

2. Conformation

Castration Criteria & Reason for Excluding Rams During Grading

Limbs:

- Strong, sure footed
- Solid hoof deportment
- Legs are not bandy/bow legged
- Legs are not knock-kneed

Foundations:

- Slight hock angulation
- Short, strong pasterns (45-degree angle)
- Solid bone structure
- Joints should be straight and sound

Gait:

- Spacious, sure footed and wide legged
- Doesn't sway or waver
- Even and stable movement
- Mobile with ease

Anatomy:

- Short lower jaw or uneven jaw length
- Incisor teeth not in contact or correct position with dental pad i.e. overbite or underbite up to 18 months of age
- Weak and/or fallen pasterns
- Stunted growth
- Only one testicle present
- Scrotal hernia

Markings:

- Black body spots on the main body area
- Black tail spots
- Markings missing from knees, hocks or head

Wool: Major flaw in the fleece/wool i.e.

- Kemp and/or tender fibers (Kemp fibers are short, medullated (hollow) fibers with pointed tips that may be found within fleece. Kemp is undesirable in fleece because it does not take up dye and is coarse, brittle, weak and 'prickly'. Tender or 'hunger-fine' fibers are thinned and break easily, and may occur due to malnutrition, disease and/or scarring).
- **Excessive number of guard hairs** (i.e. long, coarse, stiff, outer-coat hairs which may be present. They cause the same difficulties to the processing as kemp fibers and are easy to recognize in the fleece because they are typically much longer than the actual wool fibers.)
- Mixed-colored wool up to an age of 18 months in rams

3. Wool

- Fleece in lambs is soft to touch but becomes coarser as the sheep matures (The Swiss grade approximately equates to 28-38 microns depending on age and gender. Fiber diameter generally finest in lambs and coarsest in adult males)
- Staple length is 10cm based on 6 months growth and the minimum length required for showing (Recommended to be shorn twice a year. Fleece weight when shorn approx. – Lambs 1-1.5 kg / Ewes 2.5 -3kg / Rams 2.5 – 3kg – Based on 6 months growth)
- Fleece is uniformly white and balanced over the whole body
- Wool on legs is thick and full
- Wool on head is natural and long
- Some black hairs/fibers are tolerated on the neck area (Females only. In males up to 18 months of age this should be factored when castrating)

The information in this guide is a translation of the Swiss Valais Blacknose breed standards provided by the Oberwalliser Schwarznasen Schafzuchtverband (Upper Valais Sheep Breeders' Association). Translation has been carried out by VBSSUK members using our own knowledge of the German language. Additional clarification has been included based on the knowledge and input from Blacknose breeders in Valais, UK & USA.

The original breed standards (in German) can be found here:
<http://www.sn-verband.ch/rassenstandard.php>