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# VISUAL SHEEP SCORES



Producer Version 4 – 2024



Australian Wool  
Innovation Limited





## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Visually assessed traits are included in the breeding objective of all stud and commercial sheep breeders, regardless of their target market or environment.

In 2007, following extensive industry consultation, Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) & Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) developed the Visual Sheep Scores to:

- Provide the Australian sheep industry with a standardised set of visual assessment scores for the consistent description of important phenotypic traits of all breeds of sheep;
- Develop a quick and simple scoring system to help sheep classers and breeders select sheep on visually-assessed traits to accelerate genetic gain;
- Enable sheep breeders and classers to record and submit visual score data and genetic information to Sheep Genetics to progress development of across-flock Australian Sheep Breeding Values (ASBVs)\* for visually-assessed traits; and
- Enable researchers to estimate the heritability of visually-assessed sheep traits, and to measure their relationships (if any), of on important production traits such as fleece weight, fibre diameter, growth rate and body weight.

\* Developed by Sheep Genetics, ASBVs enable ram breeders and commercial sheep producers to compare the genetic potential of rams and ewes for a range of production traits, independent of the environment and location.

In 2012, 2018 and 2024 the Visual Sheep Scores were reviewed to update them to the current requirements of the industry.

In addition, the visual standards and scoring system contained in this guide are endorsed by the Australian Merino Sire Evaluation Association (AMSEA), and include all compulsory traits visually assessed at Central Test Sire Evaluation sites across Australia.

Remember, profitable selection is based on identifying traits that have significant commercial value. When selecting traits for your breeding objective, ensure the selection balance is maintained. Be mindful of all traits that determine the commercial profitability and quality of your flock.

## VISUAL SHEEP SCORES

This guide provides the Australian sheep industry with a common language for the visual description, recording, and classing of all breeds of sheep according to important visual traits.

Visual Sheep Scores are designed for ram and commercial flock breeders that choose to class and select sheep on any number of visually-assessed traits as part of their overall breeding objective.

Visual scores gathered on individual sheep may be submitted to Sheep Genetics with other pedigree and performance information to assist the sheep industry with the development of across-flock ASBVs for visually-assessed traits.

Designed for use on both male and female sheep, the Visual Sheep Scores provided in this guide have been divided into eight sections:

- |                             |                          |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Wool Quality Scores      | 5. Breech Scores         |
| 2. Pigmentation Scores      | 6. Lambing Scores        |
| 3. Conformation Scores      | 7. Udder and Teat Scores |
| 4. Cover and Wrinkle Scores | 8. Classing Scores       |

A set of illustrative standards and simple instructions on 'how' and 'when' to visually score sheep are provided for each trait. Unless otherwise stated:

- A single score of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 is recorded for each trait; and
- Score 1 depicts LEAST expression and Score 5 depicts MOST expression of the trait.

Sheep should be scored relative to the score diagrams and descriptions in this booklet. The scores should **not** be distributed across the flock being scored from 1 to 5 irrespective of the range in the flock. Sheep should also **not** be scored according to the scorers perception of 'least' or 'most' – sheep must be scored according to the diagrams with the aid of the words that describe the trait.

For traits in which low levels of variation exist, **half scores between the 1 to 5 whole numbers** may be given to increase the level of variation recorded within the flock to assist in differentiating between animals. If the analysis of the scores is to be carried out in whole numbers, half scores will be collapsed to the score below.  
i.e. 3.5 score becomes 3 score.



## BEST PRACTICE VISUAL SHEEP SCORING

It is important for producers wishing to make the most of visual scoring that the following protocols are followed when scoring their flock:

- Sheep should be scored within management groups that is, sheep that have been run together. Sheep running in different mobs may express traits differently and cannot be directly compared. Ideally management groups should be as large as possible. Care should be taken when comparing small management groups as the group may be biased.
- If birth type and rear type are known, sheep should be separated into these groups prior to scoring as these factors may influence the visual appearance of sheep. This is particularly important at young ages.
- Sheep should be presented for scoring in good commercial condition. Sheep that are affected by drought or have been under-managed may not have expressed their genetic potential.
- Scorers should be appropriately trained and have experience in the traits they are assessing.
- Where possible, the same scorer should be used between years to minimise variables across years and to allow the best comparison between drops.
- Most traits are best scored in a classer's box. However, some traits, such as those relating to feet and leg structure, may be best scored as the sheep walks away from the scorer. Situations where sheep are tightly packed into a race should be avoided for classing.



## WOOL QUALITY SCORES

Wool Quality Scores provide visual standards for the description of physical fleece and fibre traits that contribute to the economic value of wool.

Wool Quality Scores are available for 6 traits. Visual scores of 1 to 5 are provided for each trait.

With the exception of wool character, Score 1 depicts LEAST expression of

the trait and Score 5 depicts MOST expression (i.e. rule of thumb is Score 1 is LESS and Score 5 is MORE of each trait).

Wool Quality Scores can be taken on both male and female sheep at various ages. It is essential to record the age of the sheep when scores are taken, with the optimal age recommended in the table below.

Wool Trait	Age	When
Fleece rot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Over 6 months</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Anytime, provided a minimum of 5 months of wool growth</li></ul>
Wool colour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Over 6 months</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Anytime, provided a minimum of 5 months of wool growth</li></ul>
Wool character	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Over 6 months</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Anytime, provided a minimum of 5 months of wool growth</li></ul>
Dust penetration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Over 6 months</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Anytime, provided a minimum of 5 months of wool growth</li></ul>
Staple weathering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Over 6 months</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Anytime, provided a minimum of 5 months of wool growth</li></ul>
Staple structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Over 6 months</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Anytime, provided a minimum of 5 months of wool growth</li></ul>

## FLEECE ROT (FLROT)

**Age:** Over 6 months and after a significant fleece rot challenge.

**When:** Anytime, provided a minimum of 5 months of wool growth, and preferably after a significant fleece rot challenge and before dust is deposited in the affected wool.

**Definition:** Fleece rot is caused by high humidity leading to multiplication of fleece rot bacteria at skin level, causing staining and, in more severe cases, exudate from the skin. Fleece rot score refers to the width of the band in the wool of stain and/or crusting that results from fleece rot bacteria. Stained bands can be yellow, green, red-orange, pink-violet, blue, brown or grey in colour. Crusting results from skin exudate deposited in the wool and when fresh or the fleece is wet, may be soft but still gives the feel of extra staple thickness.

### Score 1:

No band of stain or crusting.

### Score 2:

Band of stain <10 mm wide.  
No crusting.

### Score 3:

Band of stain >10 mm wide.  
No crusting.

### Score 4:

Band of crusting <5 mm wide, with or without stain.

### Score 5:

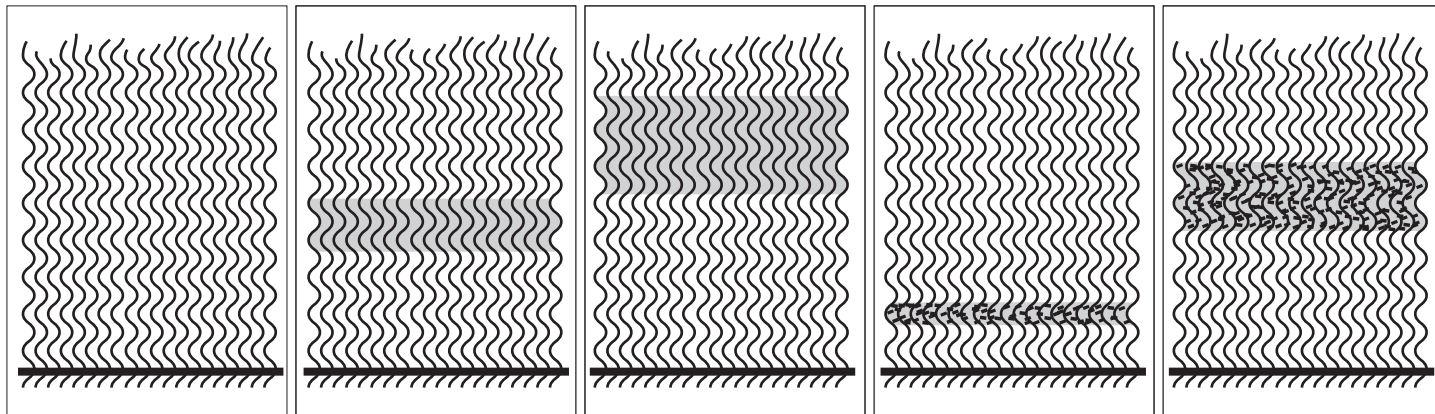
Band of crusting >5 mm wide, with or without stain.

**Note:** Fleece rot should not be confused with dermatitis ('lumpy wool'), which tends to form columns of hard lumps along the staple.

**How to score:** Open the fleece at a minimum of **three sites** along the full length of the backline and look for evidence of bands of stain and/or crusting. The highest score across the sites is recorded as the score.

**Rule of thumb:** A sheep with Score 1 has no staining or crusting. A sheep with Score 5 has a band/s of crusting greater than 5 millimetres wide, with or without stain.

## FLEECE ROT (FLROT)



Score 1

Score 2

Score 3

Score 4

Score 5

## WOOL COLOUR (COL)

**Age:** Over 6 months.

**When:** Anytime, provided a minimum of 5 months of wool growth.

**Definition:** Wool colour describes the intensity of whiteness and yellowness of greasy wool. The degree of yellow may vary within a score, however score the intensity of colour.

### Score 1:

Has bright white wool.

### Score 2:

Has off white wool.

### Score 3:

Has mildly yellow wool.

### Score 4:

Has intense yellow wool.

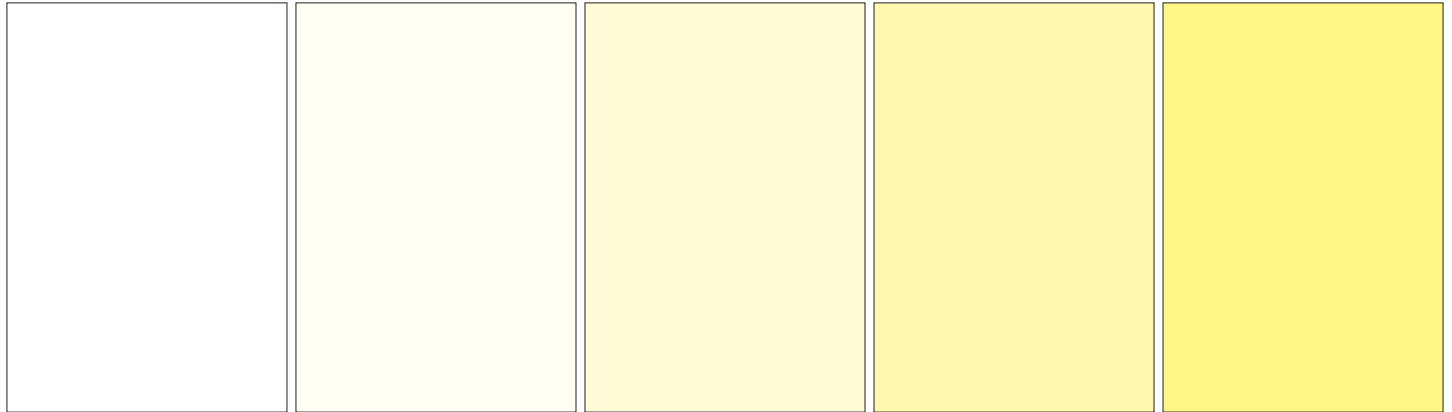
### Score 5:

Has very intense yellow wool.

**How to score:** Open the fleece at a minimum of **three sites** – side of shoulder, mid-side and hip. The highest score across the sites is recorded. Colour does not need to be present along the entire length of the staple to be recorded. Colour that results from fleece rot should **not** be scored as wool colour.

**Rule of thumb:** A sheep with Score 1 has the brightest white wool, whereas a Score 5 sheep has a very intense type of yellow.

## WOOL COLOUR (COL)



Score 1

Score 2

Score 3

Score 4

Score 5

## WOOL CHARACTER (CHAR)

**Age:** Over 6 months.

**When:** Anytime, provided a minimum of 5 months of wool growth.

**Definition:** Wool character describes the definition of crimp, in terms of both evenness and depth.

**How to score:** Open the fleece cleanly at a minimum of **three sites** along the middle of the side of the sheep from shoulder to hip. Evaluate the evenness and depth of the crimp along the length of the staples and across all staples at the site. The highest score across the sites is recorded. It should be noted that wool character is not an assessment of crimp frequency (quality count).

**Rule of thumb:** A sheep with Score 1 has very even and very deep crimp along the entire length of the staples observed at the opening. A Score 5 sheep has 'flat' wool due to uneven crimp or crimp lacking depth.

### Score 1:

Very even and very deep crimp.

### Score 2:

Even and deep crimp.

### Score 3:

Crimp is lacking evenness and depth.

### Score 4:

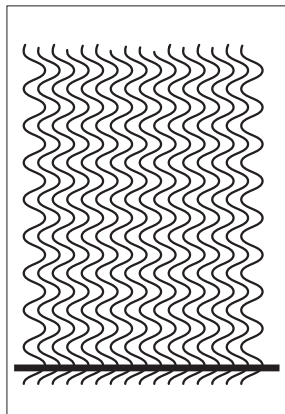
Crimp is severely lacking evenness and depth and the staple starts to look 'flat'.

### Score 5:

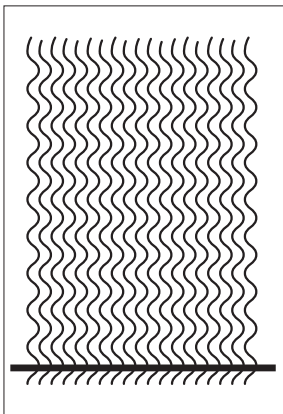
No crimp evenness or depth and as a result looks 'flat'.



