

# SHOW LAMB SELECTION

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## BREEDS OF SHEEP

There are many breeds of sheep. Here are a few that are used in junior market lambs



**Columbia Suffolk**



**Rambouillet**



**Hampshire**



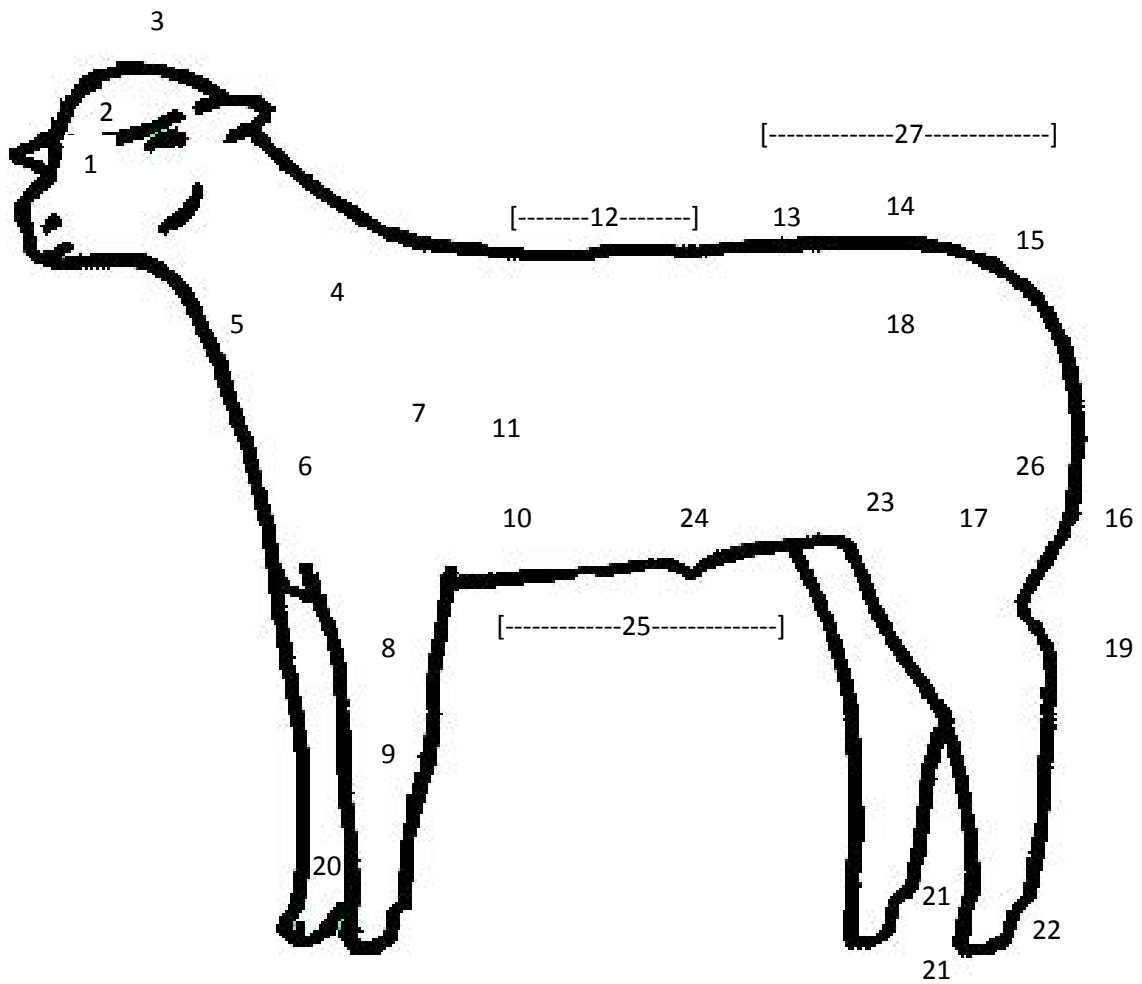
**Dorset**



**Southdown**

## PARTS OF THE SHEEP

- |                  |                     |
|------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Face          | 15. Dock            |
| 2. Forehead      | 16. Twist           |
| 3. Poll          | 17. Leg             |
| 4. Neck          | 18. Hip             |
| 5. Throat        | 19. Hock            |
| 6. Breast        | 20. Pastern         |
| 7. Shoulder      | 21. Dew Claw        |
| 8. Forearm       | 22. Foot            |
| 9. Cannon Bone   | 23. Hind flank      |
| 10. Fore flank   | 24. Sheath or Naval |
| 11. Heart Girth  | 25. Underline       |
| 12. Rack or Back | 26. Stifle          |
| 13. Loin         | 27. Hindsaddle      |
| 14. Rump         |                     |



