

Livestock Judging Guide



By

Neal Smith

Extension Area Specialist – 4-H

Module 8: Sheep



Judging Breeding Ewes

Judging Breeding Ewes



- ❧ Ideal breeding ewe:
 - ❧ Possess an abundance of scale
 - ❧ Bigger, longer, heavy-boned sheep are preferred
 - ❧ Long, level topline
 - ❧ High volume or capacity:
 - ❧ Deep bodied, with bold spring of rib
 - ❧ Wide, deep chest
 - ❧ Natural thickness from end to end
 - ❧ Structurally correct and sound

Ideal Breeding Ewe



Legs placed wide apart

Judging Breeding Ewes



Steps to Judging Sheep

- Begin from the ground and work up
- Then from rear to front
- Rank based on traits of importance they possess
- Put greatest emphasis on most valuable traits
- Eliminate easy placings
- Rank the remainder on bases of volume of important traits

Judging Breeding Ewes



- ❧ Ranking of Traits for Breeding Sheep
 - ❧ Balance and style
 - ❧ Frame size
 - ❧ Soundness and structural correctness
 - ❧ Capacity or Volume
 - ❧ Degree of muscling
 - ❧ Degree of leanness
 - ❧ Wool

Judging Market Lambs



☞ Evaluating Balance and Style

☞ Equal portions of:

☞ Width

☞ Depth

☞ Length (special emphasis)

☞ Should be wide and deep through rear (leg)

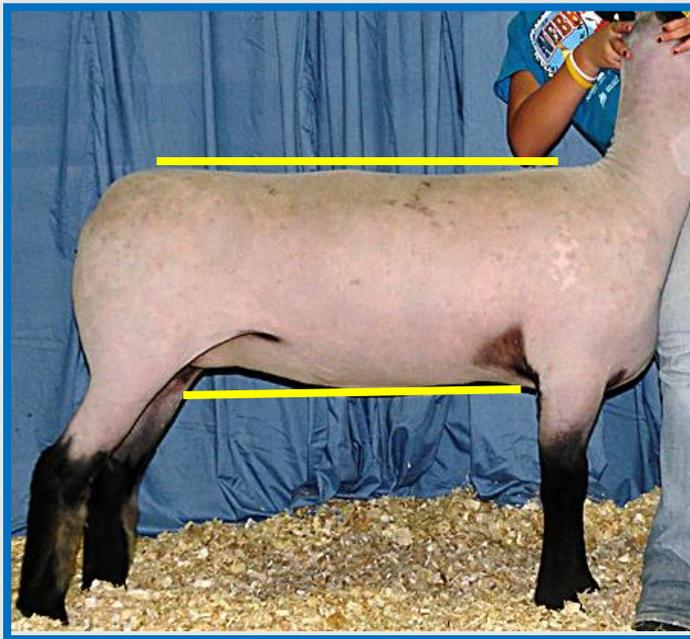
☞ Tight and trim through front end

☞ Majority of the weight is in back half

Judging Breeding Ewes



Proper Balance



Proper Balance

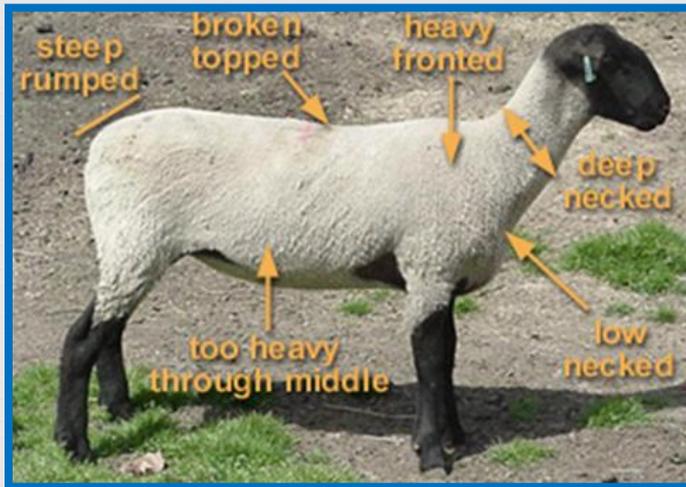


“Christmas Tree” Shape, when viewed from Side & Rear,
with majority of weight in the back half

