SHEEP, THEIR TYPES AND CHARACTERISTICS

IV.

THE FINE-WOOL BREED—AMERICAN MERINO.

The Merinos introduced into the United States were necessarily distributed among farmers of widely varying tastes and as widely differing opportunities for the bestowal of attention on feeding and breeding. This fact, considered in connection with the vicissitudes of agriculture in a new country, under extremes of climate to which Spanish Merinos had for so many generations been strangers, will account for the comparatively few real successes in acclimatizing and improving them that are recorded in the earlier history in the United States. But few of the many breeders who secured animals of the importations heretofore mentioned succeeded in establishing flocks that attracted public attention. These, however, were sufficient to lay the foundation for what is undoubtedly, when considered in view of all the requisites for a wool-bearing animal, combined with a fair mutton production, the superior of the several types of the fine wool breed. A large proportion of the Merino flocks of the United States, descendents of the importations from Spain, were subsequently interbred with the Saxon and French varieties, until many of the characteristics of these were pretty thoroughly engrained into American flocks. Through the exceptions to this rule, however, a sufficient number of flocks have been found, tracing with reasonable proof of purity direct to their Spanish ancestry, to warrant the claim that the present highest type of American Merino is the direct descendant, without admixture of other blood, of animals included in some of the several importations from Spain made prior to the year 1812.

It is within the memory of men now living—less than fifty years—that the efforts of breeders began to concentrate toward the typical American Merino of today. The attempts have been made to define and detail the characteristics required in the perfect sheep. These are commonly excepted—having received the endorsement of a committee composed of exceptionally competetive breeders, called to pass upon the fine wool sheep at the International Exhibition of Sheep and Wool, held at Philadelphia in 1889, and adopted by the management of several leading fairs, for the guidance of judges—is reproduced, as indexing the opinion of thoughtful breeders as to the relative importance of each point indicated.

In explanation of what might otherwise permit the impression that very little importance is attached to blood—that is, purity of breeding—it should be understood that the standard is for pure-bred animals only; hence their admission as such is recognized by a single point; which is equivalent to saying that, upon satisfactory evidence, the judge is satisfied the animals are purely bred.

POUNTS OF EXCELLENCE FOR AMERICAN MERINO SHEEP—100 DENOMINATING PERFECTION.

1. Wool—Thoroughbred, i.e., pure-bred, from one or more of the direct importations of Merino sheep from Spain, prior to the year 1812, without the admixture of any other blood.

2. Constitution—Inclined to be strong, deep, and large breast cavity, broad back, heavy quarters, with muscular development forming capacious stock; black, or soft, of fine texture, and pink color; extended loin, well filled, beautiful countenance, and good size, age considered.

3. Size—In fair condition, twelve months' growth; full-grown rams should weigh at least 300 pounds, ewes not less than 120 pounds. [The Philadelphia jury made these 150 and 100 pounds.]

4. General Appearance—Good carriage, boit style, elastic movement, showing, in particular parts, as well as general outline, symmetry of form.

5. Body—Throughout heavy bones, well proportioned in length, smooth joints, ribs starting horizontally from backbone, and well rounded to the breast-bone, which should be wide, and strong, and prominent in front; strong backbone, straight and well-proportioned as to length. Heavy, muscular shoulders, deep, broad, the fore limb extended behind and before, with shoulders well set on, neither projecting sharply above the shoulders, nor so flat as to incur liability to slip shoulder.

6. Folds and Wrinkles—Folds on the rams should be larger than on the ewe. Large and pendulous folds from the chest, and hanging down each side of the neck, and extending up the sides of the neck, but lighter if at all extending over the base of the head behind the fore-leg or shoulder, one on front of hind leg, hanging down across the flanks, two or more on rear of hind legs, or quarters, extending upward toward the tail, with one or two on and around the tail, giving the animal a square appearance on the hind quarters, and straight down at may be from end of tail to hock joints and hind feet. In addition to folds, small wrinkles over the body and belly are desirable, as forming a compactness of fleece, but not large enough to be apparent on the surface of green fleece, or to cause, thus leaving the body of the fleece even in quality and free from the jar of large folds over the body.

7. Head—Wide between the ears, and across the eyes, and across the nose, and high at top of head to tip of nose; face straight, eyes clear and prominent; ears thin, medium size, and, together with the face, nose, lips, and white, and covered with soft, fine wool, bearded on the rams, heavier toward the shoulders, well set up, and running down to back of the head.

8. Legs and Feet—Legs long, straight, and strong, set apart forward and back, heavy bone, smooth joints, with large muscular development of the forelegs; thin, heavy thigh, wide down to hock joints, and from hock joints downward covered with short wool, or the soft furry covering...
**Fleece—Covering—Tendency to hair and**

**ears upon any part of the sheep is to be**

**avoided. Evenness of fleece in length, qual-**

**ity, density, texture, crimp, toughness, strength**

**and elasticity, covering the entire body, belly**

**and legs to the knees; head well covered for-**

**ward, squarely to a line in front of the eyes;**

**well filled between the ears and ears or horns,**

**and well upon the cheeks; muzzle clear, with**

**small opening up to and around the eyes.**

**Scrotum of rams covered with wool free from**

**tendency to hair**

**Quality—Medium, but such as is known in our**

**market as fine delaine and fine clothing wool,**

**distinctly better to quality, lustre, crimp and**

**elasticity than the wools of the same length**

**grown upon the common grade sheep.**

**Density—Shown by the compactness of the**

**fleece, throughout which should open free**

**but close, showing very little of the skin at**

**any point, even at the extremities.**

**Length—At one year's growth not less than two**

**and one-half inches, and as near as may be**

**uniform in length to the extremities of the**

**fleece.**

**Oils—Evenly distributed, soft and flowing freely**

**from skin to surface; medium in quantity.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fleece—Covering—Tendency to hair and ears upon any part of the sheep</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality—Medium, but such as is known in our market as fine delaine</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and fine clothing wool, distinctly better to quality, lustre, crimp</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and elasticity than the wools of the same length grown upon the</td>
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<td>common grade sheep.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Density—Shown by the compactness of the fleece, throughout which</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>should open free but close, showing very little of the skin at any</td>
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<tr>
<td>point, even at the extremities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Length—At one year's growth not less than two and one-half inches,</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>and as near as may be uniform in length to the extremities of the</td>
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<td>fleece.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oils—Evenly distributed, soft and flowing freely from skin to</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>surface; medium in quantity.</td>
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</tbody>
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**Total: 105**