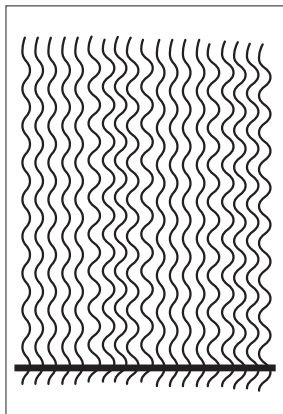
## WOOL CHARACTER (CHAR)



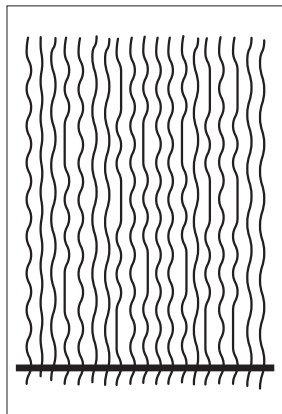
Score 1



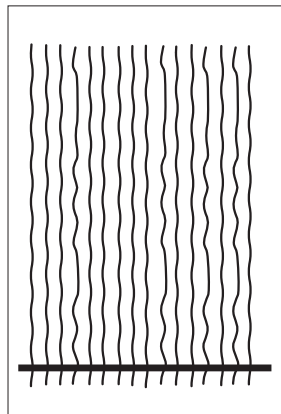
Score 2



Score 3



Score 4



Score 5

## DUST PENETRATION (DUST)

**Age:** Over 6 months.

**When:** Anytime, provided a minimum of 5 months of wool growth.

**Definition:** Dust penetration is the degree of a solid level (not just light or flaky) of dust penetration down the staple.

**Note:** Dust penetration and staple weathering can be confounding traits. Depending on environment and season, only one trait may need scoring.

**How to score:** Open the fleece at a minimum of **three sites** along the full length of the backline. The highest score across the sites is recorded as the score. When scoring **rams**, it may be necessary to score along the middle of the side of the sheep from shoulder to hip, to avoid scores being confounded by rams who have been ridden.

**Rule of thumb:** A sheep with Score 1 has no significant dust penetration. A Score 5 sheep has dust penetration almost all, or all, of the length of the staple.

### Score 1:

Staple is free or near free of dust penetration with only the very tip of wool (<6% of staple) affected by dust.

### Score 2:

Staple has 6-20% solid level of dust penetration.

### Score 3:

Staple has 21-40% solid level of dust penetration.

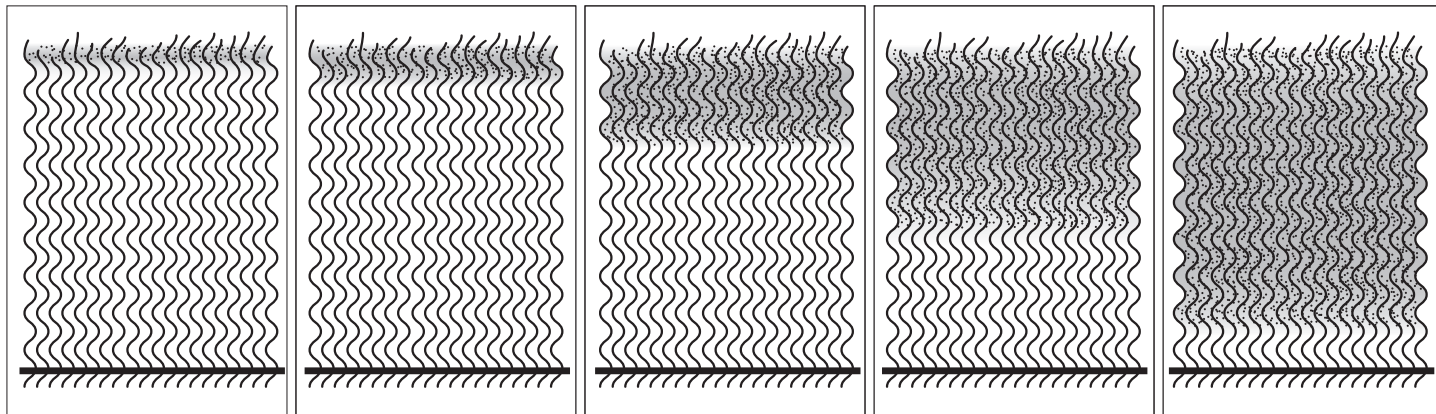
### Score 4:

Staple has 41-70% solid level of dust penetration.

### Score 5:

Staple has 71-100% solid level of dust penetration.

## DUST PENETRATION (DUST)



Score 1

Score 2

Score 3

Score 4

Score 5

## STAPLE WEATHERING (WEATH)

**Age:** Over 6 months.

**When:** Anytime, provided a minimum of 5 months of wool growth.

**Definition:** Staple weathering is the degree of deterioration down the staple due to penetration of light and water, i.e. 'swollen' staple, and when more severe, 'paint brush' tip.

**Note:** Staple weathering and dust penetration can be confounding traits. Depending on environment and season, only one trait may need scoring.

**How to score:** Open the fleece at a minimum of **three sites** along the full length of the backline. The highest score across the sites is recorded as the score.

**Rule of thumb:** A sheep with Score 1 has no significant deterioration of staple due to penetration of light and water. A Score 5 sheep has extensive deterioration of fibre structure along nearly all, or all, of the length of the staple.

### Score 1:

Staple is free or near free of deterioration (<6% of staple) due to penetration of light and water.

### Score 2:

Staple has 6-20% deterioration due to penetration of light and water.

### Score 3:

Staple has 21-40% deterioration due to penetration of light and water.

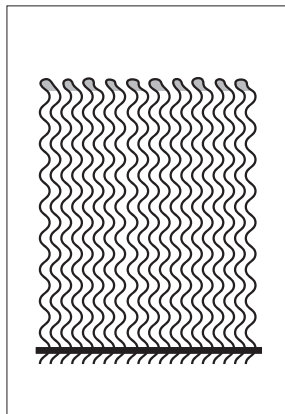
### Score 4:

Staple has 41-70% deterioration due to penetration of light and water.

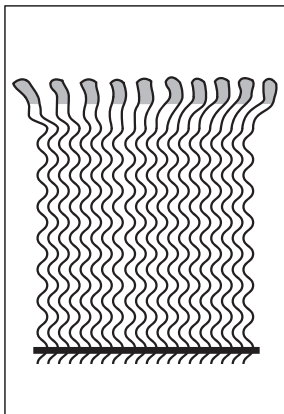
### Score 5:

Staple has 71-100% deterioration due to penetration of light and water.

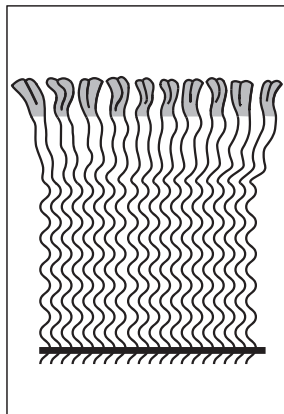
## STAPLE WEATHERING (WEATH)



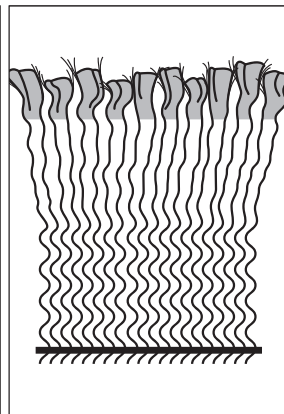
Score 1



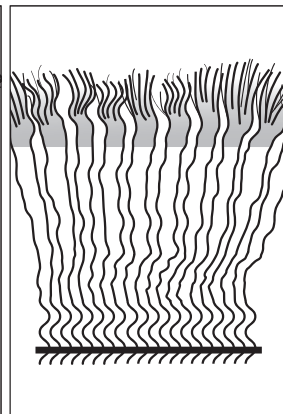
Score 2



Score 3



Score 4



Score 5

## STAPLE STRUCTURE (SSTRC)

**Age:** Over 6 months.

**When:** Anytime, provided a minimum of 5 months of wool growth.

**Definition:** Staple structure describes the arrangement of fibre bundles comprising each staple, in particular the average diameter of the staples observed at an opening.

**How to score:** Open the fleece at a minimum of **three sites** along the middle of the side of the sheep from shoulder to hip. Evaluate the average diameter of the staples at an opening. The highest score across the sites is recorded.

**Rule of thumb:** A sheep with Score 1 has extremely fine fibre bundles (<6 mm), whereas a Score 5 sheep has extremely large bundles of fibres (>30 mm) which makes the staples 'blocky' in appearance.

### Score 1:

Staple comprises very fine bundles, i.e. staple width of <6 mm in diameter.

### Score 2:

Staple comprises fine bundles, i.e. staple width of 6-10 mm in diameter.

### Score 3:

Staple comprises medium bundles, i.e. staple width of 11-20 mm in diameter.

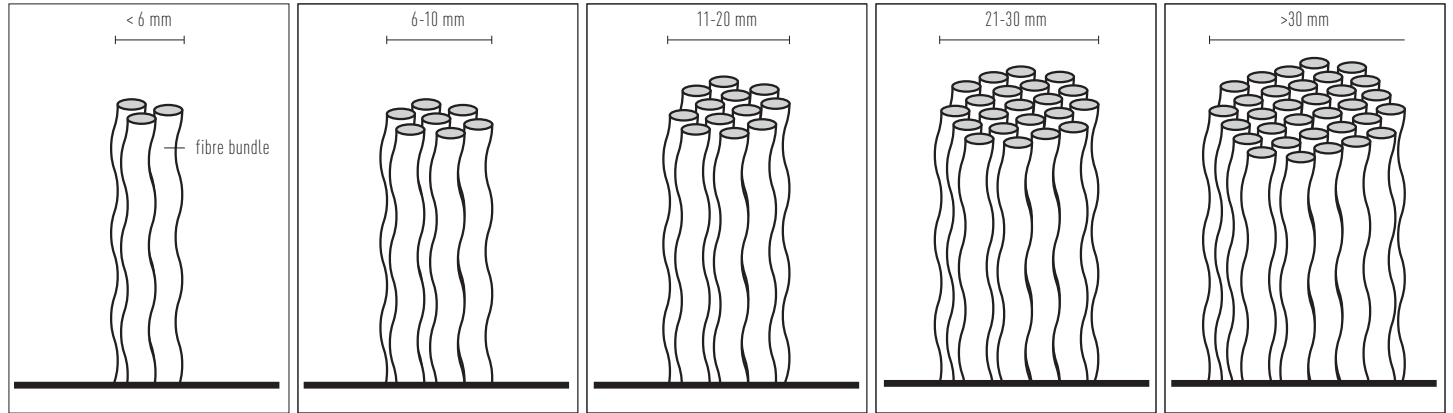
### Score 4:

Staple comprises large bundles, i.e. staple width of 21-30 mm in diameter.

### Score 5:

Staple comprises 'blocky', extremely large bundles, i.e. staple width of >30 mm in diameter.

# STAPLE STRUCTURE (SSTRC)



Score 1

Score 2

Score 3

Score 4

Score 5





## PIGMENTATION SCORES

Pigmentation Scores provide visual standards for the description of pigmentation traits that contribute to the economic value of wool and the visual appearance of sheep flocks.

Pigmentation Scores are available for 4 traits. Visual scores of 1 to 5 are provided for fibre pigmentation and non-fibre pigmentation, where Score 1 depicts LEAST expression of the trait and Score 5 depicts MOST expression (i.e. rule of thumb is Score 1 is LESS and Score 5 is MORE of each trait).

Scores of 1 and 5 only are provided for recessive black and random spot (i.e. a 'yes' or 'no' expression of the trait).

It is essential that random spot and recessive black are scored and recorded separately from fibre pigmentation.

Pigmentation Scores can be taken on both male and female sheep at various ages. It is essential to record the age of the sheep when scores are taken, with the optimal age recommended in the table below.

Wool Trait	Age	When
Fibre pigmentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2 to 10 weeks</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lamb marking*</li></ul>
Non-fibre pigmentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2 to 10 weeks</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lamb marking*</li></ul>
Recessive black	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2 to 10 weeks</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lamb marking*</li></ul>
Random spot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2 to 10 weeks</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lamb marking*</li></ul>

\* Pigmentation scores can also be submitted to Sheep Genetics if pigmentation is identified after lamb marking, such as classing or shearing.

## FIBRE PIGMENTATION (FPIG)

**Age:** 2 to 10 weeks.

**When:** Lamb marking\*.

**Definition:** Fibre pigmentation refers to the percentage of dark fibres at different sites of the sheep, in particular the body, legs, face, poll, ears, eyelashes and back of neck (birthcoat halo hair). Pigmented fibres are normally black, grey or red-tan in colour.

**Note:** Importantly, fibre pigmentation is scored separately from random spot (Australian piebald) and recessive black (Agouti gene).

**How to score:** A single score of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 is recorded for each of the seven sites – body, legs, face, poll, ears, eyelashes and back of neck (birthcoat halo-hair).

**Rule of thumb:** If the body, ears, legs and eyelashes have no pigmentation (Score 1), but 41-70% of the fibres on the back of neck are pigmented, Score 4 is the overall score recorded for the trait.

### Score 1:

No pigmented fibres at any site.

### Score 2:

1-20% pigmented fibres at one or more sites.

### Score 3:

21-40% pigmented fibres at one or more sites.

### Score 4:

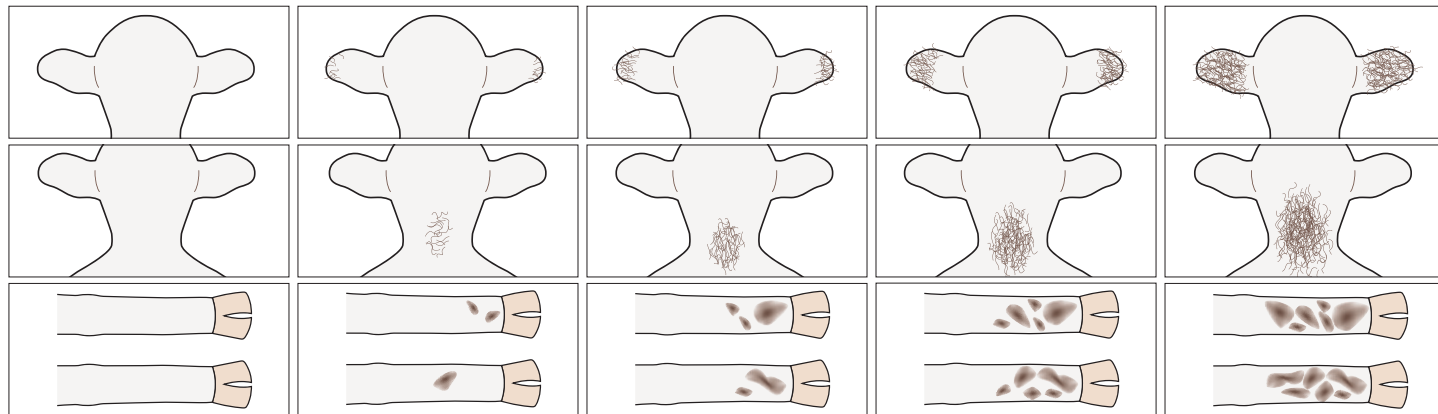
41-70% pigmented fibres at one or more sites.