Judging Breeding Ewes



Poorly Balance



Heavy-fronted, deep and low necked, broken topped, too heavy through middle & steep rumped

Lacks Balance



Straight and stylish, but lacks balance, wrong "Christmas tree" shape, too heavy-fronted

Judging Breeding Ewes



☞ Evaluating Balance and Style

☞ Style deals with:

- ☞ Correctness of structure
- ☞ Straightness of design

☞ Sheep should have:

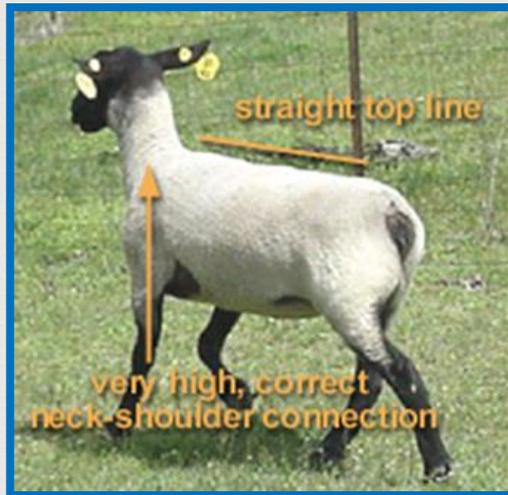
- ☞ Straight top line
- ☞ Neat shoulder that blends smoothly into neck and ribs



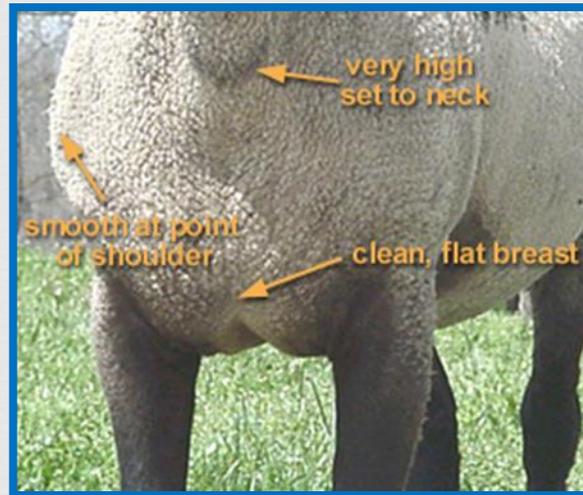
Judging Breeding Ewes



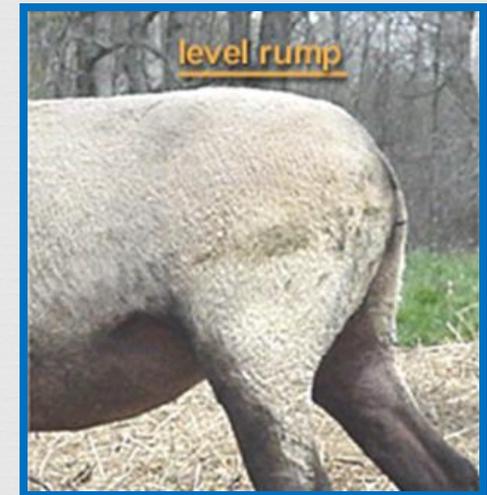
Examples of Proper Style



Straight top line, high & correct neck-shoulder connection



Neat front, smooth at point of shoulder, clean, flat breast area and very high neck set

