs to enjoy high growth rates. Wool fibre is usually 22 to 23 microns in diameter.

Prime SAMM Breeders' Society Australia:

ABRI

University of New England

Armidale NSW 2351

www.samm.com.au

Meat sheep breeds

Short wool



Poll Dorset

The Poll Dorset breed was developed in Australia from 1937 to 1954 by introducing the poll gene into Dorset Horn flocks from other poll breeds.

The Poll Dorset is a short-wooled meat producing animal. It is by far the most popular of the terminal sire breeds in the production of prime lambs from crossbred mothers.

The breed has responded to the challenge of change over the past decade, becoming a larger, longer and leaner animal with excellent growth rates and muscling. Prime lambs, produced mainly from mating Poll Dorset rams to crossbred Merino mothers, continue to improve average weight and carcass yield. This is through increasing use of the genetic improvement program LAMBPLAN®, and through improved nutrition and management of the growing lamb. In 1992 the Poll Dorset Meat Elite Flock program was set up to identify superior genetic seedstock in the breed.

Its success in the production of large, lean lambs, is due to its high yielding carcasses, with excellent eye muscling and ratio of lean meat to fat. Lambs sired by Poll Dorsets can satisfy the lightweight Middle Eastern market at 12kg to 15kg, the local market at 18kg to 22kg or the export market at 20 to 25kg or heavier.

The Poll Dorset is highly fertile and capable of breeding at a young age. It is noted for its exceptional mothering and milking ability. It produces a dense Downs type short wool of around 30 microns.

Poll Dorset sheep are available throughout southern Australia in relatively large numbers. Export sales continue to countries in Asia, Europe, Africa and North and South America.

Further information is available from: The Australian Poll Dorset Association Inc
GPO Box 75B
Melbourne VIC 3001
www.polldorset.org.au



Poll Horn

The Dorset Horn breed was brought to Australia in 1895. It is a short-wool breed, producing a fleece of around 90mm length and 27 microns quality. It has excellent fertility and a long breeding season. Its main use is as a terminal sire mated traditionally to first-cross (Merino/Border Leicester) ewes to produce prime lambs for the local and export markets. Dorset Horn rams are also used to produce first cross lambs from Merino ewes. Typically, under good pasture conditions, they will produce prime lamb carcasses that reach 14kg at 10 weeks and up to 22kg at 14 to 16 weeks.

Further information is available from:

The Australian Dorset Horn Association

82 Highett Street

Richmond VIC 3121

www.assba.com.au



Texel

The Texel breed comes from the Isle of Texel off the north coast of Holland. They are also known to have existed in the North Sea coastal areas of Europe for centuries. They were introduced into Australia from Denmark and Finland via New Zealand in 1993.

The Texel is now expanding both its stud and commercial base throughout Southern Australia. It is a well developed, evenly proportioned, heavily muscled lean sheep. It is being used as a sire of first-cross ewes or as a terminal sire over crossbred ewes to achieve large, commercially targeted, lean lambs. The Texel is noted for its high fertility and its ability to produce

excellent milking off grass. Its fleece is reasonably bulky with a good length staple of approximately 100mm and a fibre micron diameter in the low 30s. Texels are heavily involved in performance recording through LAMBPLAN®.

Further information is available from: The Australian Texel Stud Breeders'
Association
GPO Box 75B
Melbourne VIC 3001
<http://www.texel.org.au>



White Suffolk

The White Suffolk breed was developed in Australia by crossing the Suffolk with a white breed such as the Poll Dorset. It is a fertile breed that can be mated at any time of the year. It is rapidly gaining popularity as a prime lamb terminal sire that can consistently produce lambs to finish over 20kg. There are no coloured fibre dockages with the White Suffolk as it produces a high quality, white, Downs type wool. The breed is a strong supporter of LAMBPLAN®.

Further information is available from: The Australian White Suffolk Association
PO Box 108
Goodwood SA 5034
www.whitesuffolk.org.au

South Suffolk

The South Suffolk breed was originally fixed by crossing Southdown and Suffolk sheep. It was introduced to Australia from

New Zealand in 1946.