### Score 5:

71-100% pigmented fibres at one or more sites.

\* Pigmentation scores can also be submitted to Sheep Genetics if pigmentation is identified after lamb marking such as classing or shearing.

## FIBRE PIGMENTATION (FPIG)



Score 1

Score 2

Score 3

Score 4

Score 5

## NON-FIBRE PIGMENTATION (SPIG)

**Age:** 2 to 10 weeks.

**When:** Lamb marking\*.

**Definition:** Non-fibre pigmentation refers to the percentage of pigmentation on the areas of the sheep, in particular the bare skin of the nose, lips, eyelids and hooves. Pigmented skin and hooves are normally brown-tan or black-grey in colour and can be solid or smudges.

**How to score:** A single score of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5, is recorded for three sites – nose/lips, eyelids and hooves.

**Rule of thumb:** A Score 1 sheep has no skin or hoof pigmentation at all. If a sheep has no pigmentation on the nose, lips or eyelids (Score 1), but 41-70% of the total hoof area is pigmented (Score 4), Score 4 is the overall score recorded for the trait.

### Score 1:

No pigmented area  
i.e. 0% of all bare skin  
sites and all four hooves.

### Score 2:

1-20% pigmented area  
of one or more bare skin  
sites and/or 1-20% of  
the total hoof area.

### Score 3:

21-40% pigmented  
area of one or more  
bare skin sites and/or  
21-40% of the total  
hoof area.

### Score 4:

41-70% pigmented  
area of one or more bare skin  
sites and/or 41-70% of the  
total hoof area.

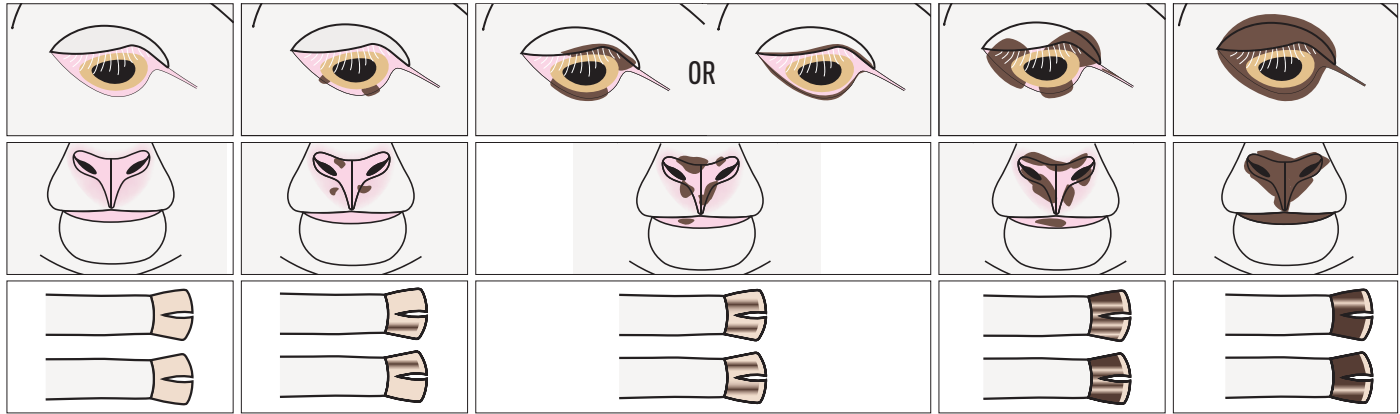
### Score 5:

71-100% pigmented area of  
one or more bare skin sites  
and/or 71-100% of the total  
hoof area.

\* Pigmentation scores can also be submitted to Sheep Genetics if pigmentation is identified after lamb marking such as classing or shearing.

## NON-FIBRE PIGMENTATION (SPIG)

Note: Score 5 diagrams shows 100% pigmented area of all bare skin sites. Score 5 does not need to be 100% pigmented.



Score 1

Score 2

Score 3

Score 4

Score 5

## RECESSIVE BLACK (BLK)

**Age:** 2 to 10 weeks.

**When:** Lamb marking\*.

**Definition:** Caused by the Agouti gene, recessive black refers to the presence of pigmented wool or hair fibres anywhere on the face or body that present as relatively symmetrical markings. Pigmented fibres can be black, dark and light grey, brown or tan in colour. Importantly, recessive black is scored separately from random spot and fibre pigmentation.

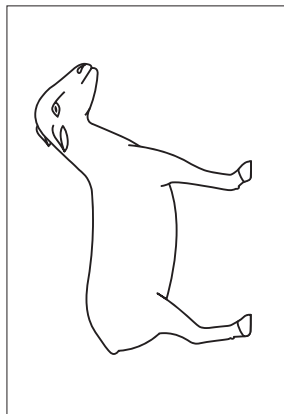
**Note:** If the face or body is completely white or has a random pattern on one side of the face or body (i.e. non-symmetrical), the sheep should be scored as random spot (Pg. 26).

**How to score:** A single score of 1 or 5.

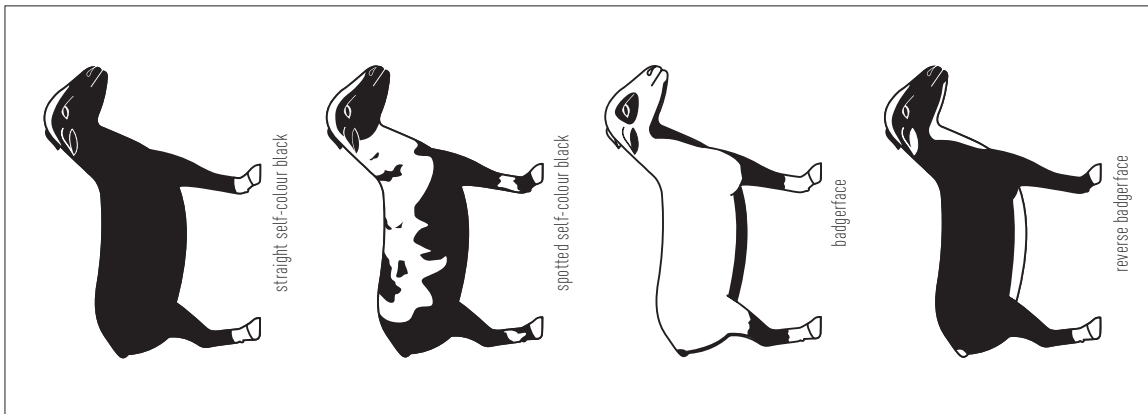
**Rule of thumb:** If a sheep has relatively symmetrical markings on both sides of the face or body then it is going to be one of the recessive black patterns (Score 5) of 'straight self-colour black', 'spotted self-colour', 'badgerface' or 'reverse badgerface'.

\* Pigmentation scores can also be submitted to Sheep Genetics if pigmentation is identified after lamb marking such as classing or shearing.

## RECESSIVE BLACK (BLK)



Score 1



Score 5

## RANDOM SPOT (SPOT)

**Age:** 2 to 10 weeks.

**When:** Lamb marking\*.

**Definition:** Random spot (Australian piebald) refers to the presence of a distinct patch of pigmented fibres anywhere in the wool-growing area on the face or body, whether small or large in size. Pigmented fibres are normally black-grey or brown in colour. Importantly, random spot is scored separately from recessive black and fibre pigmentation.

**Note:** If both sides of the face or body are spotted (i.e. symmetrical), the sheep should be scored as recessive black.

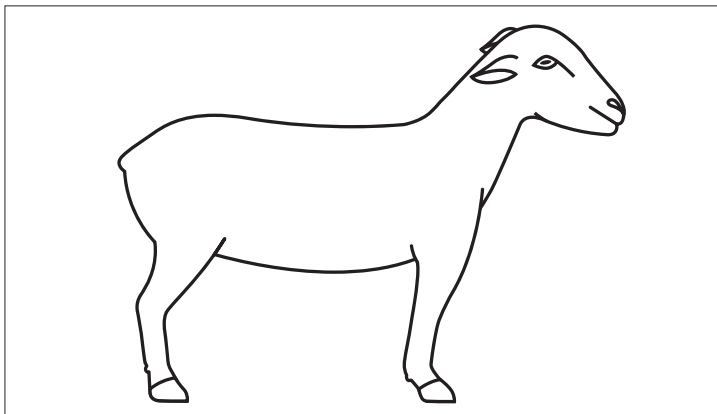
**How to score:** A single score of 1 or 5.

**Rule of thumb:** A random pattern is characterised as a rounded, pigmented, wool or hair spot; usually only one or, if more than one, not symmetrically positioned (i.e. distributed unevenly to one side of the face or body in the wool-growing area).

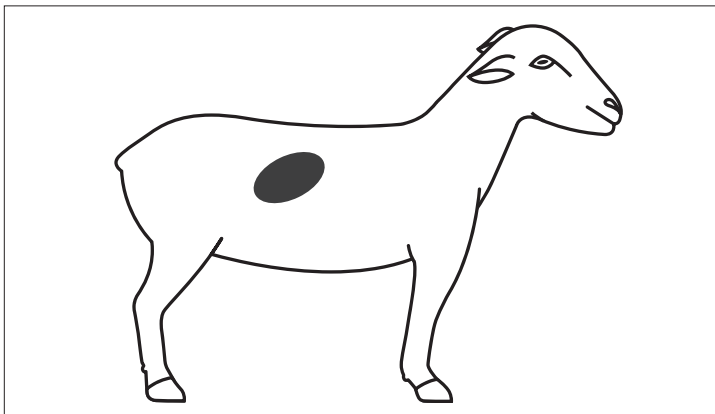
\* Pigmentation scores can also be submitted to Sheep Genetics if pigmentation is identified after lamb marking such as classing or shearing.



## RANDOM SPOT (SPOT)



Score 1



Score 5



## CONFORMATION SCORES

Conformation Scores provide visual standards for the description of physical body and structural traits that influence the soundness and productivity of sheep flocks.

Conformation Scores are available for 9 traits. Visual scores of 1 to 5 are provided for each trait.

A single score is recorded for all conformation traits. This includes the combined trait of shoulder/back, where the highest score of the multiple sites is recorded.

Conformation Scores can be taken on both male and female sheep at various ages. It is essential to record the age of the sheep when scores are taken, with the optimal age recommended in the table below.

Conformation Trait	Age	When
Jaw	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Over 4 months</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Anytime</li></ul>
Hocks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Over 4 months</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Anytime</li></ul>
Front legs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Over 4 months</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Anytime</li></ul>
Pasterns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Over 4 months</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Anytime</li></ul>
Front toes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Over 4 months</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Anytime, before foot trimming</li></ul>
Back toes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Over 4 months</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Anytime, before foot trimming</li></ul>
Shoulder/Back	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Over 4 months</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Within 1 month post shearing</li></ul>
Teeth eruption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Over 4 months</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Anytime</li></ul>
Horn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>From 12 months</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>When at least 50% of the group are a Score 2 or more</li></ul>

## JAW (JAW)

**Age:** Over 4 months.

**When:** Anytime.

**Definition:** Jaw refers to the soundness of jaw structure, in particular the alignment of the lower jaw and its teeth relative to the top jaw and the edge of its pad that the lower jaw teeth bite onto.

**Note:** The edge of pad refers to the front edge of the pad when referring to overshot jaws and the back edge of the pad when referring to undershot jaws.

### Score 1:

Upper and lower jaws line up squarely at the teeth i.e. teeth rest on the pad.

### Score 3:

Jaw is marginally 'undershot' or 'overshot'; lower jaw is slightly shorter or longer than the upper jaw and as a result the teeth are either slightly behind or in front of the edge of the pad, i.e. at yearling age 1-3 mm in front or behind the edge of the pad at the centre of the jaw.

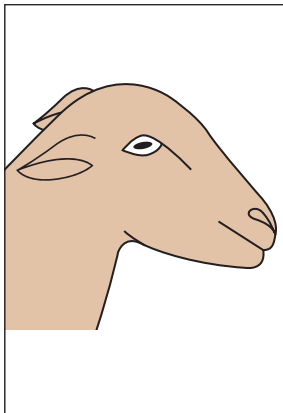
### Score 5:

Heavily 'undershot' or 'overshot' jaw; lower jaw is significantly shorter or longer than the upper jaw and as a result the teeth are either well behind or in front of the edge of the pad, i.e. at yearling age >3 mm in front or behind the edge of the pad at the centre of the jaw.

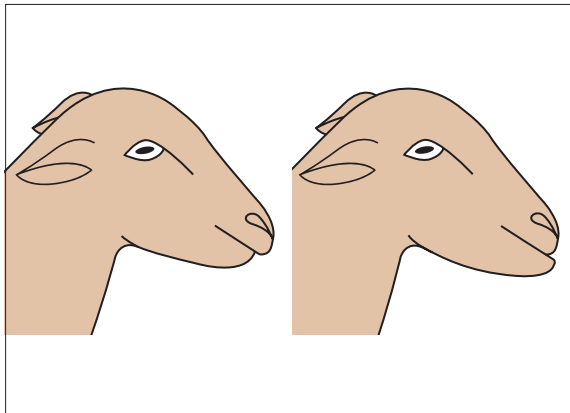
**How to score:** A single score of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5.

**Rule of thumb:** The upper and lower jaws of a Score 1 sheep line up squarely at the teeth i.e. teeth rest on the pad, whereas a Score 5 sheep has either a heavily 'undershot' jaw or heavily 'overshot' jaw.