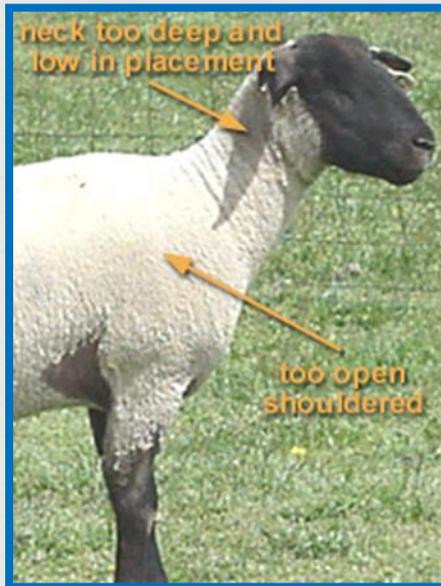


Level rump structure that is desired in sheep

Judging Breeding Ewes

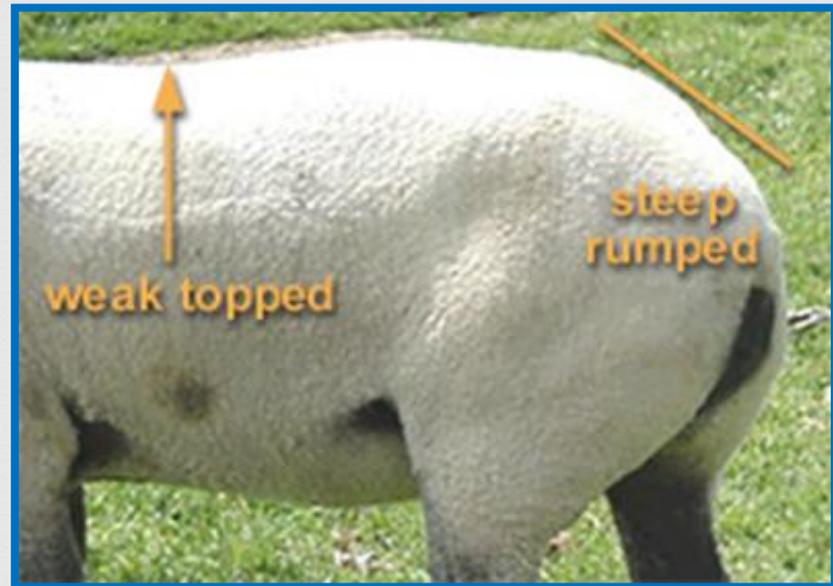


Lacks Style



Too deep necked, too low in neck placement & too opened shouldered

Lacks Style



Weak topped & too steep in its rump

Judging Breeding Ewes



œ Evaluating Frame Size

- œ Larger framed ewes, within the same breed, indicates:
 - œ Growth
 - œ Increased productivity
- œ Ewes with more size & scale are desired if:
 - œ Balanced & stylish
 - œ Structurally sound
- œ Larger, longer, heavy-boned sheep are in demand by all breeds
- œ Frame size varies between different breeds

Judging Breeding Ewes



œ Evaluating Soundness

- œ Correct set or angle to feet, legs & joints are extremely important to:
 - œ Production (growth)
 - œ Longevity (soundness)
- œ Evaluate soundness by observing:
 - œ Feet and Pasterns
 - œ Hocks
 - œ Knees
 - œ Rump
 - œ Shoulders

Judging Breeding Ewes



☞ Feet and Pasterns

- ☞ Strong with slight angle
- ☞ Provides cushion for joints

Correct



Big feet with even toes, set flat on surface and square with animal's body

Correct



Correct set to pastern, good depth of heel and big foot setting flat & even

Judging Breeding Ewes



Incorrect Structure



Judging Breeding Ewes



∞ Hocks

- ∞ Correct structure is critical to:
 - ∞ Mobility
 - ∞ Longevity
- ∞ Should have 20 degree of set or angle
- ∞ Should be clean, flat & free of swelling
- ∞ Gives flex & power on the move
- ∞ Good measure of correctness:
 - ∞ Ability to get rear leg beyond the dock when walking



Correct set to hocks

Judging Breeding Ewes



Sickle-hocked



Too much set to the hocks

Judging Breeding Ewes



☞ Knees should be:

- ☞ Square with the body when viewed from the front
- ☞ Slightly set back when viewed from the side

Buck-kneed



Knee “bucked over”, lacks cushion & will restrict movement

Knock-kneed



Knee bowed slightly inward

Judging Breeding Ewes



☞ Rump

☞ Ideal rump is:

