



DORPER

Sheep Breeders' Society of South Africa



THE DORPER SOUTH AFRICA'S MASTERPIECE

THE DORPER is an indigenous South African breed. 50 years ago the Department of Agriculture and some farmers decided to develop a sheep breed which can produce a maximum number of lambs, with good mutton qualities and which could be marketed off arid and extensive grazing conditions.

They managed to produce the Dorper which fulfilled all their expectations and succeeded in developing a wonderful breed which is not only ideally suited to the purpose for which it was bred, but is adaptable to conditions throughout the world. It will make a huge contribution to mutton production worldwide.

The Dorper breed was developed through the crossing of the Blackhead Persian



ewe with the Dorset Horn and this resulted in the birth of some white Dorper lambs. The difference in colour is therefore merely a matter of preference for each breeder. Black-headed breeders constitute about 85% of the members of the Dorper Sheep Breeders' Society of South Africa.

The Dorper breed is now numerically the second largest breed in South Africa and has spread to many countries throughout the world

Outstanding Characteristics

Mutton Production, Adaptability, Hardiness, Veld Utilisation and Good Mothering Qualities

1. MUTTON PRODUCTION

The Dorper is primarily a mutton sheep and meets these requirements exceptionally well.

- **High Reproduction Rate**

In breeding mutton sheep a high reproduction rate is one of the most important economic factors.

- **The Dorper has a long breeding season which is not seasonally limited. A good manager can organise his programme so that lambs can be dropped at any time of the year.**
- **The breed is fertile and the percentage of ewes that become pregnant in one mating season is relatively high. This increases the selection potential and the sale of surplus slaughter lambs.**
- **Lambing intervals can be eight months. Consequently under good veld conditions and with good management the Dorper ewe can lamb three times in two years.**
- **Multiple births are prevalent and testify to the high fecundity of Dorper ewes. A lambing percentage of 150% can be reached under good conditions while in exceptional cases even 180% can be attained. Under extensive conditions a lambing percentage of 100% can be**

expected. In a flock containing a large number of maiden ewes, the lambing percentage will be in the region of 120% as these ewes usually drop single lambs. If it is assumed that the lambing percentage is 150% and that management is at such a level that ewes can lamb about three times in two years, a Dorper ewe will produce 2,25 lambs on an annual basis.

The following table indicates the reproduction of Dorper ewes on veld grazing which were mated during March and April.

Reproduction per 100 Dorper ewes mated

	Number of ewes	Lambs born	Lambs weaned
Ewes mated	100		
Ewes lambled	95		
Ewes with single lambs	61	61	60
Ewes with twin lambs	30	60	58
Ewes with triplet lambs	4	12	10
Total number of lambs		133	128

Make Money with Mutton Sheep - Dr Q P Campbell

- **Weight Gain**

The Dorper lamb grows rapidly and attains a high weaning weight which again is an economically important characteristic in the breeding of mutton sheep. A live weight of about 36 kg can be reached by the Dorper lamb at the age of 3- 4 months. This ensures a high quality carcass of approximately 16 kg. This is associated with the inherent growth potential of the Dorper lamb and its ability to graze at an early age.

According to Dr Q P Campbell in "Make Money with Mutton Sheep", the average daily gain of Dorpers under extensive conditions was from 81 g to 91 g per day. During a phase D2 growth test at Tweedie, the average daily gain was 160 g per day in the test while the average daily gain per day of age was 203 g per day.

- **Carcass Quality**

A well grown Dorper lamb has carcass qualities in respect of conformation and fat distribution which generally qualifies for a super grading. At stock sales it is a much sought after slaughter lamb both on the hook and on the hoof. Above all, it answers to the requirements of the housewife who wishes to serve quality mutton. During the International Expo in 1990 in Bloemfontein, 120 entrants entered 1200 animals of all breeds of which 600 were slaughtered. Dorper carcasses won 8 of the first 10 places including both Single and Group Championships.

The best quality Dorper carcasses are marketed under the Brandname DIAMOND DORPER.