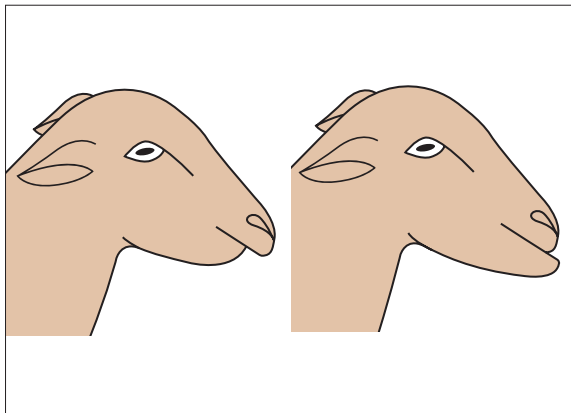
## JAW (JAW)



Score 1



Score 3



Score 5

## HOCKS (HOCK)

**Age:** Over 4 months.

**When:** Anytime.

**Definition:** Hocks refer to the soundness of the hind leg structure, in particular the rear view orientation of the back legs and angulation of the hock joints in relation to the feet.

**How to score:** A single score of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5.

**Rule of thumb:** A sheep with Score 1 has parallel hocks and no angulation at the hock joint. A Score 5 sheep has touching hocks or hocks that are very close to touching and extreme angulation at the hock joint.

**Note:** Hocks should be scored when viewed from the rear and preferably when the sheep is walking away from the scorer.

### Score 1:

Straight hind legs that stand squarely over the feet.

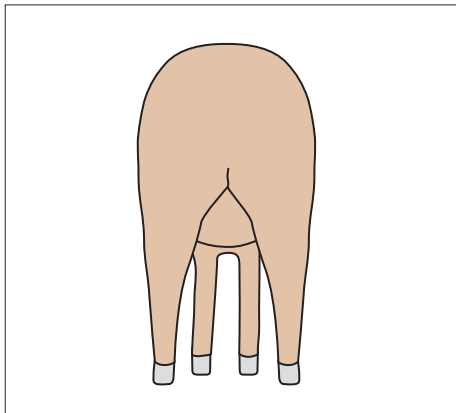
### Score 3:

Hocks orientating inwards; feet moderately splayed; moderate angulation of hocks.

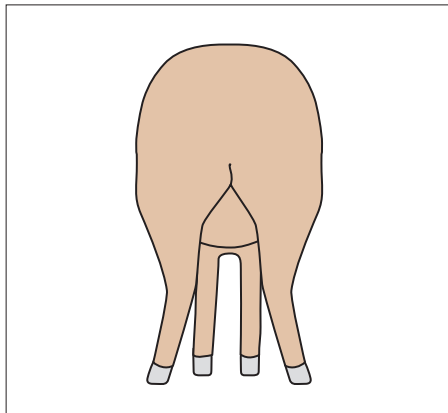
### Score 5:

Upper hind legs close together; hocks touching and feet splayed; extreme angulation of hocks.

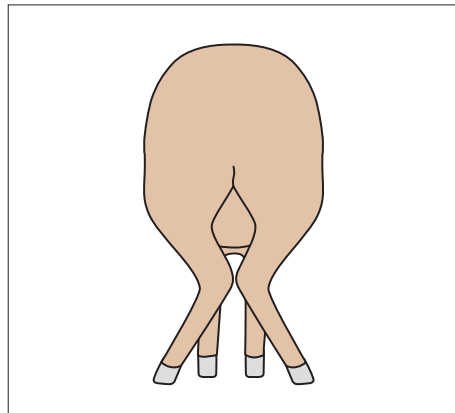
## HOCKS (HOCK)



Score 1



Score 3



Score 5

## FRONT LEGS (FLEGS)

**Age:** Over 4 months.

**When:** Anytime.

**Definition:** Front legs refers to the soundness of leg structure, in particular the orientation of the front legs and feet.

**How to score:** A single score of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5.

**Rule of thumb:** A sheep with Score 1 has straight front feet. A Score 5 sheep has extreme outward or inward orientation of the front feet.

### Score 1

Front feet have no orientation i.e. point squarely forward.

### Score 3

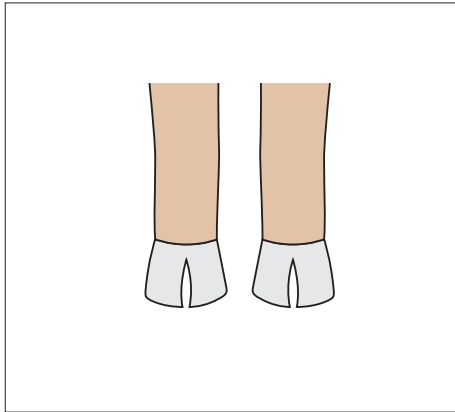
Moderate outward or inward orientation of the front feet.

### Score 5

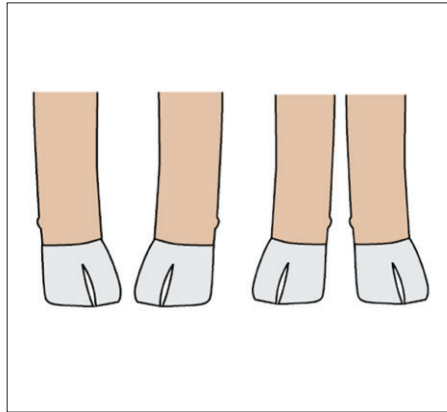
Extreme outward or inward orientation of the front feet.



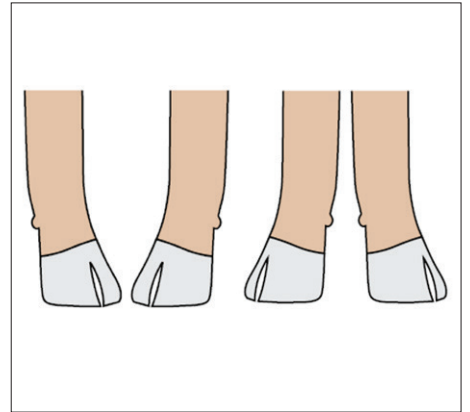
## FRONT LEGS (FLEGS)



Score 1



Score 3



Score 5

## PASTERNS (PASTERN)

**Age:** Over 4 months.

**When:** Anytime.

**Definition:** Pasterns refers to the angulation of the pastern joint, when viewed from the side.

**How to score:** A single score of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5. The highest score of all four pasterns is recorded.

**Rule of thumb:** A sheep with Score 1 has least angulation of the pastern. A sheep with Score 5 has most angulation of the pastern.

**Note:** Individual scores may be recorded for the front and back pasterns if desired. If so, they should be recorded as FPASTERN (front pasterns) and BPASTERN (back pasterns).

### Score 1

Very little or no angulation of the pastern.

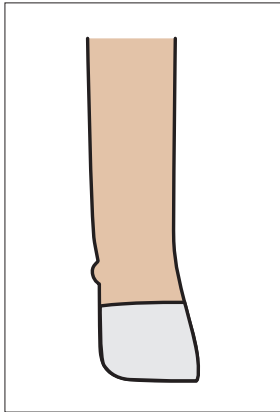
### Score 3

Moderate angulation of the pastern.

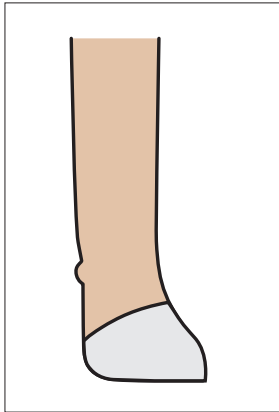
### Score 5

Extreme angulation of the pastern i.e. pasterns resting on the ground.

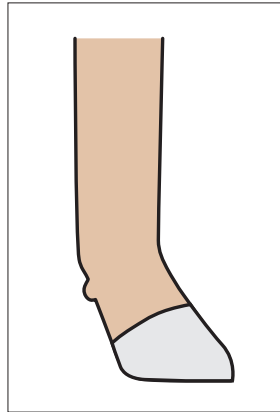
## PASTERNS (PASTERN)



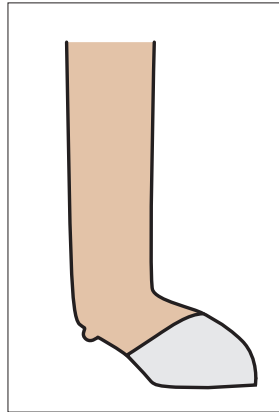
Score 1



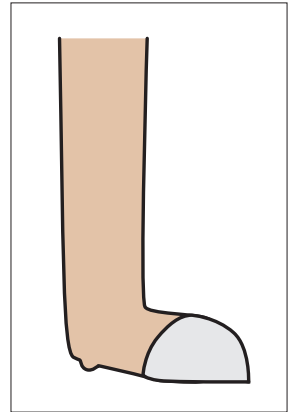
Score 2



Score 3



Score 4



Score 5

## FRONT TOES (FTOES)

**Age:** Over 4 months.

**When:** Anytime, before foot trimming.

**Definition:** Front toes refers to the direction and the degree of the growth of the toes on the front feet.

**How to score:** A single score of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5. The highest score of the two front feet is recorded.

**Rule of thumb:** A sheep with Score 1 has straight front toes. A Score 5 sheep has front toes that open severely outwards or are severely rolled over (either inward to outward) or that curl severely inwards and crossover. Front toes that are longer than normal that do not open outwards or are not curled inward are Score 4 for long and Score 5 for very long.

**Note:** Individual scores may be recorded for the toes on each foot if desired. If so, they should be recorded as RFTOES (right front toes) and LFTOES (left front toes).

### Score 1

Toes growing straight and do not touch one another; are square and normal length.

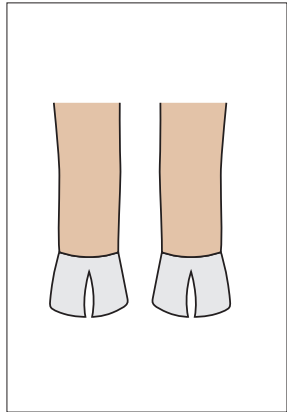
### Score 3

Long or very long toes that open slightly outwards or are slightly rolled over (either inward to outward), or that curl slightly inwards and touch.

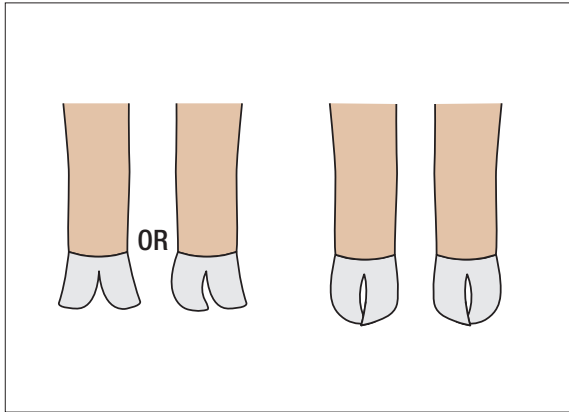
### Score 5

Long or very long toes that open severely outwards or are severely rolled over (either inward to outward), or that curl severely inwards and crossover.

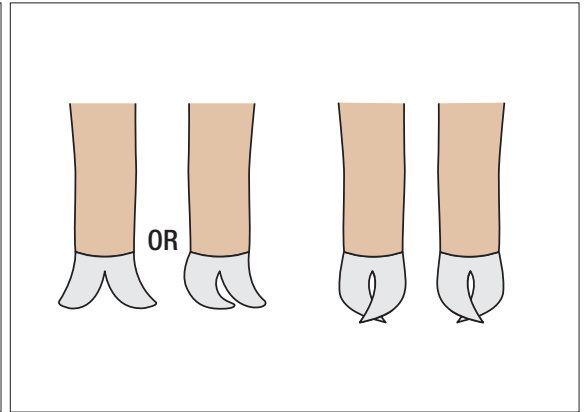
## FRONT TOES (FTOES)



Score 1



Score 3



Score 5

## BACK TOES (BTOES)

**Age:** Over 4 months.

**When:** Anytime, before foot trimming.

**Definition:** Back toes refers to the direction and the degree of the growth of the toes on the back feet.

**How to score:** A single score of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5. The highest score of the two back feet is recorded.

### Score 1

Toes growing straight and do not touch one another; are square and normal length.

### Score 3

Long or very long toes that open slightly outwards or are slightly rolled over (either inward to outward), or that curl slightly inwards and touch.

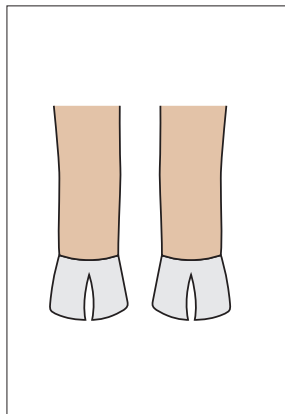
### Score 5

Long or very long toes that open severely outwards or are severely rolled over (either inward to outward), or that curl severely inwards and crossover.

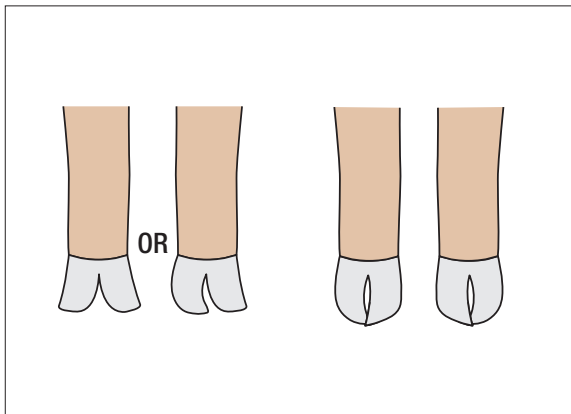
**Rule of thumb:** A sheep with Score 1 has straight back toes. A Score 5 sheep has back toes that open severely outwards or are severely rolled over (either inward to outward) or that curl severely inwards and crossover. Back toes that are longer than normal that do not open outwards or are not curled inward are Score 4 for long and Score 5 for very long.

**Note:** Individual scores may be recorded for the toes on each foot if desired. If so, they should be recorded as RBTOES (right back toes) and LBTOES (left back toes).