- ☞ Average to above average in length
- ☞ Very slightly sloping from front to back

Short, steep
rump



Long, level
rump



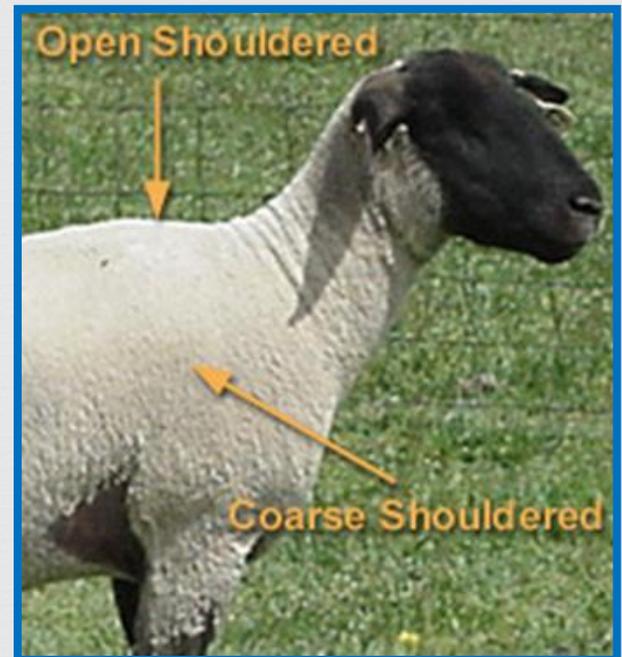
Judging Breeding Ewes



Shoulders

- Proper shoulder angle is critical for good length of stride
- Shape & tightness of front end is important for proper balance
- Point of shoulder should be trim & smooth

Incorrect shoulder structure



Judging Breeding Ewes



Examples of correct shoulder structure



Desired tight shape at the top of the shoulder



Shoulder blends smoothly into neck & forerib



Desired smoothness at the point of the shoulder

Judging Breeding Ewes



☞ Evaluating Capacity or Volume

- ☞ Amount of body volume a ewe possesses
- ☞ Necessary to perform at a high level
- ☞ And, still maintain body condition
- ☞ Associated with:
 - ☞ Production traits
 - ☞ Performance traits



Judging Breeding Ewes



☞ Evaluating Capacity or Volume

☞ Determined by:

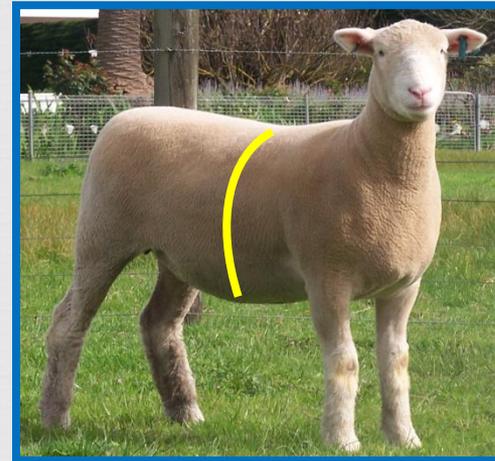
- ☞ Body width (spring of rib)
- ☞ Body depth
- ☞ Body length

☞ Ewes should be:

- ☞ Wide bodied
- ☞ Good spring of rib
- ☞ Deep & wide through chest

☞ Depth should be:

- ☞ Uniform from front to back
- ☞ Through heart girth & rear flank



Bold spring
of rib



Judging Breeding Ewes



œ Evaluating Degree of Muscling

- œ Follow same basic guidelines as with market lambs
- œ “Natural thickness” is preferred over extreme muscle
- œ First - evaluated through center of leg for thickness
- œ Second - Examine width between rear feet
 - œ On the move
 - œ Standing

Judging Breeding Ewes



☞ Evaluating Degree of Muscling

☞ Compare base width to top width

☞ Heavy muscled ewes – base width = top width

☞ Don't be tricked by additional width due to fat cover

☞ Other areas to evaluate degree of muscling:

☞ Length of hindsaddle (loin and leg)