## WHY SHOW JUNIOR LIVESTOCK?

The junior livestock program is a unique opportunity to use live animals to help youth develop. Youth learn something about agriculture and livestock production and develop an appreciation for the livestock industry, but the main objectives are to teach life skills and help youth become productive citizens of our society. The experience of youth owning and working with animals, being responsible for their care, health, and growth, and exhibiting them in a competitive environment is a tremendous character building process. Junior livestock projects help develop life skills such as; leadership, communication, decision making and problem-solving. Character building, record keeping and the development of personal responsibility are other skills youths can develop as a result of their involvement in the broad range of programs in junior livestock.

### MUSCLE

Select show lambs with good expression of muscle. Pick a lamb that has firm, hard muscle tone in the legs, loin, and rump, where the higher priced cuts are located. Look for muscle from different views and areas.

#### From the Rear

**Leg** -The widest portion should be through the center of the leg or stifle area. A larger outside muscle right above the stifle joint is very desirable. A muscular lamb will stand and walk wide. This requires good development of inside leg muscle. A lamb can stand wide and not have a lot of inside muscle. They may just be structurally wide. Be sure to check for inside muscle.

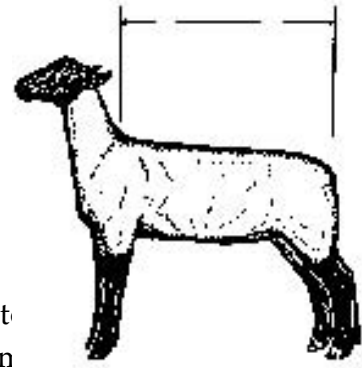


**Top** -A lamb needs to be wide across the top. The loin needs to be large and muscular. Look for a large rib cage which indicates a lot of capacity. Width is an indicator of muscle. However, be sure to feel your lamb to be certain that it is not fat. Feel down the back bone to determine the expression of the loin muscle. A good indicator of muscle is when you can feel a groove down the top of young lambs. This is like feeling the groove between your fingers when they are close together.

### **From the Side AB**

Choose a lamb that has proper length in the areas of the higher priced cuts, legs, loin and rump. The back portion of the top or hind saddle (B) should be longer than the front part, rack or back (A). To calculate this, measure from the last two ribs to the pin bones, (where the tail connects to the body). This should be two or more inches longer than the front part, depending on the lamb's size.

Length of the loin is important. Measure from the last two ribs to the pin bones. Length and width of the loin are important. Short bodied, compact animals are preferred. Be careful not to get carried away with length. If you select a lamb that is too long it may be weak topped.



### **From the Front**

A bulging muscle from the knee to the shoulder is desirable. Large bone circumference of the cannon bone is a gauge of muscle, too. The larger the bone, the more area there is to attach muscle to. Select a lamb with a relatively long, thick cannon bone. The shoulder should be slightly prominent. Avoid getting a lamb with too large a shoulder as this will take away from a smooth, balanced appearance.

## **STRUCTURAL CORRECTNESS**

Show lambs should be correct in their skeletal or bone structure. The lamb's neck should be erect and extend out of the top of the shoulder. The top line should be long, level and straight. The legs should have a large circumference or diameter of bone. Its pasterns should be strong, and it should stand with its feet and legs wide apart. When it walks it should move with long, smooth steps, and track out wide. Do not select lambs that are open shouldered, weak topped and have steep rumps.

## **STYLE AND BALANCE**

These two characteristics describe how a lamb blends together. The front and rear ends should match. Looking at the lamb from the side view, it should have a clean, trim chest. The shoulder should be smooth while the top line should be long and level. A trim middle is desirable. Because lambs are shown with less than 1/4 inch wool, it is desirable that they have a tight, wrinkle-free hide.

The most noticeable lamb in a pen holds its head up and looks long and straight with a level hip. Its walk is proud and wide based with a thick leg.

## LOOK FOR POTENTIAL

Select a lamb that shows good potential. Large framed, long bodied lambs, with a long neck, cannon bone, and thick loin show the most potential for growth. Lambs that are long in the loin and level in the rump have an advantage over others in the show ring.

## REFERENCES

The author does not claim all material inside as original. Thank you and credit goes to the following sources.

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