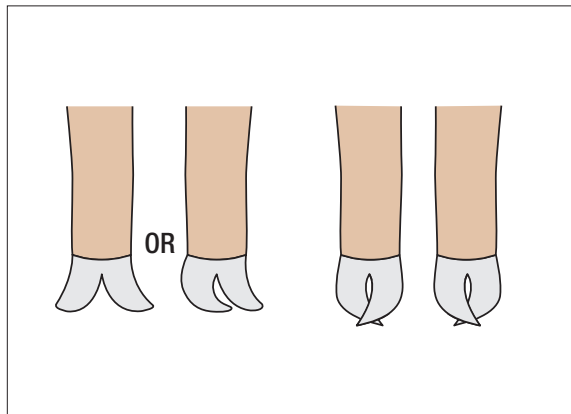
## BACK TOES (BTOES)



Score 1



Score 3



Score 5

## SHOULDER/BACK (BACK)

**Age:** Over 4 months.

**When:** Within 1 month post shearing.

**Definition:** A combined trait, Shoulder/Back refers to the soundness of the shoulder blades and their position in relation to the neck and spine. Additional information is available in the Researcher Version of the Visual Sheep Scores that contains scores for the component traits that make up Shoulder/Back.

**Note:** Care should be taken when scoring sheep in good condition that excess loin muscle is not mistaken for a slightly arched back (Score 3).

### Score 1:

Shoulder blades sit squarely either side of the spine i.e. no trough or ridge between the shoulders; back straight between shoulders and hips.

### Score 3:

Shoulders positioned below the spine to create a 'ridge' or above the spine to create a 'trough' between the shoulder blades; back dips or arches slightly behind the shoulders (relative to the shoulders and hips).

### Score 5:

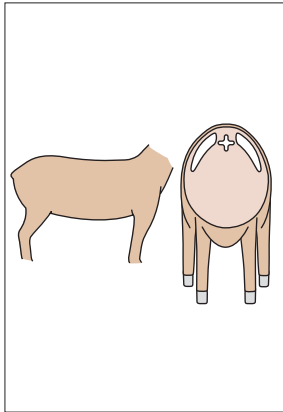
Extremely high and wide shoulder blades that create a deep 'trough' above the spine or extremely low and narrow shoulder blades that create a sharp 'ridge' above the spine and/or back dips or arches severely behind the shoulders (relative to the shoulders and hips).

**How to score:** A single score of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5.

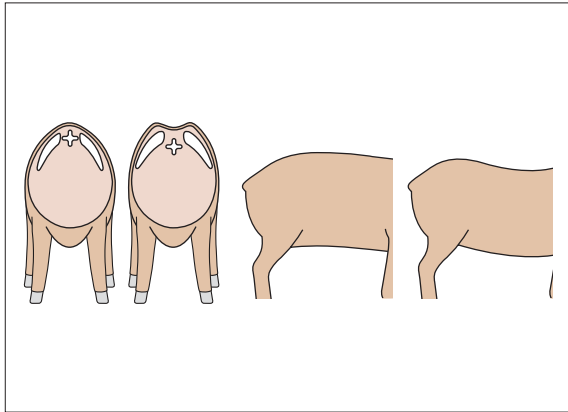
**Rule of thumb:** A sheep with Score 1 has angular shoulders and a straight back between the top of the shoulder blades and hips. A Score 5 sheep has shoulder blades that sit well above or well below the spine, or an extremely 'dipped' or 'arched' backline.



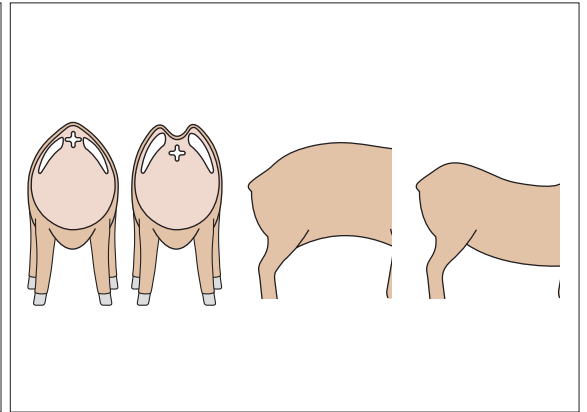
## SHOULDER/BACK (BACK)



Score 1



Score 3



Score 5

## TEETH ERUPTION (TE)

**Age:** From 12 months.

**When:** When at least 50% of the group are a Score 2 or more. Regular monitoring of a sample of the group may be required in order to determine the appropriate time.

**Definition:** Teeth eruption refers to the timing of the loss of lambs teeth and eruption of permanent teeth.

**How to score:** A single score of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5.

**Rule of thumb:** A sheep with Score 1 has only lambs teeth showing. A Score 5 sheep has both permanent teeth fully showing.

### Score 1:

Only lambs teeth showing.

### Score 2:

Lambs teeth missing or one of either of the permanent teeth starting to show.

### Score 3:

Both permanent teeth slightly showing.

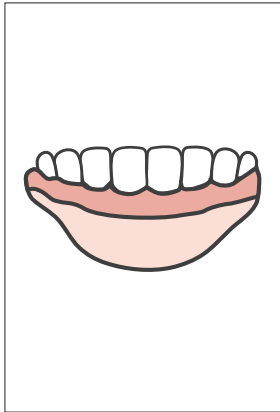
### Score 4:

Both permanent teeth half showing.

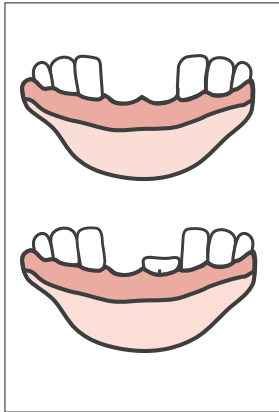
### Score 5:

Both permanent teeth fully showing.

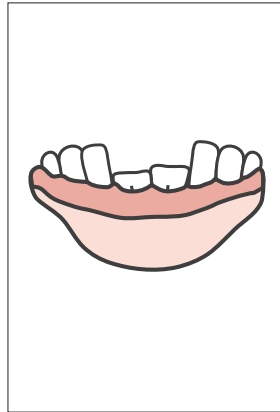
## TEETH ERUPTION (TE)



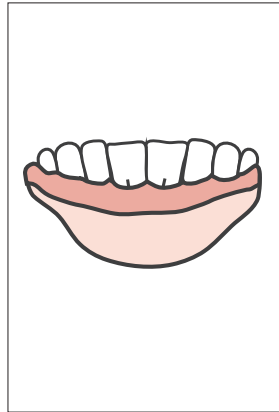
Score 1



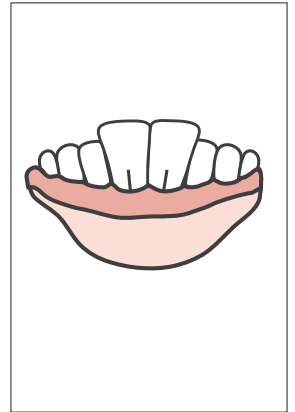
Score 2



Score 3



Score 4



Score 5

## HORN (HORN)

**Age:** Over 4 months.

**When:** Anytime.

**Definition:** Horn refers to the expression of horn length. Horn length can vary from no horns, small scurs, medium horns and a full set of horns. Whilst horn can be scored on ewes, it is most commonly a ram score.

**Note:** Whilst only score 1, 3 and 5 are described below, a score of 2 or 4 can also be given.

### Score 1:

POLL

A detectable indentation in the bone of the skull at the horn site.

### Score 3:

SCUR

Small growth at the horn site (10 mm or more in length).

### Score 5:

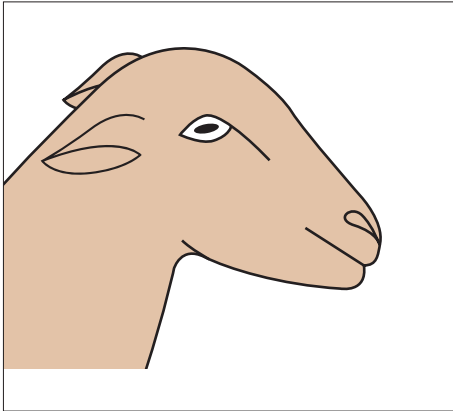
HORN

Full-grown, symmetrical horns firmly attached to skull.

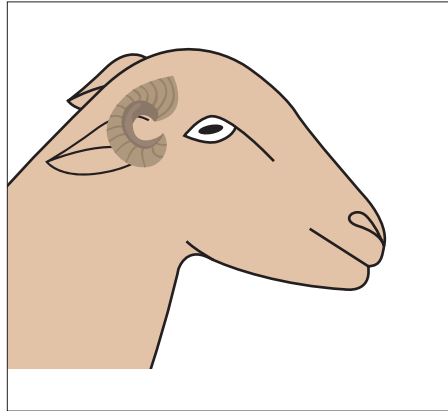
**How to score:** A single score of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5.

**Rule of thumb:** A sheep with Score 1 is a poll animal with an indentation in the skull at the horn site. A Score 5 sheep has a full set of symmetrical horns.

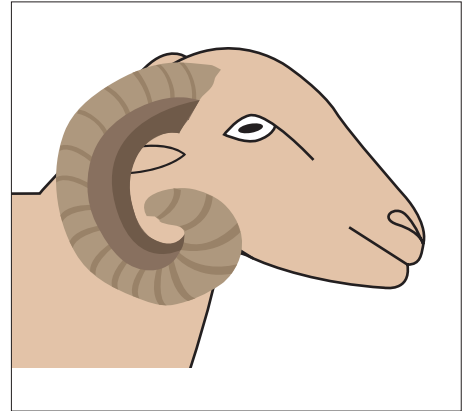
## HORN (HORN)



Score 1



Score 3



Score 5



## COVER AND WRINKLE SCORES

Cover and Wrinkle Scores provide visual standards for the description of wool cover and skin wrinkle traits that influence the welfare and productivity of sheep flocks.

Cover and Wrinkle Scores are available for 3 traits. Visual scores of 1 to 5 are provided for each trait.

Cover and Wrinkle Scores can be taken on both male and female sheep at various ages. It is essential to record the age of the sheep when scores are taken, with the optimal age recommended in the table below.

Cover and Wrinkle Trait	Age	When
Face cover	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Over 4 months</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Anytime, provided a minimum of 3 months of wool growth</li></ul>
Body wrinkle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Over 4 months</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Within 1 month post shearing, preferably straight off-shears</li></ul>
Neck wrinkle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Over 4 months</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Within 1 month post shearing, preferably straight off-shears</li></ul>

## FACE COVER (FACE)

**Age:** Over 4 months.

**When:** Minimum of 3 months wool.

**Definition:** Face cover refers to the degree of wool cover on the face, including the top of head and jowl.

**How to score:** A single score of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5.

**Rule of thumb:** A sheep with Score 1 has an open face with no wool on the jowls or top of the head. A Score 5 sheep has wool covering its entire face.

### Score 1:

Open face with no wool in front of the ears or on the jowls.

### Score 2:

Wool cover over the top of head; some on the side of muzzle, but not joined between the ears and eyes.

### Score 3:

Wool cover over the top of head and on the side of muzzle; wool joined between the ears and eyes.

### Score 4:

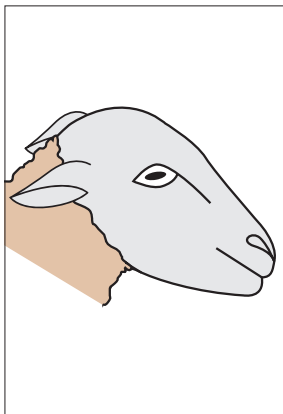
Wool cover from the top of the head down the muzzle; clear channel remains between the eye and the mouth.

### Score 5:

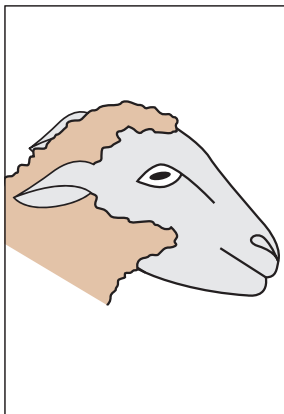
Heavy wool growth over the entire face with the exception of the eyes, nose and mouth areas; wool from the top and side of the muzzle joining.



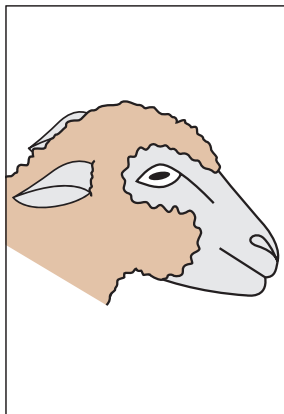
## FACE COVER (FACE)



Score 1



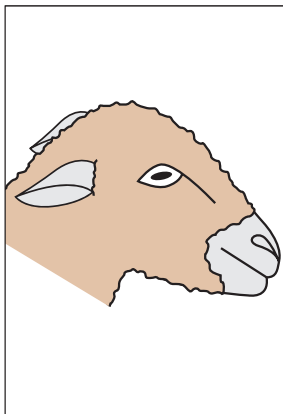
Score 2



Score 3



Score 4



Score 5

## BODY WRINKLE (BDWR)

**Age:** Over 4 months.

**When:** Within 1 month post shearing, preferably straight off-shears.

**Definition:** Body wrinkle refers to the degree and quantity of wrinkle on the body.

**Note:** Body wrinkle and neck wrinkle are highly correlated traits. Depending on the flock, only one trait may need scoring.

**How to score:** A single score of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5.

**Rule of thumb:** A sheep with Score 1 has a plain body with no wrinkles. A Score 5 sheep has extensive wrinkles and heavy folds of skin over its entire body.

### Score 1:

Plain-bodied sheep with no body wrinkle.

### Score 2:

Plain-bodied sheep with a few small wrinkles over the body.

### Score 3:

Slight wrinkling over the body.

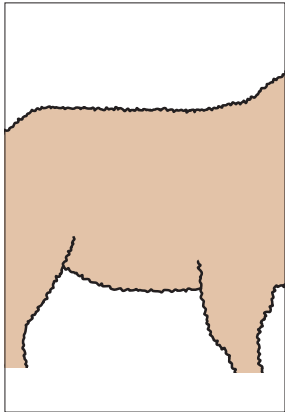
### Score 4:

Heavy wrinkling over the body.

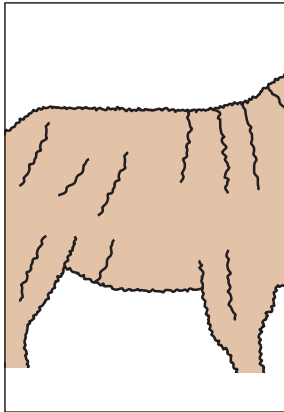
### Score 5:

Very heavy wrinkling and heavy folds of skin over the body.