The South Suffolk breed is polled, with head, legs and feet coloured light to dark brown. The breed's main role is for use as a terminal sire over crossbred or Merino ewes to produce hardy, fast growing prime lambs. The South Suffolk is an early maturing, highly fertile breed that gives birth with ease. Their wool is of a Downs type, which measures 28 to 30 microns in diameter.

Further information is available from:

The Secretary

Australian South Suffolk Sheep Society

335 Koch Road

Katandra VIC 3634

www.assba.com.au



Suffolk

The Suffolk was developed in England and introduced to Australia in 1904. Suffolks are mainly joined to first-cross ewes to achieve hybrid vigour in the production of heavy lean lambs. They are also joined to Merino ewes to produce first-cross lambs, the female of which is often used as a prime lamb mother.

The Suffolk is a highly fertile, polled breed with black head, legs and feet. The fleece is short, approximately 80mm in staple length and about 24 to 27 microns fibre diameter. They are mainly found in the safer rainfall and improved pasture areas of southern Australia. Their availability is good.

Further information is available from:

The Suffolk Sheep Society of Australia

Post Office

Strathalbyn SA 5255

www.suffolks.com.au



Southdown

The Southdown came to Australia from Sussex with the first European settlers. It is a polled, well muscled, short legged breed specialising in prime lamb production. It is used principally as a terminal sire over other breeds and their crosses to produce choice quality lambs. Its fertility is high, with a large proportion of multiple births.

The Southdown wool is a typically short Downs type. Small numbers of Southdowns are available from the southern regions of Australia.

Further information is available from:

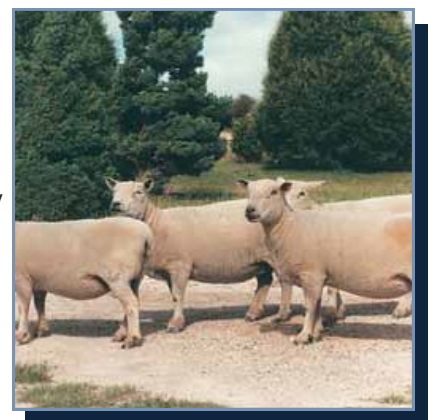
Southdown Australia Inc

PO Box 91

Narre Warren North

VIC 3804

www.assba.com.au



Dorset Down

The Dorset Down was developed in England in the early 1800s by crossing the Southdown with other local Downs sheep such as the Berkshire, Hampshire and Wiltshire breeds. They were introduced to Australia in 1938 and remain a small group with limited selection potential.

The main role of the Dorset Down is as a terminal sire in prime lamb production. It is regarded as a quick maturing, robust breed.

Further information is available from:

The Dorset Downs Breeders' Association Inc
PO Box 197
New Gisborne VIC 3438



Finnsheep

Finnsheep were first introduced to Australia in 1993 and are now found in small numbers in all southern states. They are among the most fecund in the world, with lambing rates in excess of 200% being common. Combined with inherent leanness and strong maternal traits, they are ideal for producing highly fertile, heavy milking, crossbred mothers capable of rearing large, lean lambs for slaughter.

Finnsheep are polled, with clean faces and points. Their wool is fine to medium quality, white, soft and lustrous.

Further information is available from:

The Secretary
Australian Finnsheep Breeders Association Inc
RMB 114
Inglewood VIC 3517
www.finnsheep.asn.au



East Friesian

The East Friesian is a Swedish sheep that entered Australia in 1996 after quarantine in New Zealand. In the short time it has been in Australia it has achieved a high level of popularity as it displays excellent performance in carcase competitions and growth trials.

It is primarily a terminal sire breed, with East Friesian rams used over first-cross ewes (usually Merino cross Border Leicester) to take full advantage of hybrid vigour.

Despite lighter birth weights, their growth rate is excellent resulting in a large, lean carcase usually in excess of 20kg. The East Friesian is an extremely heavy milker and this is increased in the East Friesian crossbred mother.

