

Hampshire Breed Facts

Submitted by Sheri Smith-Figueroa & Julie Owens



Country of origin: The Hampshire sheep were developed in Southern England in an agricultural county called Hampshire by crossing Southdown rams with local slow-maturing ewes. The Old Hampshire, Berkshire Knot, Willshire Horn, Cotswold and Southdown sheep were believed to be the original breeds found in and along the borders of Hampshire County. Brief history: Hampshire sheep were reported in the U.S. around 1840. Around 1865 to 1870 Hampshires were again imported from England but the first authentic record of importations was made in 1879. For over a century, U.S. breeders have bred and selected Hampshires to fill specific sheep industry needs. Hampshire sheep have the genetic ability to efficiently convert forage into meat and fiber and are adaptable and productive in various geographic regions of the United States.

The Hampshire is a large, open faced and active sheep with a mild disposition. Mature rams should weigh 275 pounds or more and mature ewes should weigh 200 pounds or more in breeding condition.

Fiber characteristics: The staples are large and rectangular, with flat tips. As with all the down types, the crimp is not distinct in the staple, but very obvious in the individual fibers.

Average fleece weight: 4.5 - 10 lbs

Average fiber length: 2 - 3.5 inches

Bradford spinning count: 46s - 58s

Micron diameter: 25 μ - 33 μ

Colors where applicable: Color is usually natural off-white, frequently "freckled" with brown spots.

Method of preparation:

Spinning techniques:

Recommended uses: The spun yarn is very lofty, hard-wearing and elastic.

Purchase information:

References:

*American Sheep Industry Association, Inc.
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Who's Who in U.S. Sheep Breeds (poster)

Raising Sheep the Modern Way by Paula Simmons, c. 1989, Storey Publications, p. 22.

In Sheep's Clothing: A Handspinner's Guide to Wool by Nola Fournier and Jane Fournier, c. 1995, Interweave Press, p. 102

Photo: Carol Wise

Wise Hamps

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