

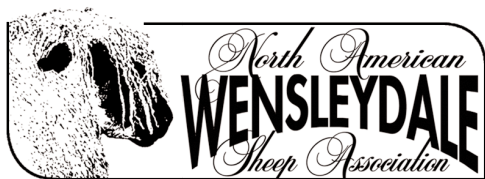


Black yearling ewe, U.K.

In England, separate registries are maintained to record white and colored Wensleydales. The American Association does not discriminate regarding color and all sheep are recorded in the same registry. The term "colored" refers to anything other than white.

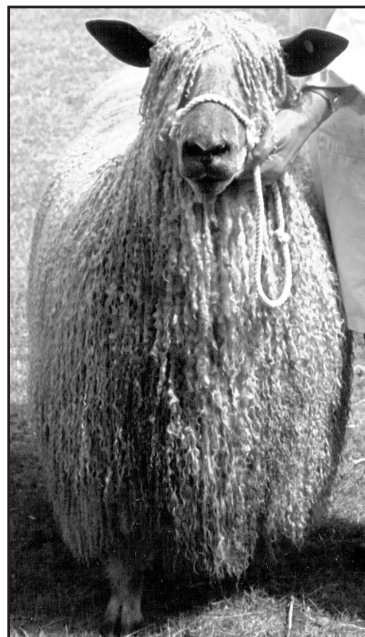


White U.K. Wensleydale in heavy fleece.



Yearling ewes, U.K.

It is customary in England for the first shearing of some animals to be delayed until the animals are over a year old - creating the extremely long staple length that is associated with the Wensleydale. Subsequent fleeces are never as long as the first shearing.



Yearling ewe, U.K.

Prepared for show, this ewe carries a 16-18 month fleece. In England, an additional class of yearling ewes is shown in long fleeces, all other yearling ewes, rams & lambs are shown in shorter fleece that better displays the heavy muscling and substantial conformation of the breed.

North American WENSLEYDALE Sheep Association



The Wensleydale is a very large English long-wool breed that produces the finest luster longwool fiber in the world. This breed is a true dual-purpose breed not only producing superior wool, but also serving as a terminal sire for lamb production.

Described by the British Meat and Livestock Commission as "probably the heaviest of all our indigenous breeds", it is a visually striking sheep with considerable presence. It has a bold and alert carriage which is accentuated by a broad, level back and heavy muscling in the hindquarters. The white Wensleydale has a distinctive deep blue head and ears which should be clean except for a well developed forelock of wool. Both sexes are polled.

Today the breed is established throughout the United Kingdom and extends into mainland Europe. There is currently an upgrading program in the United States utilizing imported semen to establish the American Wensleydale.

HISTORY OF THE WENSLEYDALE BREED

The Wensleydale breed, which originated in North Yorkshire, England, early in the 19th century, is the direct descendant of a long since extinct longwool breed which was probably introduced into the valley of Wensleydale in the late 18th century, being used mainly for crossing on hill ewes.

An outstanding ram named "Bluecap" was the foundation sire and the breed is probably unique in that its Association is able to not only identify a foundation sire but also trace that ram's parentage, year and place of birth and breeder. Bluecap was born in 1839 in North Yorkshire, sired by an outstanding Dishley Leicester ram out of a ewe of the now extinct local longwool breed. His unique qualities, which determined the breed type without any further infusion of Leicester blood, were his dark skin, superb quality of wool, and size - 448 lbs. at two years.

The Wensleydale breed was developed to provide rams for crossing onto hill ewes, mainly Swaledale, Blackface, Rough Fell, Cheviot and Dalesbred. The female crossbreds develop into prolific, heavy-milking, hardy breeding ewes while the wethers, under natural conditions and on marginal ground, provide quality carcasses at higher weight, with no excess fat.

WENSLEYDALES IN NORTH AMERICA

The North American Wensleydale Sheep Association (NAWSA) was formed in 1999 by a group of breeders and supporters dedicated to the development and promotion of the Wensleydale breed in North America. Federal regulations prohibit importation of live animals and embryos from the United Kingdom, but *with the enthusiastic encouragement and support of the U.K. Wensleydale Longwool Sheep Breeders' Association*, the NAWSA has developed guidelines for upgrading by using imported semen in order to establish the "American Wensleydale" on this continent.

Guidelines for Upgrading

The registry supports the development of purebred white and colored Wensleydale sheep from the crossing of registered Cotswold, Leicester Longwool, and Lincoln ewes with purebred Wensleydale rams (semen). The first generation (50% blood) bred back to a purebred Wensleydale sire produces a 75% blood. The second generation bred back to a purebred Wensleydale sire produces an 87% blood, and so on. When the fraction of Wensleydale blood reaches 96% (31/32 or fifth generation), the animal will be considered a purebred American Wensleydale.

Scrapie Resistance

The Wensleydale has the highest genetic resistance to Scrapie of all recognized sheep breeds in the United Kingdom with PrP tests revealing a 90% codon 171 RR genotype in the breed. The NAWSA requires that, in order to be registered, all male animals test RR at codon 171. The result of this is that by using a Wensleydale ram, all progeny will carry at least one "R" - making them of the genotype that is currently believed to be resistant to scrapie.

STATISTICS FROM THE U.K.

Mature weight:

<i>Rams</i>	<i>300-325 lbs</i>
<i>Ewes</i>	<i>200-225 lbs</i>

Average prolificacy:

<i>Yearling ewes</i>	<i>200%</i>
<i>Mature ewes</i>	<i>250%</i>

Lamb weight at eight weeks:

<i>Singles</i>	<i>57 lbs.</i>
<i>Twins</i>	<i>48 lbs.</i>

Twin lambs will average 13 pounds each at birth with a growth rate that enables ram lambs to reach 160 lbs. at 21 weeks.

Wool Characteristics:

<i>Micron count</i>	<i>33-35</i>
<i>Staple length</i>	<i>8-12 inches</i>
<i>Ylg fleece weight</i>	<i>13-20 lbs</i>

Wensleydale fleeces are entirely kemp free as a result of the unique characteristics of the wool-producing follicles. This special quality is genetically transmitted to cross-bred lambs, characterizing the Wensleydale ram as perhaps the leading wool improving sire in the world.

Color Genetics

The color gene is recessive to the white gene in the Wensleydale. This means that if there is a white gene present, the effect of any color gene will be masked by the dominant white gene, resulting in a white lamb that is carrying the color gene. If there is no white gene present, the color genes can then be effective in producing a colored lamb.

www.WensleydaleSheep.org

Additional information and forms may be accessed on the website. Included on that site: Association bylaws, upgrading guidelines, board of directors & officers, meeting minutes, flock book, registration forms, membership roster, and many photos of purebred U.K. Wensleydale Sheep.

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*Wensleydale Wool is the Finest
and Most Valuable Luster
Longwool in the World*