The breed supports Meat and Livestock Australia's LAMPLAN® and is available only in small numbers.

Further information is available from:

The East Friesian Breed Society
C/- Guthridge Livestock Pty Ltd
PO Box 19
Derrinallum VIC 3325
www.assba.com.au



Hampshire Down

Hampshire Down sheep were first imported into Australia in 1880 from Hampshire in England, where they had been developed by crossing the Wiltshire and Berkshire breeds. It is a large robust breed noted for its high fertility and extended breeding season. The wool has a fineness of 26 microns and a staple length of around 90mm. Numbers are limited.

Further information from:

The Australian Hampshire Downs Breeder's Association Inc

PO Box 37

Bridgewater TAS 7030



Ryeland

The Ryeland originated in Herefordshire and came to Australia in 1919. It is mainly found in Victoria, northern Tasmania and the

south-east corner of South Australia. The Ryeland is a poll meat breed, carrying a fine Downs type short wool. It boasts a high

survival rate in lambs at birth, excellent ease of lambing and heavy milking ability. It has some popularity for crossing with the Merino or as a terminal sire with crossbred ewes. The trend is towards the production of purebred rams that will sire a larger, leaner lamb.

Further information from:

The Ryeland Sheepbreeders' Association of Australia

PO Box 125

Hamilton VIC 3300



Shropshire

The Shropshire is one of the oldest of the British breeds and was imported to Australia in the 1860s. This dual-purpose sheep produces a high quality fleece and an excellent prime lamb carcase. The fleece has a fineness of 26 microns and a staple length of 100mm. The number of Shropshire sheep available for sale or export is limited.

Further information from:

The Australian Association of British Breed Sheep

Royal Agricultural Society of Victoria

Epsom Rd

Ascot Vale VIC 3032



Meat sheep breeds

Long wool



Border Leicester

The Border Leicester came to Australia in 1871 from Britain. It is large framed, polled, Roman nosed, fertile and produces a long, coarse fleece with an average fibre diameter of 32 to 38 microns.

Its value has been in its ability to mate with the Merino ewe to produce a firstcross ewe that exhibits all the classic advantages of hybrid vigour. First-cross wethers are usually slaughtered for either the local or the Middle East trades.

Specialised sheep breeders produce these hybrid ewe lambs in large numbers to on sell to other specialised prime lamb breeders.

The crossbred ewe, when mated to a meaty terminal sire of a third breed, produces a high percentage of strong, fast growing lambs for the large lean lamb meat trade. It is an excellent milker and is renowned for the way it mothers and protects its lambs. This first-cross Border Leicester/Merino ewe is crossed with one of a number of terminal breeds, but more usually with a Poll Dorset ram, to create the ideal crossbred meat lamb.

The Border Leicester Merino crossbred ewe has been exported in large numbers to Central America and the Balkans, as well as the Middle East where its excellent mothering ability has off-set the poor mothering potential of the Arabian fat tail sheep in local commercial crossbreeding ventures.

Further information is available from:

The Australian Border Leicester

Association

'Cal Col'

Deniliquin NSW 2710

www.assba.com.au

Romney

Originally from the Kent Marshes in England, the Romney came to Australia in 1872. It produces a heavy, long wool of 200mm in length and 30-40 micron fibre diameter. This is a major reason why the Romney was used as a foundation breed in the development of some of the newer carpet-wool breeds. It is ideally suited to the temperate, medium to high rainfall areas of south eastern Australia. The Romney is polled, large framed and is able to produce a large, relatively lean carcase, especially when crossed with one of the many meat breeds available today.

Further information from:

The Australian Romney Association

82 Highett Street

Richmond VIC 3121

www.assba.com.au



Perendale

The Perendale was developed in New Zealand in the 1940s, and then in Australia in the late 1950s, from the Romney and Cheviot breeds. It is a dual-purpose breed that is ideal

for prime lamb production through crossing with Merino or other long wool breeds to produce first-cross mothers that are highly fertile, easy lambers, excellent milkers

and very protective of their progeny. The Perendale

produces a bulky 28 to 34 micron fleece with a long

staple length (approximately 125mm), well suited to hand spinning as well as carpet manufacture. It is a hardy breed, popular in wetter, colder, higher altitude areas of south-east Australia.