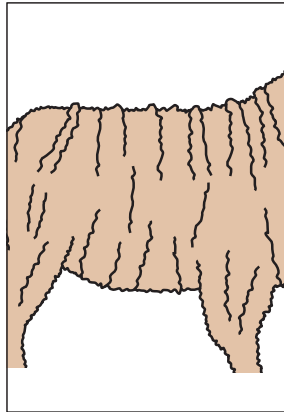
## BODY WRINKLE (BDWR)



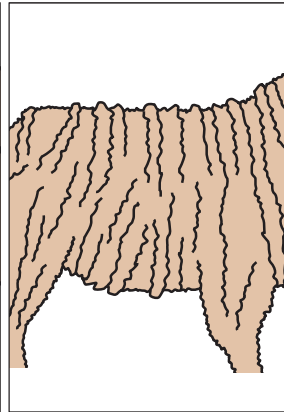
Score 1



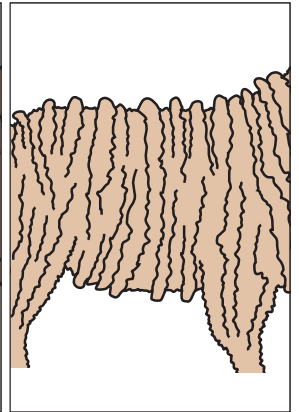
Score 2



Score 3



Score 4



Score 5

## NECK WRINKLE (NKWR)

**Age:** Over 4 months.

**When:** Within 1 month post shearing, preferably straight off-shears.

**Definition:** Neck wrinkle refers to the degree and quantity of wrinkle on the neck and apron region.

**Note:** Neck wrinkle and body wrinkle are highly correlated traits. Depending on the flock, only one trait may need scoring.

**How to score:** A single score of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5.

**Rule of thumb:** A sheep with Score 1 has a plain neck with no wrinkles on the underside. A Score 5 sheep has extensive and heavy folds of skin on the neck and apron regions.

### Score 1:

Plain-bodied sheep with no wrinkle on the neck or apron.

### Score 2:

Plain-bodied sheep with a few small wrinkles or skin folds on the neck or apron.

### Score 3:

Slight wrinkling and few skin folds on the neck or apron.

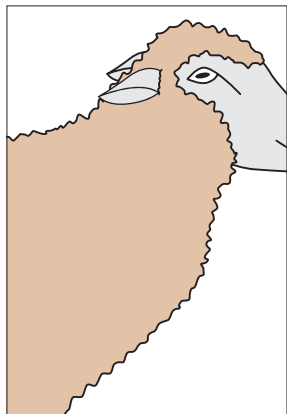
### Score 4:

Heavy wrinkles and skin folds on the neck and apron.

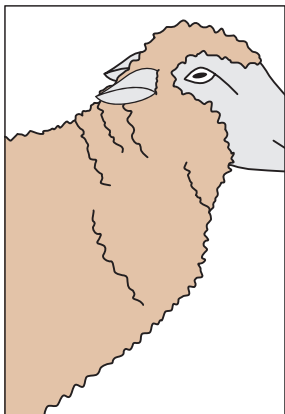
### Score 5:

Very heavy wrinkles and large skin folds on the neck and apron.

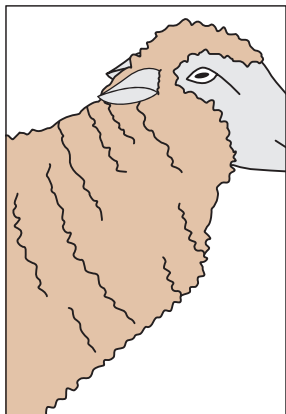
## NECK WRINKLE (NKWR)



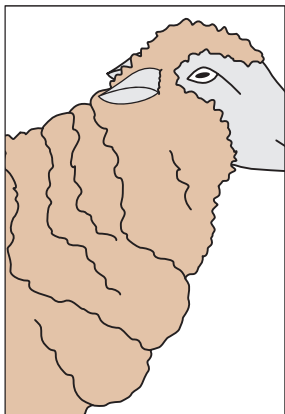
Score 1



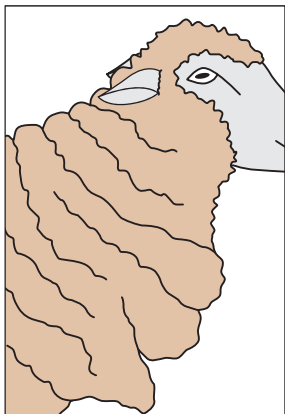
Score 2



Score 3



Score 4



Score 5



## Breech Scores

Breech Scores provide visual standards for the description of breech traits that influence the susceptibility of Merino sheep flocks to breech flystrike.

Breech Scores are available for 7 traits. Visual scores of 1 to 5 are provided for each trait. Mulesing can affect the physical expression and score of each trait.

Breech Scores can be taken on both male and female sheep at various ages. It is essential to record the age of the sheep when scores are taken, with the optimal age recommended in the table below.

Breech Trait	Age	When
Breech cover – lambs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2 to 10 weeks</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lamb marking, preferably in the cradle</li></ul>
Breech cover	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Over 4 months</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Within 1 month post shearing</li></ul>
Crutch cover	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Over 4 months</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Anytime</li></ul>
Breech wrinkle – lambs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2 to 10 weeks</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lamb marking</li></ul>
Breech wrinkle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Over 4 months</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Within 1 month post shearing</li></ul>
Dag	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Over 4 months</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prior to crutching</li></ul>
Urine stain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Over 4 months</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Anytime, provided a minimum of 4 months of wool growth in breech area</li></ul>

## BREECH COVER – LAMBS (BCOV)

**Age:** 2 to 10 weeks.

**When:** Lamb marking, preferably in the cradle.

**Definition:** Breech cover refers to the amount of natural bare skin around the perineum and breech area, in particular, the depth and width of bare skin below and surrounding the vulva or anus. It is important to consider the width and depth of the bare skin in combination when scoring breech cover, however, width is considered more important than depth. Some animals have short 'fluffy' fibres growing on the bare skin at certain times of the year. This should be scored as bare skin. Males and females will appear differently, however all animals should be scored as they are observed and not adjusted for sex.

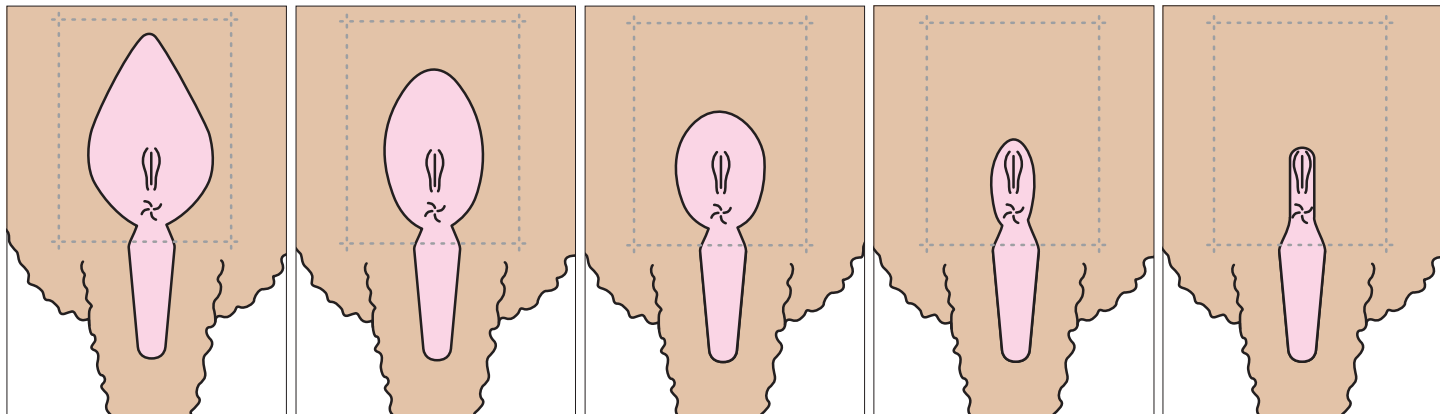
**Note:** Only visual scores on unmulesed sheep (or lambs prior to mulesing) can be submitted to Sheep Genetics.

**How to score:** A single score of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5.

**Rule of thumb:** A Score 1 sheep has natural bare area that extends outwards around the anus and vulva, and right down to the bottom of the breech area (the channel). A sheep with Score 5 has complete wool cover i.e. no natural bare area at all. If a sheep has deep natural bare area that extends to the bottom on the breech area (Score 1), but is a very narrow natural bare area, then the overall score should be adjusted back by 1, i.e. the overall score would be Score 2 as the width of the bare area is more important than the depth.



## BREECH COVER – LAMBS (BCOV)



Score 1

Score 2

Score 3

Score 4

Score 5

## BREECH COVER (BCOV)

**Age:** Over 4 months.

**When:** Within 1 month post shearing.

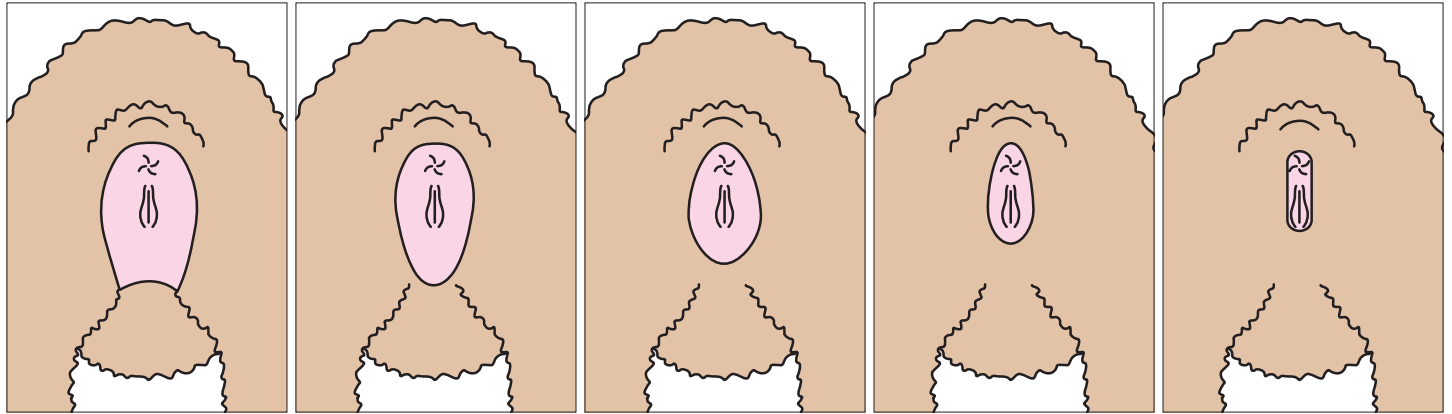
**Definition:** Breech cover refers to the amount of natural bare skin around the perineum and breech area, in particular, the depth and width of bare skin below and surrounding the vulva or anus. It is important to consider the width and depth of the bare skin in combination when scoring breech cover, however, width is considered more important than depth. Some animals have short 'fluffy' fibres growing on the bare skin at certain times of the year. This should be scored as bare skin. Males and females will appear differently, however animals should be scored as they are observed and not adjusted for sex.

**Note:** Only visual scores on unmulesed sheep (or lambs prior to mulesing) can be submitted to Sheep Genetics.

**How to score:** A single score of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5.

**Rule of thumb:** A Score 1 sheep has natural bare area that extends outwards around the anus and vulva and right down to the bottom of the breech area (the channel). A sheep with Score 5 has complete wool cover i.e. no natural bare area at all. If a sheep has deep natural bare area that extends to the bottom on the breech area (Score 1), but is a very narrow natural bare area, then the overall score should be adjusted back by 1, i.e. the overall score would be Score 2 as the width of the bare area is more important than the depth.

## BREECH COVER (BCOV)



Score 1

Score 2

Score 3

Score 4

Score 5

## CRUTCH COVER (CCOV)

**Age:** Over 4 months.

**When:** Anytime.

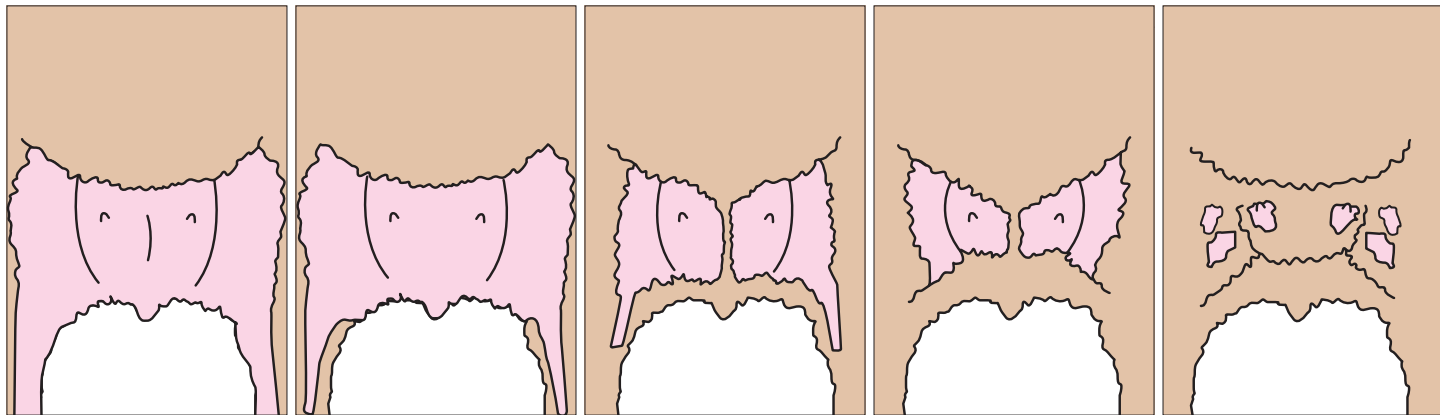
**Definition:** Crutch cover refers to the amount of natural bare skin from which wool would normally be removed by the first blow during crutching, in particular, the pubic area, groin and inside back legs. Males and females will appear differently, however animals should be scored as they are observed and not adjusted for sex.

**Note:** Visual scores on mulesed sheep can be submitted to Sheep Genetics as long as the entire group is mulesed and no selective mulesing is undertaken. It is essential to record the mulesing status of the sheep when scores are taken.