☞ From last rib to dock

☞ Width & length of loin

☞ Shape over rack (grooves shape to the rack is desired)

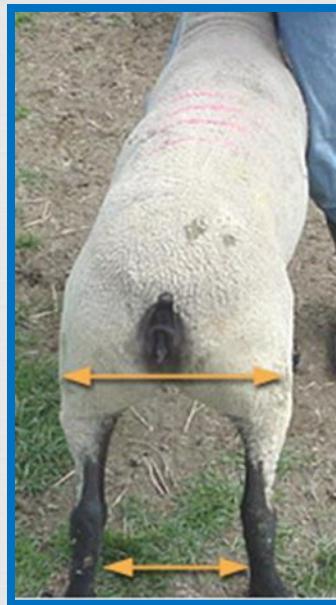
Judging Breeding Ewes



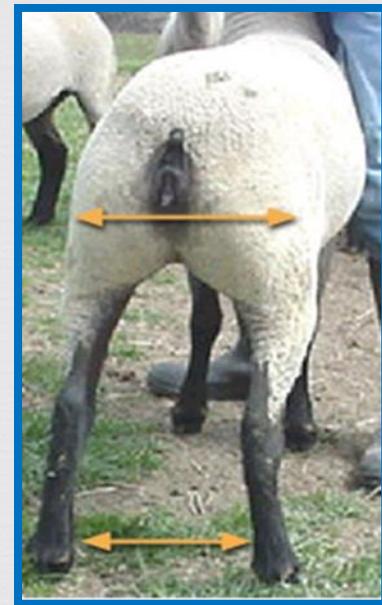
Center Leg and Base Width



Light muscled
(Narrow width)



Average muscled
(Average width)



Heavy muscled
(Wide based)