Further information from:

The Australian Perendale Association

RMB 1476

Piries-Gough Bay Road

Mansfield VIC 3722



English Leicester

One of the oldest known British long wool breeds, the English Leicester was developed in the Midlands of England in the 1700s as a dual-purpose breed. The breed was imported to Australia in 1826.

It is a large framed breed, known for its fertility, good mothering and milking qualities. The fleece is heavy, curly, highly lustrous and soft-handling. It has a spiral-tipped staple 200-250mm long and of 32 to 38 microns. Rams are used to cross over Merino and other breeds to produce first-cross dams for prime lamb production. Numbers are limited and found mainly in the southern states.

Further information is available from:

The Secretary, English Leicester Association of Australia Inc

"Aringa"

40 Clark Road

Tynong North

VIC 3813

www.ballaratweb.net/elaa



Coopworth

Coopworth sheep were developed in the 1950s in New Zealand by crossing Border Leicester and Romney sheep. They were exported to Australia in 1976 and are now found throughout its southern areas. It is a dual-purpose breed, with selection emphasis on commercial meat and wool traits.

Highly fertile, with a low lamb mortality rate, Coopworths have excellent mothering and milking ability, ensuring good lamb growth rates. Carcasses are long, lean and well formed.

The wool has a white, soft lustre, 33 to 38 microns in diameter and is excellent for home spinning and commercial apparel use. It can also be used in carpet manufacture. All Coopworths are performance recorded, being part of Meat and Livestock Australia's LAMBPLAN® genetic assessment program. They are readily available.

Further information is available from:

The Coopworth Sheep Society of Australia

"Clifton Hill"

45 Sproules Rd

Wallington VIC 3221

www.coopworth.org.au



Gromark

Developed in northern New South Wales in 1965, from approximately equal Corriedale and Border Leicester breeding, the

Gromark is a versatile dual-purpose breed. It is used mainly as a terminal sire in the production of large, lean lambs and for firstcross production. It has a soft-handling fleece of between 27 to 33 microns in diameter. Gromark sheep have been selected by objective measurement since 1965 for fast growth and large mature size, without excessive fat.

Gromarks are LAMBPLAN® tested.

Further information is available from:

The Gromark Society of Australia

PO Box 426

Tamworth NSW 2340



Cheviot

The Cheviot comes from the Cheviot Hills along the English-Scottish border. It dates from the 14th century, but was only introduced into Australia in 1938. The Cheviot is an alert, active, stylish sheep with a distinctive wool which is used in the manufacture of tweeds and for hand knitting. It is also used as a terminal sire in prime lamb production. The breed is polled, with face and legs free of wool.

The Cheviot is primarily a hill country sheep, and is therefore found mainly in the high rainfall areas of south-eastern Australia.

Further information is available from:

The Secretary, Australian Cheviot Sheep Association

71 Duke Street

Richmond VIC 3121

www.assba.com.au



Lincoln

The Lincoln is claimed to be the parent of all the long wool breeds of England and was used in the development of the Corriedale and Polwarth breeds in Australia. It was imported in the early 1980s. It produces a long (300mm - 400mm), heavy fleece of around 38 microns in diameter, but also produces a large, lean carcase, especially if crossed with a Downs type meat breed.