**How to score:** A single score of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5.

**Rule of thumb:** A Score 1 sheep has natural bare area that extends completely throughout the pubic, groin and breech region, as well as right down the inside back legs beyond the hocks. A sheep with Score 5 has almost complete wool cover, i.e. no natural bare area.

## CRUTCH COVER (CCOV)



Score 1

Score 2

Score 3

Score 4

Score 5

## BREECH WRINKLE – LAMBS (BRWR)

**Age:** 2 to 10 weeks.

**When:** Lamb marking, either standing or in the cradle. When scored in the cradle the below diagrams can be used upside down. It should be noted that when scored in the cradle, lambs may appear less wrinkly than if the lamb is standing.

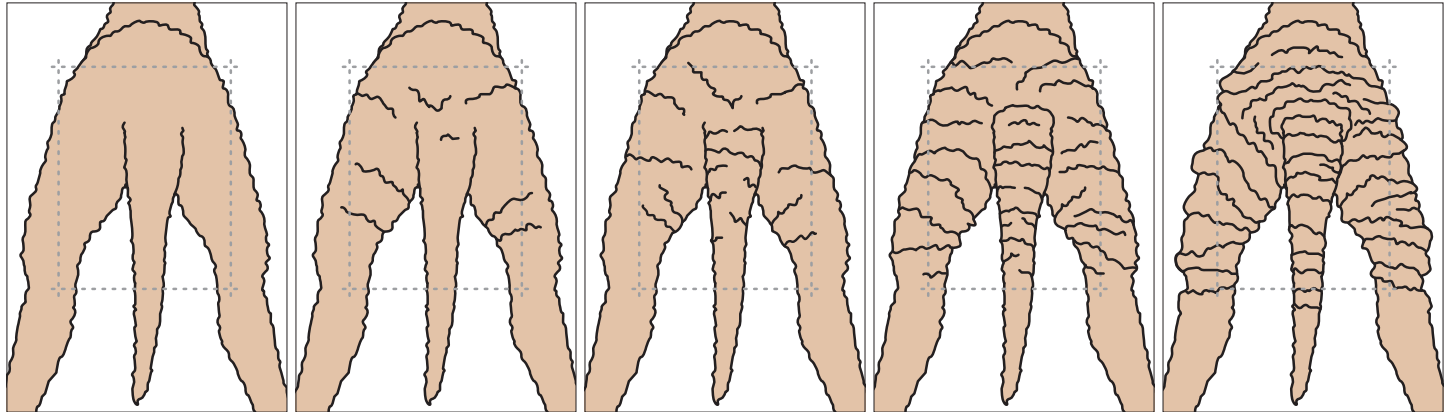
**Definition:** Breech wrinkle refers to the degree of wrinkle at the tail set, sides of the tail (bat wings), adjacent to the anus/vulva and down the hind legs.

**Note:** Only visual scores on unmulesed sheep (or lambs prior to mulesing) can be submitted to Sheep Genetics.

**How to score:** A single score of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5. The highest score of either the tail set or leg zone is recorded.

**Rule of thumb:** A sheep with Score 1 has no wrinkle. A Score 5 sheep has extensive wrinkle at the tail set, sides of the tail (bat wings), adjacent to the anus/vulva and down the hind legs.

## BREECH WRINKLE – LAMBS (BRWR)



Score 1

Score 2

Score 3

Score 4

Score 5

## BREECH WRINKLE (BRWR)

**Age:** Over 4 months.

**When:** Within 1 month post shearing.

**Definition:** Breech wrinkle refers to the degree of wrinkle at the tail set, sides of the tail (bat wings), adjacent to the anus/vulva and down the hind legs.

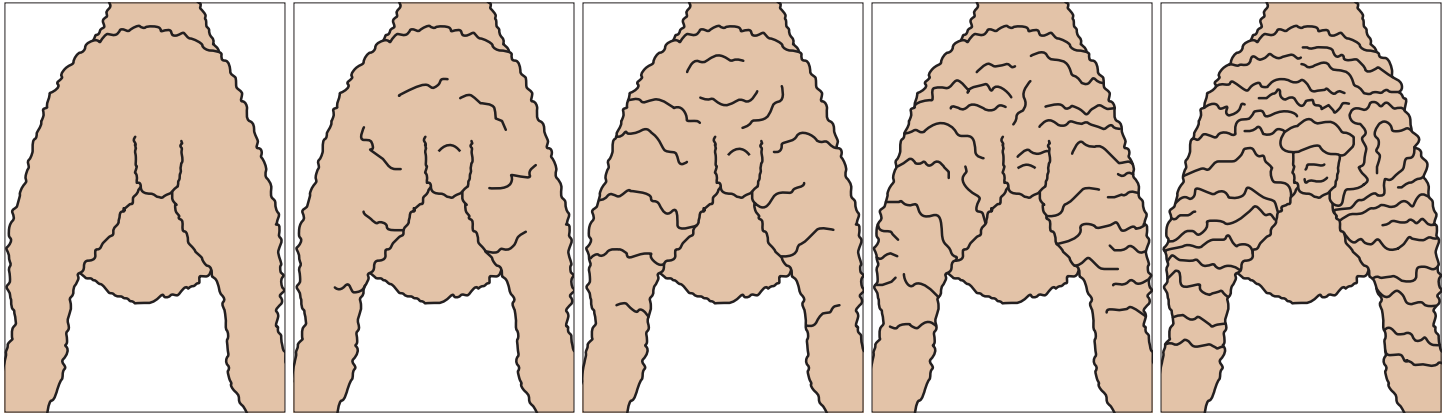
**Note:** Only visual scores on unmulesed sheep (or lambs prior to mulesing) can be submitted to Sheep Genetics.

**How to score:** A single score of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5. The highest score of either the tail set or leg zone is recorded.

**Rule of thumb:** A sheep with Score 1 has no wrinkle. A Score 5 sheep has extensive wrinkle at the tail set, sides of the tail (bat wings), adjacent to the anus/vulva and down the hind legs.



## BREECH WRINKLE (BRWR)



Score 1

Score 2

Score 3

Score 4

Score 5

## DAG (DAG)

**Age:** Over 4 months.

**When:** Prior to crutching, 60 days after the season break following a worm burden (when one exists) or when 30-40% of the flock is scouring.

**Definition:** Dag formation is caused by the adhesion of faecal material to the breech area. Dag refers to the quantity of faecal material adhering to the wool surrounding the breech and extending down the hind legs.

When scoring dag, the sweaty fribs that some sheep have around the breech should not be included.

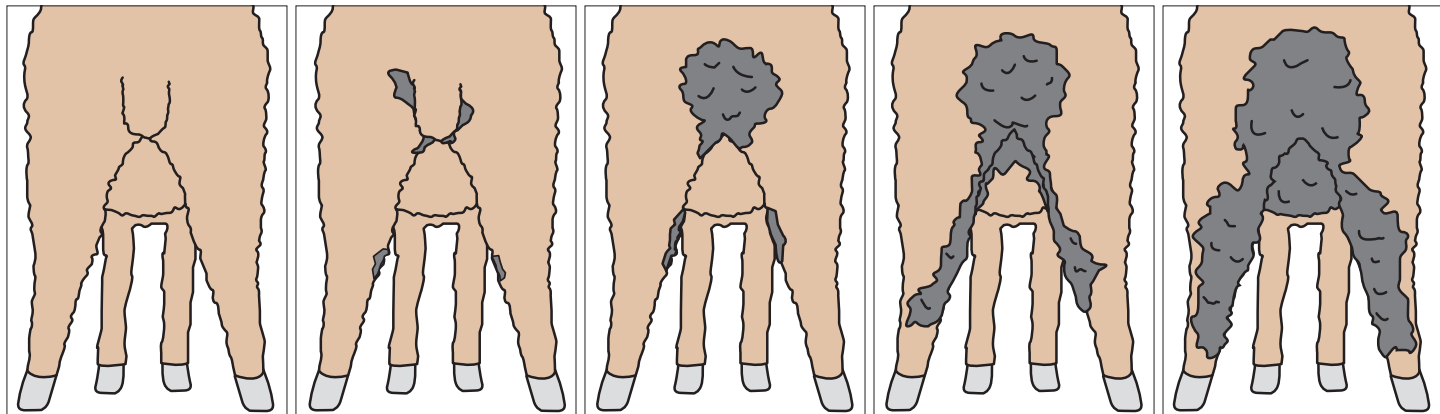
**Note:** Visual scores on mulesed sheep can be submitted to Sheep Genetics as long as the entire group is mulesed and no selective mulesing is undertaken. It is essential to record the mulesing status of the sheep when scores are taken.

**How to score:** A single score of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5.

**Rule of thumb:** A sheep with Score 1 has no dags. A Score 5 sheep has extensive dags in the breech area, and extending right down the hind legs to the pasterns.

It should be noted that mulesed sheep may present with no dag in the breech area, but dag on the hind legs. In this case, the sheep should be scored in relation to the dag on the hind legs.

## DAG (DAG)



Score 1

Score 2

Score 3

Score 4

Score 5

## URINE STAIN (URINE)

**Age:** Over 4 months.

**Sex:** Ewe.

**When:** Anytime, provided a minimum of 4 months of wool growth in breech area.

**Definition:** Urine stain is caused by the absorption of urine in the breech wool.

Urine stain refers to the area of breech wool, including the wool on the hind legs and tail, that is clearly stained by urine. Diagrams only show the variation in stain on the leg, however, stain on the tail (when present) should be accounted for.

When scoring urine stain, the sweaty fribs that some ewes have around the vulva should not be included.

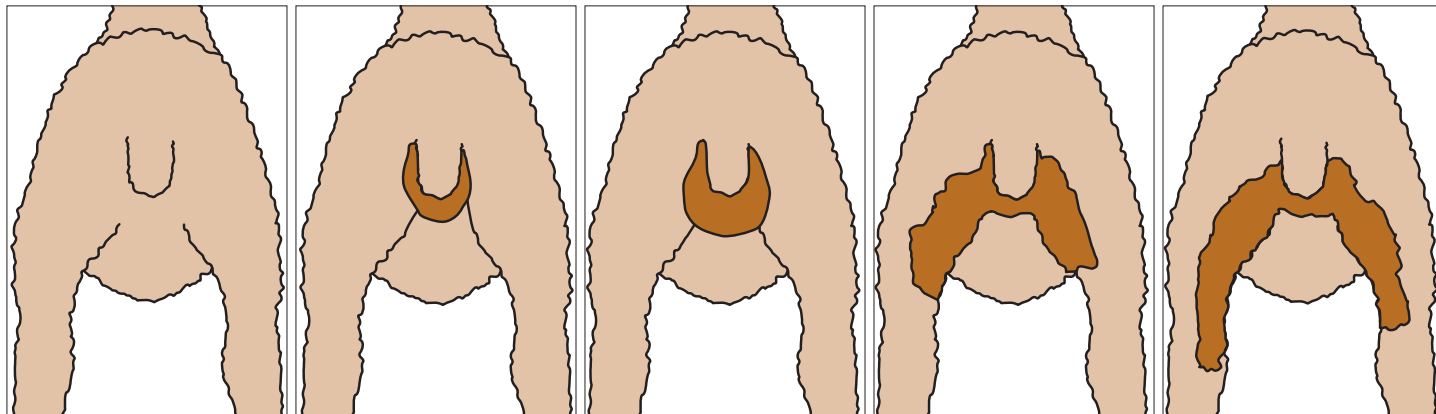
**Note:** Visual scores on mulesed sheep can be submitted to Sheep Genetics as long as the entire group is mulesed and no selective mulesing is undertaken. It is essential to record the mulesing status of the sheep when scores are taken.

**How to score:** A single score of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5.

**Rule of thumb:** A ewe with Score 1 has no urine stain. A Score 5 ewe has extensive urine stain in the breech area and extending down the hind legs. If a ewe has urine stain extending further down one leg than the other, the leg with the greater extent of urine stain is scored.

It should be noted that mulesed sheep may present with no urine stain in the breech area, but urine stain on the hind legs. In this case, the sheep should be scored in relation to the urine stain on the hind legs.

## URINE STAIN (URINE)



Score 1

Score 2

Score 3

Score 4

Score 5



## LAMBING SCORES

Lambing Scores provide standards for the description of traits that influence the ability of a ewe to give birth to and rear a lamb.

Lambing Scores are available for 2 traits. Visual scores of 1 to 5 are provided for each trait.

Lambing Scores can be taken on ewes at various ages. It is essential to record the age of the ewe when scores are taken.

Lambing Trait	Age	When
Maternal behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Over 12 months</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Within 24 hours post lambing</li></ul>
Lambing ease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Over 12 months</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>At the time of birth or within 24 hours post lambing</li></ul>

## MATERNAL BEHAVIOUR (MBS)

**Age:** First lambing onwards.

**Sex:** Ewe.

**When:** Within 24 hours post lambing.

**Definition:** Maternal behaviour refers to the ewe's behaviour towards its lamb(s). It can be scored through assessing the distance a ewe travels from the lamb when the lamb(s) is handled by operators. It is important that the same process is used to record all ewes lambing.

**How to score:** A single score of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5.

**Rule of thumb:** A ewe with Score 1 shows excellent maternal behaviour and stays close to the lamb(s). A ewe with Score 5 shows poor maternal behaviour and little interest in the lamb(s).

### Score 1:

Ewe stays close to the lamb(s) and operator.

### Score 2:

Ewe stays within 10 metres of the lamb(s) and operator.

### Score 3:

Ewe stays within 30 metres of the lamb(s) and operator.

### Score 4:

Ewe runs away but readily returns when operator moves away.

### Score 5:

Ewe runs away and is difficult to get to return to the lamb(s) or the lamb(s) is abandoned.



## LAMBING EASE (LE)

**Age:** Lambs.

**When:** At the time of birth or within 24 hours post lambing.

**Definition:** Lambing ease describes the ease of which a lamb is born.

**How to score:** A single score of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5.

**Rule of thumb:** A lamb with a Score 1 indicates lambing occurs unassisted and without difficulty. A lamb with a Score 5 requires veterinary assistance or the ewe dies during birth. If ewes are checked regularly (e.g. on a daily basis), it is reasonable to assume that those lambs born without observation or assistance are scored as Score 1, or a Score 2 if there are clear indications it was a difficult birth, such as a swollen head. Lambing ease is recorded against each individual lamb(s) in the litter.