Square,
wide top
shape

Judging Breeding Ewes



☞ Width and Length of Loin

☞ Long, wide loin is desirable



Areas to evaluate in determining width and length of loin

Judging Breeding Ewes



☞ Length of Hindsaddle

☞ Contains most valuable cuts

☞ Should be greater in length & weight than foresaddle



Judging Breeding Ewes



☞ Shape Over Rack

☞ Fairly high-priced cut

☞ Grooved shape over rack indicates high degree of muscling

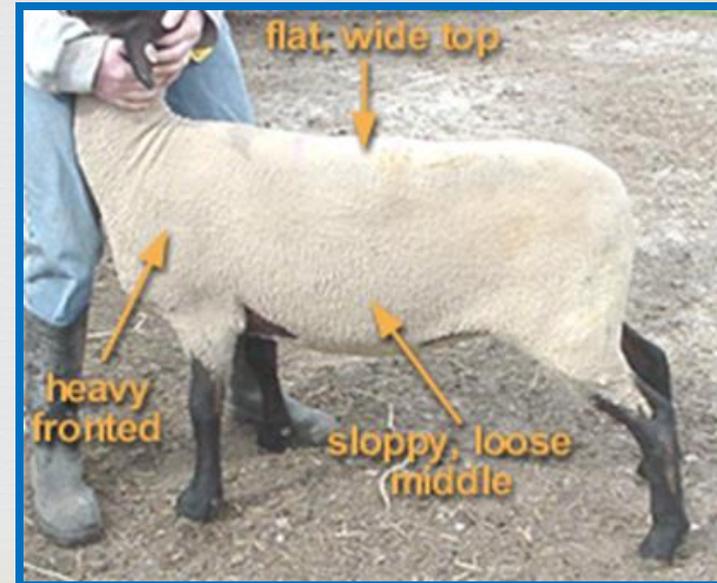


Judging Breeding Ewes



❧ Evaluating Degree of Finish

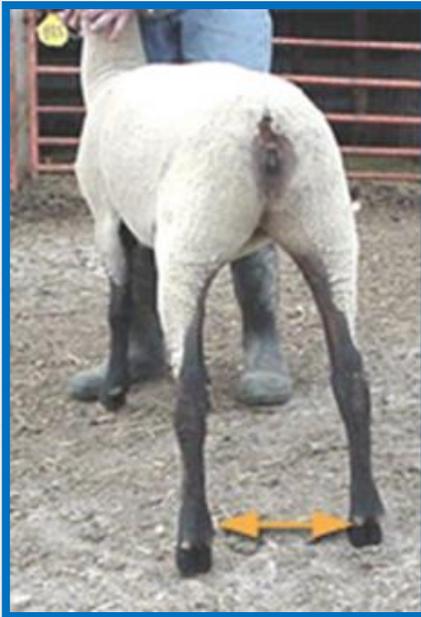
- ❧ Should be lean with 0.15 to 0.20 inches of backfat thickness
- ❧ Degree of finish is influenced by:
 - ❧ Amount of muscling
 - ❧ Frame size
 - ❧ Stage of maturity
- ❧ Fat sheep will be widest over their top



Judging Breeding Ewes

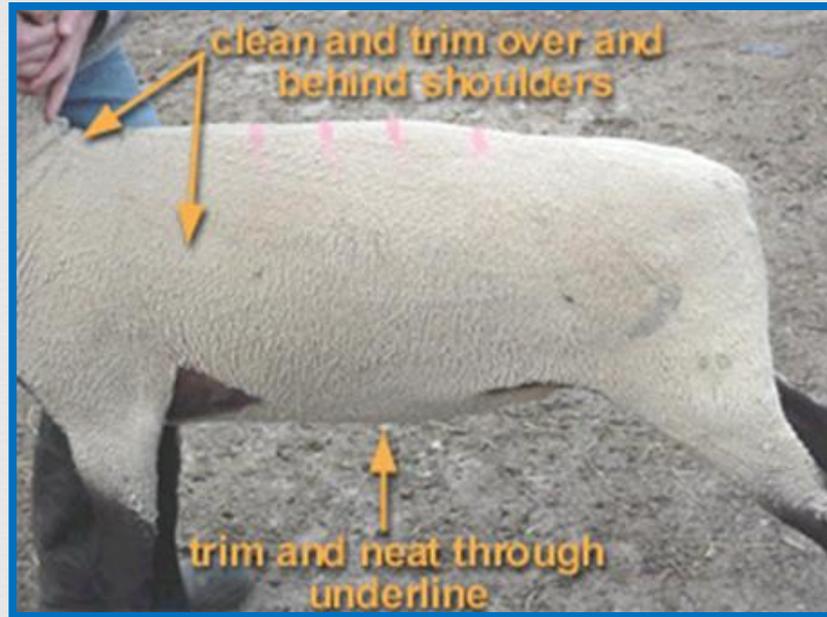


Ideal Finish



Very trim, with base width at least as wide as top

Ideal Finish



Very clean and trim over & behind the shoulder, extremely trim & neat through underline

Judging Breeding Ewes



œ Evaluating Wool

- œ Not a priority with mutton-type sheep
- œ May have classes with wool-type breeds
- œ Fleece should be:
 - œ Dense
 - œ Of good character (have distinct crimp)
 - œ Clean & bright
 - œ Free of black fibers
- œ Skin should be healthy pink color