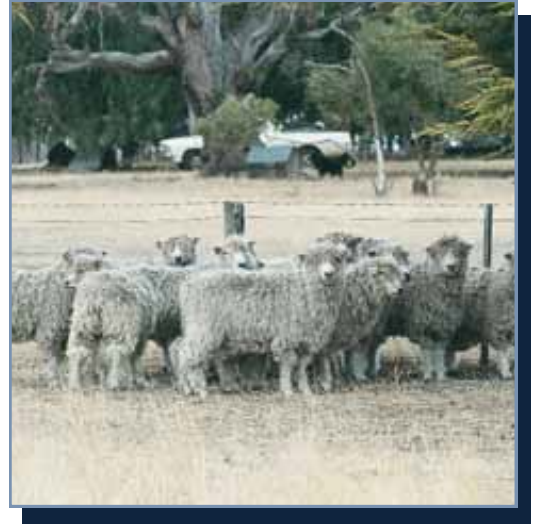
Further information is available from:

The Australian Lincoln Society Inc

Glenfine Homestead

Cape Clear VIC 3351

www.assba.com.au



Fat tail sheep breeds



Awassi

The Awassi is a major fat tail breed of the Arabian Peninsular, found in large numbers in Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Smaller numbers are scattered throughout the other countries of the region. Following a long quarantine program, the breed was released for commercial production in Western Australia in 1993. Since that time emphasis has been on producing ram lambs for export, as well as stud stock for the expansion of the flock.

The breed has long droopy ears, a fat tail, a brown face and points. It has a white body with long coarse carpet style wool. They are multi purpose, yielding meat, carpet wool and commercial milk. The Awassi is a placid animal with an appealing temperament and character, yet strong and hardy. It can adapt to all conditions.

Both ram lambs and ewes are available for export. Their export to the Middle East has been highly successful, due to their familiarity to the residents of the region and the quality of their meat.

Further information is available from:

YYH Holdings Pty Ltd

PO Box 131

West Perth WA 6872

Van Rooy sheep

Van Rooy sheep were propagated in South Africa in 1906 using Ronderib Afrikaner over Rambouillet ewes and later introducing some Wensleydale blood. Persian flocks were used to expand the breed, giving today's Van Rooy Sheep a resemblance to the White Persian. The aim was to produce sheep that were strong and hardy, to cope with regular droughts. The Van Rooy has good fertility, with excellent conformation compared to other fat tail types.

Van Rooy sheep were imported into Australia in 1998 and are well suited to meat production in arid zones. They are easy care, have a short white hair coat which minimises fibre contamination. The Van Rooy also has better carcass conformation than other fat tailed breeds. They are ideal for producing hybrid ewes to use for terminal lamb breeding in the pastoral zone.

Further information is available from:

Van Rooy Sheep Breeders

PO Box 40

Parilla SA

Phone: +61 8 857 66080; www.lm.net.au/~genelink/



Damara

Introduced in 1996 from South Africa, the Damara breed of sheep is a hardy, long legged, highly fertile, fat tail sheep suited for meat production in the semi arid areas of Australia. The Damara does not require shearing and shows strong resistance to parasites, making it an easy-care sheep breed. Because of its recent introduction, upgrading programs are in the early stages and

purebred animals are few. Release of genetics is controlled through the Damara Breeder's Group. Damara sheep and their crosses are marketed through the live sheep trade to the Middle East, where their type is familiar and sought after. They are also marketed to the Australian and Middle East carcass trade.

Further information is available from:

The Damara Breeders' Group

2 Sheila Street

Mosman Park WA 6012



Karakul

The Karakul breed of fat tail sheep originated in Iran and Afghanistan. It was introduced into Australia by the University of New South Wales in 1985 through the purchase of a flock that had been originally imported to the US from Iran in the early 1900s.

Historically, the Karakul has been bred specifically for the pelt of the very young lamb, which was used in the manufacture of pelt hats for the local population.

The breed has a variety of coat colours. At birth, lambs usually have a lustrous, curly black pelt, but as they get older the curls disappear and the coat becomes brownish to bluish grey, getting greyer with age. Other colours, from white to tan and brown, through to silver blue, also occur. The Americans have bred for white wool characteristics, culling the 'coloureds'. Karakuls have a broad fat tail, a roman nose and ears that point downwards and forwards.