**Score 1:** Unassisted.

No operator intervention is required to assist the lambing ewe and/or there are no indications that it was a difficult birth for a lambing that was otherwise unobserved in the past 24 hours.

**Score 2:** Easy pull.

Where lambing is observed – the ewe was assisted; however, intervention was only slight. Where lambing is not directly observed – there are indicators that the ewe has recently (i.e. within 24 hours) given birth and there are indicators that there was some difficulty during birth.

**Score 3:** Hard pull.

Significant intervention is required to assist in lambing, where the ewe would more than likely not have given birth to a lamb herself naturally.

**Score 4:** Malpresentation.

Malpresentation is when the lamb's birthing position differs from the normal position - the lamb presents in a way where it does NOT have both front legs, with tips of hooves pointed upwards, oriented to the vaginal opening with the lamb's head in between the two front legs.

**Score 5:** Veterinary assistance.

If the ewe dies during lambing, or veterinary assistance is required, or a c-section is performed, or the ewe is required to be euthanised.



## UDDER AND TEAT SCORES

Udder and Teat Scores provide standards for the description of traits that influence the ability of a ewe to rear a lamb as well as ewe health, welfare and longevity.

Udder and Teat Scores are available for 3 traits. Visual scores of 1 to 5 are provided for each trait.

Udder and Teat Scores can be taken on ewes at various ages. It is essential to record the age of the ewe when scores are taken as well as whether they were recorded at lambing, marking or weaning.

Scores should be recorded when the ewe is in a standing position and the scorer has access to the ewe so that a view can be taken from both the back and the side.

Other udder and teat faults should be recorded independently. These may include missing teats, mastitis, badly asymmetrical udders and any other abnormalities.

Ewes that have not lambed during the current reproduction cycle should not be scored for Udder and Teat Scores.

Udder and Teat Scores	Age	When
Udder depth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• First Lambing Onwards</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• From lambing through to weaning</li></ul>
Teat size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• First Lambing Onwards</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• From lambing through to weaning</li></ul>
Teat placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• First Lambing Onwards</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• From lambing through to weaning</li></ul>

## UDDER DEPTH (UDEPTH)

**Age:** First lambing onwards.

**Sex:** Ewe.

**When:** From lambing through to weaning.

**Definition:** Udder depth refers to the size of the udder measured in relation to hocks and attachment of the udder to the abdomen.

**How to score:** A single score of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5. For udders that are asymmetrical, the largest side should be scored.

**Rule of thumb:** A ewe with Score 1 has a very small udder close to the level of the abdomen and well attached to the abdomen. A Score 5 ewe has an udder that drops below the level of hocks and/or is poorly attached to the abdomen.

### Score 1

A very small udder close to the level of the abdomen and well attached to the abdomen.

### Score 2

Less than half way to the hocks and well attached at abdomen.

### Score 3

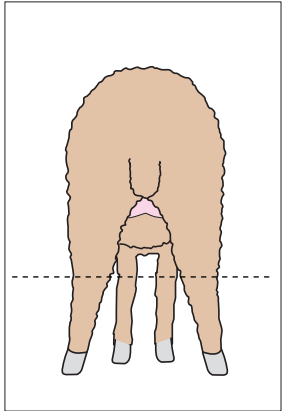
Half way to the hocks and well attached at abdomen.

### Score 4

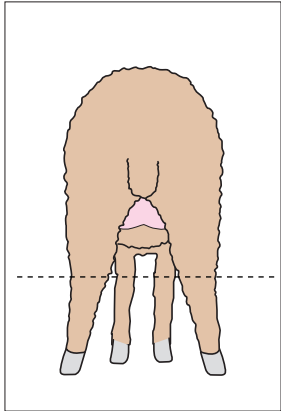
To the hocks and either well attached at abdomen or beginning to show signs of becoming pendulous with weak attachment to the abdomen.

### Score 5

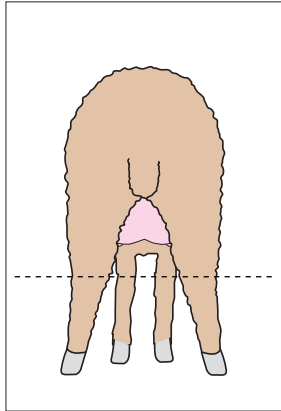
Below the hocks, and/or clearly pendulous showing poor attachment at abdomen.



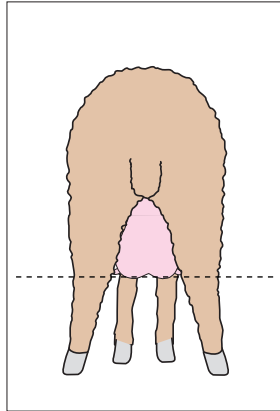
Score 1



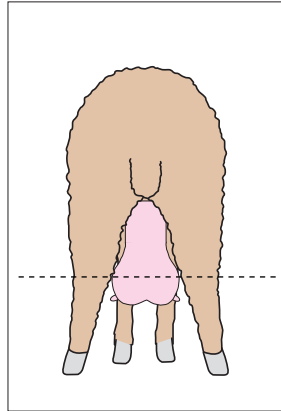
Score 2



Score 3



Score 4



Score 5

## TEAT SIZE (TSIZE)

**Age:** First lambing onwards.

**Sex:** Ewe.

**When:** From lambing through to weaning.

**Definition:** Teat size refers to the length, width and shape of the teats.

**How to score:** A single score of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5. Where teats are not even, the largest teat should be scored.

**Rule of thumb:** A ewe with Score 1 has very small teats. A Score 5 ewe has very wide and long teats (referred to as bottle teats) that would prevent a lamb from suckling.

### Score 1

Very small sized teats <2cm in length.

### Score 2

Small sized teats between 2-3 cm in length.

### Score 3

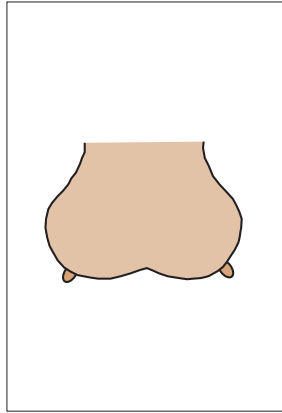
Medium sized teats between 3-5 cm in length.

### Score 4

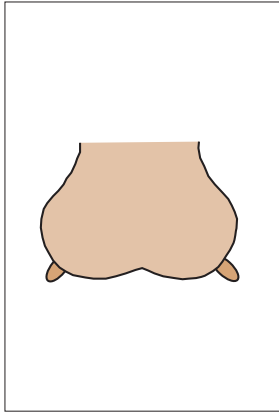
Wide teats between 5-7 cm in length and / or beginning to result in the lamb having difficulty suckling.

### Score 5

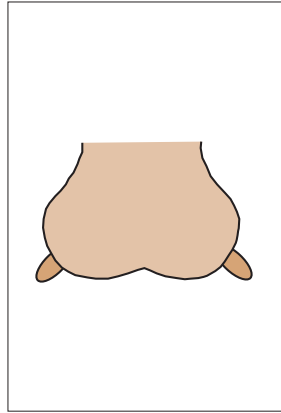
Very wide teats >7 cm in length, or bottle teats preventing the lamb from suckling.



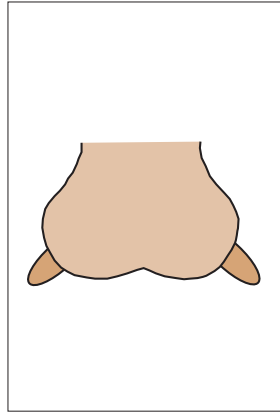
Score 1



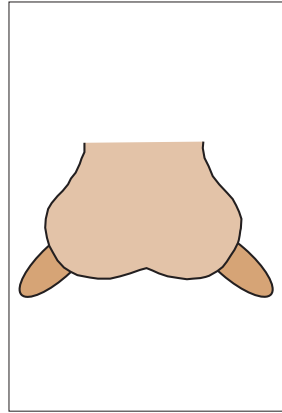
Score 2



Score 3



Score 4



Score 5

## TEAT PLACEMENT (TPLACE)

**Age:** First lambing onwards.

**Sex:** Ewe.

**When:** From lambing through to weaning

**Definition:** Teat placement refers to the alignment of the teat on the udder.

**Note:** Care needs to be taken when scoring ewes with small udders as teats may not easily be seen and may be scored incorrectly.

**How to score:** A single score of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5.

**Rule of thumb:** A ewe with Score 1 has teats that are horizontal to the ground and can often be obscured by the hind leg. A Score 5 ewe has teats that point vertical toward the ground.

### Score 1

Teats horizontally aligned, high on the udder and can often be obscured by the hind leg.

### Score 2

Teats almost horizontally aligned, moderately high on the udder and may be obscured by the hind leg.

### Score 3

Teats aligned at or near a 45 degree angle to the ground.

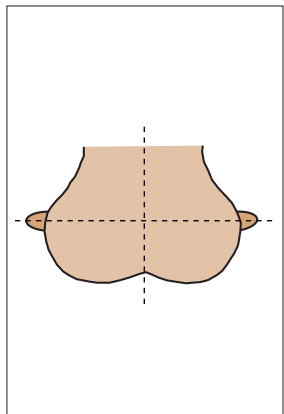
### Score 4

Teats almost vertically aligned.

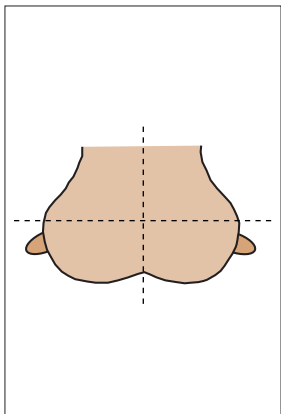
### Score 5

Teats vertically aligned that point to the ground.

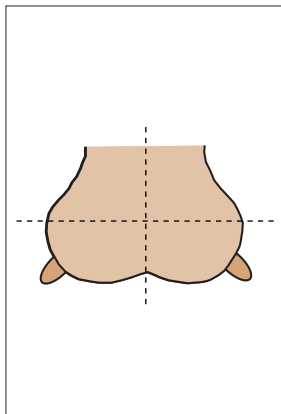




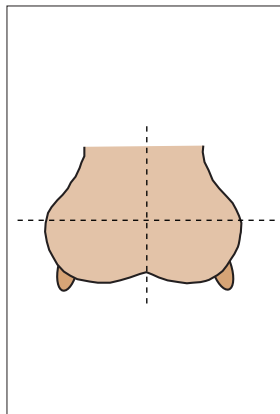
Score 1



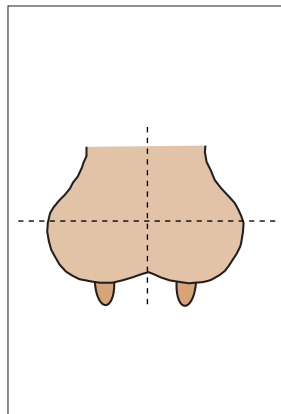
Score 2



Score 3



Score 4



Score 5



## CLASSING SCORES

Classing Scores provide standards for the description of sheep relative to the flock's breeding objective.

Classing Scores are available for 2 traits. Visual scores of 1, 3 or 5 are provided for each trait.

Classing Scores can be taken on both male and female sheep at various ages. It is essential to record the age of the sheep when scores are taken, with the optimal age recommended in the table below.

Classing Trait	Age	When
Classer's visual grade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Over 6 months</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Anytime, provided a minimum of 5 months wool growth</li></ul>
Overall selection grade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Over 6 months</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Anytime, provided a minimum of 5 months wool growth</li></ul>

## CLASSER'S VISUAL GRADE (VGRADE)

**Age:** Over 6 months.

**When:** Anytime, provided a minimum of 5 months wool growth.

**Definition:** Classer's Visual Grade describes the standard of the sheep for visual performance relative to the flock's breeding objective.

**How to score:** The sheep should be assessed in a classing race or box that allows good access and the ability to clearly observe each sheep as an individual.

**Rule of thumb:** A sheep with Score 1 is a TOP and is in the top 10-30% of the group. A Score 5 sheep is a CULL (or sale sheep) and is in the bottom 10-30% of the group.

### Score 1:

TOP  
Sheep is in the top  
10-30% of the  
sheep in the group.

### Score 3:

FLOCK  
Sheep is in the  
middle 40-80% of the  
sheep in the group.

### Score 5:

CULL  
Sheep is in the  
bottom 10-30% of the  
sheep in the group.

## OVERALL SELECTION GRADE (OSVGRADE)

**Age:** Over 6 months.

**When:** Anytime, provided a minimum of 5 months wool growth.

**Definition:** Overall Selection Grade describes the overall standard of the sheep for both visual and measured performance relative to the flock's breeding objective.

**How to score:** The sheep should be assessed in a classing race or box that allows good access and ability to clearly observe each sheep as an individual.

Measured information such as individual trait information or index needs to be presented to the classer to enable them to make an overall assessment.

**Rule of thumb:** A sheep with Score 1 is a TOP and is in the top 10-30% of the group. A Score 5 sheep is a CULL (or sale sheep) and is in the bottom 10-30% of the group.

### Score 1:

TOP

Sheep is in the top 10-30% of the sheep in the group.

### Score 3:

FLOCK

Sheep is in the middle 40-80% of the sheep in the group.

### Score 5:

CULL

Sheep is in the bottom 10-30% of the sheep in the group.

## STAGE CODE

The following Stage Codes should be used when submitting data to Sheep Genetics.

Name	Stage Code	Age*	Age Range
Birth	B	0	Birth to 24 hours
Weaning	W	100	40-149 days (6 weeks - 5 months)
Post weaning	P	225	150-299 days (5-10 months)
Yearling	Y	365	300-449 days (10-15 months)
Hogget	H	540	450-659 days (15-22 months)
Adult	A	700	660 days or older (22 months or older)

\* The average age of the sheep in the management group.

ASBVs for some visual traits are reported as either 'early' or 'late'. For example, early breech wrinkle (ebwr) and late dag (ldag). Stage codes are divided into early and late as follows.

Early Stages	Late Stages
Birth	Yearling
Weaning	Hogget
Post weaning	Adult

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This guide has been produced with the assistance of many sheep breeders and sheep industry research and management specialists, in particular, members of the Executive Committee of Australian Merino Sire Evaluation Association.

### Disclaimer

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