Judging Breeding Ewes



œ Evaluating Wool

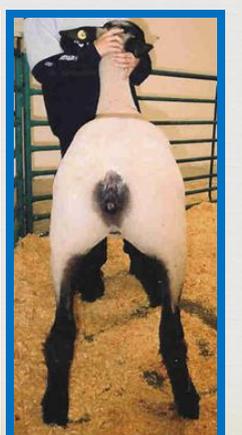
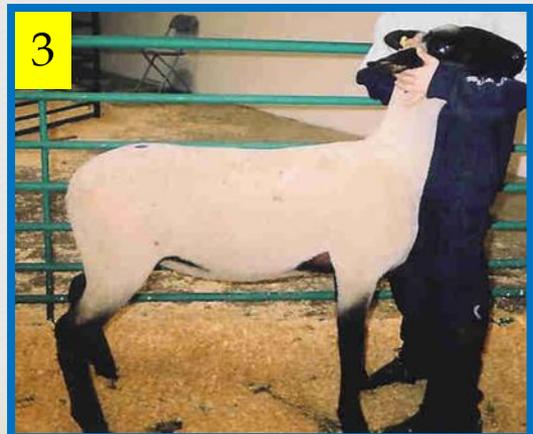
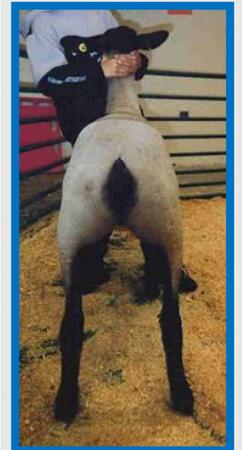
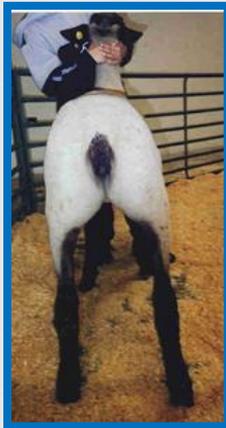
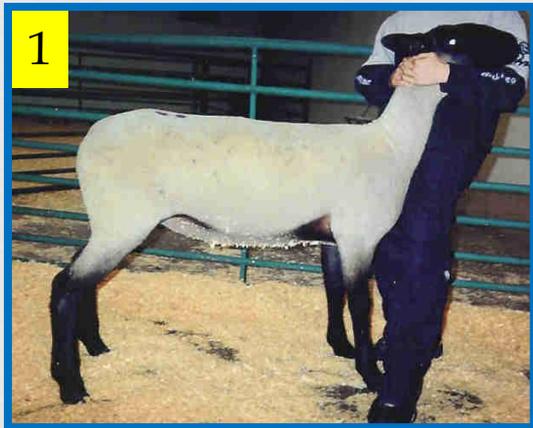
- œ Never open wool on the back of sheep
- œ Open fleece on the side
- œ Look for:
 - œ Length
 - œ Grade density
 - œ Uniformity of wool
 - œ Color of skin



Test Your Skills



Place this class of breeding ewes



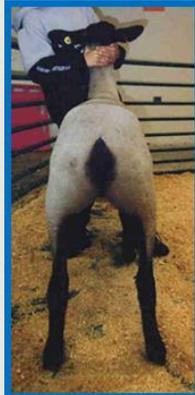
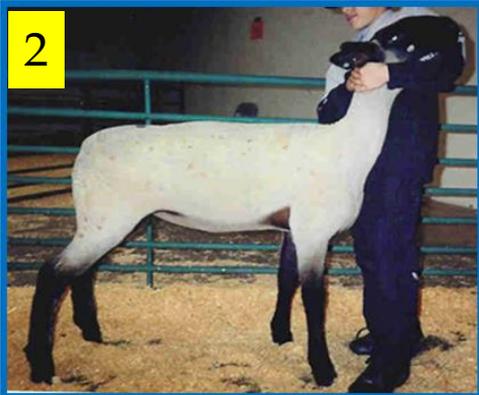
Official Placing



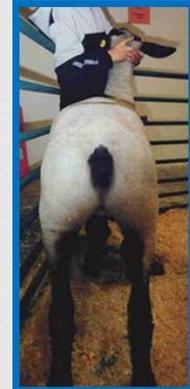
Official Placing: 2 - 3 - 1 - 4

Cuts: 2 - 3 - 4

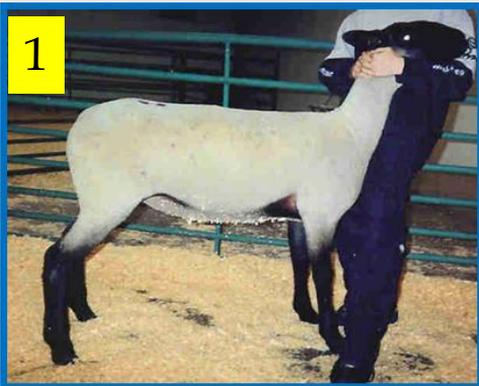
1st



2nd



3rd



4th