Further information is available from:

Fares Rural Co Pty Ltd

33 Phillimore Street, Fremantle WA 6160



Other sheep breeds

Carpet wool and meat sheep—shedding

Elliotdale

The Elliotdale is a carpet wool sheep developed at Elliott Research Station in Tasmania between 1967 and 1976. It is largely based on a carpet wool gene carrying Tasmanian

Romney sheep. It is similar to the Romney with cleaner points and a carpet wool fleece of 40 plus microns in diameter. Shearing is required twice per year with a long staple length wool of 120mm-150mm for six months growth. Rams may be horned or polled, but ewes are always polled. The Elliotdale also makes an excellent prime lamb mother. Mainly available in Tasmania, small numbers are also available in all mainland

states except Queensland.

Further information is available from:

The Elliotdale Sheepbreeders' Society of Australia

PO Box 199

Dandenong VIC 3175.



Drysdale

Drysdales were imported from New Zealand in 1975 where they had been developed from the Romney to provide wool for the carpet industry. In Australia, the emphasis is on the carpet wool traits, although the Drysdale is an excellent prime lamb mother with

an abundant milk supply. It is a hardy, large framed sheep with black hooves. The Drysdale produces a specialty carpet wool.

The fibre is medullated, chalky white in colour and resilient. It is approximately 40 microns in diameter, without any crimp.

Further information is available from:

The Australian Drysdale Sheep Breeders' Association

RMB 2465

Kilmany, VIC 3851

Phone: +61 3 51 492 250



Tukidale

The Tukidale breed was developed in New Zealand from a mutant Romney ram that showed the dominant medullated (or hairy) gene distinctive of carpet wool sheep. Two Tukidale rams were introduced to Australia in 1975 and mated to Romney ewes.

From this small start, Tukidales have spread from New South Wales to Victoria and South Australia, with small numbers in other states.

The Tukidale is a very robust and hardy sheep that can produce prime lambs in areas of good rainfall and pasture conditions. They are horned, of medium fertility, with chalky white wool that is highly medullated and harsh to handle. Fibre diameter can be more than 35 microns. These characteristics give Carpets resilience, hard wearing qualities and the ability to accept dyes readily. The wool grows at approximately 2.5cm per month and needs shearing every six months.

Further information is available from:

The Secretary

Tukidale Sheep Society of Australia Inc

“Blackwood Park North”

1300 Hopkins Highway

Purnim VIC 3278



Dorper/White Dorper

The Dorper, a recent arrival in Australia, was developed in South Africa from crossing the Blackhead Persian ewe with the Dorset Horn.

The breed is mainly black-faced with a white body, although some are all white. It has a long breeding season and is highly fertile. It is hardy and will thrive equally in semi-arid and good conditions. The Dorper is an easy-care sheep. Its fleece is a mixture of hair and wool, which drops off if not shorn.

Further information from:

The Dorper Sheep Breeders' Society of Australia

PO Box 108

Goodwood SA 5034



Wiltshire Horn

An ancient British breed, the Wiltshire Horn was introduced into Australia in 1952. Their easy-care, wool-shedding habit has interested those wishing to keep a few sheep for local slaughter and grass control.

They are a lean meat breed with a reasonable frame. Rams are excellent as terminal sires in crossbreeding with other breeds for prime lamb production. They are a horned breed with a short wool coat that is shed in spring, leaving a hairy undercoat for summer. Wiltshire Horn breeders use Meat & Livestock Australia's LAMBPLAN® to assist in genetic improvement.

Further information is available from:

AWHSA,

Post Office, Gundaroo NSW 2620

www.wiltshirehorn.asn.au



Wiltipoll

The Wiltipoll has recently been evolved in Australia through the infusion of Poll Dorset, Poll Merino, Border Leicester and

Perendale genes into the ancient Wiltshire Horn breed, creating the Wiltipoll. This poll breed has the wool shedding characteristics of the Wiltshire Horn. A registered Wiltipoll sheep must have no less than 96.87% Wiltshire Horn blood, be polled and must completely shed its fleece annually. It is an easy-care breed, suited to heavy prime lamb production.

Further information is available from:

The Australian Wiltipoll Association Inc

Martindale

PO Box 620

Strathalbyn SA 5255

www.wiltipoll.com