- 1. Adaptability**

The Dorper is well adapted to a variety of climatic and grazing conditions. Originally this breed was developed for the more arid areas of the Republic but today they are widely spread throughout all the provinces. The Dorper does well in various veld and feeding conditions and reacts very favourably under intensive feeding conditions. It is indeed a popular breed.

- 2. Hardiness**

The Dorper is hardy and can thrive under veld conditions where other breeds can barely exist and the ewe can raise a lamb of reasonable quality under fairly severe conditions. As this is one of the aims in the development of the breed, when added to inherent hardiness and non-selective razing habits, it places the Dorper, as mutton breed, virtually in a class of its own.

- 3. Veld utilisation**

As a strong and non-selective grazer the Dorper can advantageously be incorporated into a well planned veld management system. On most farms there are grazing and other food sources which are

not utilized or are underutilised. Here the Dorper can be used to the producer's advantage, either alone, or in conjunction with other small stock breeds, to convert this asset into profit.

4. Good mothering qualities

The Dorper ewe produces a large quantity of milk, is instinctively fond of its lamb and has the ability to care for and rear her offspring well, be it single or twin lambs.

5. Easy care

The Dorper is an easy care breed which requires a minimum of labour. Its skin covering which is a mixture of hair and wool, will drop off if not shorn to keep it tidy. The Dorper has a thick skin which is highly prized and protects the sheep under harsh climatic conditions.

6. Temperament

The Dorper has a very even temperament and is a pleasure to work with..... it will creep into your heart.

Before purchasing embryos or semen please ensure that the person you are dealing with is a registered and established breeder of the Dorper Breeders' Society of South Africa. Contact +27 49 842 2241 or fax +27 49 3589 for any further information.

CARCASS QUALITY



The ultimate object in the breeding of Dorper sheep is the production of a high quality lamb carcass. The Dorper has proved that it can compete with the best lamb carcasses in South Africa of all other mutton breeds and cross-breeds. In fact the Dorper carcass can now be said to compare more than favourably with the best in the world, as virtually all exotic mutton breeds are represented in this country. As early as September 1955, the Dorper won first prize in the block test against various other breeds and cross breeds at the Rand Fat Stock Show and this champion carcass was sold in those early days at R4,62 (1 US\$ = R4,60) per kilogram. Since then the Dorper has done well on various shows and won many prizes and championships.

The South African Meat Board inaugurated a National Carcass Competition in 1986 which is open to all

breeds. This competition is run on a national basis at various selected centres and virtually all the judging is done by the latest scientific means of measurement. Very little is left to judging by "eye".

The Dorper proved its competitive carcass quality in the 1986 National Carcass Competition by being placed FIRST, FOURTH, FIFTH & SIXTH in the group of 3 carcasses and SECOND and THIRD in the individual carcass class. In 1987 this achievement was surpassed by the Dorper gaining the FIRST and SECOND places in the group of 3 carcasses and FIRST and THIRD places in the individual class. As 109 breeders of all mutton breeds entered 424 top quality lamb carcasses for this competition, this was a fantastic achievement!



During the International Expo in 1990 in Bloemfontein 120 entrants entered 1200 animals of all breeds of which 600 were slaughtered. Dorper carcasses won 8 of the first 10 places as follows:

Single carcasses:	Champion carcass and 3rd, 4th and 5th places.
Group carcasses:	Champion group, Reserve Champion group and 3rd and 5th places.

It is not uncommon for 90% or more of a consignment of Dorper slaughter lambs to obtain super grades.

The Dorper ewe has good mothering abilities and can rear a lamb with ease, while the lamb develops further through its inherent growth potential. The ideal carcass weight is 14-16 kg and the lamb should reach this weight within 3,5 to 4 months.

The best quality Dorper carcasses are exclusively marketed as DIAMOND DORPER.

The quality of the meat of two Dorper types (leggy and dumpy) was evaluated by the Agricultural Research Council, Irene. They found that the percentage of meat in the carcass varied between 73.9 and 74.6 between the two types. The mutton to bone ratio varied between 4.9:1 to 5.2:1. The percentage of

muscle in the carcass was approximately 65% and the total carcass fat approximately 20%. The high quality cuts were between 43.2% and 45.9% of the total carcass. The Dorper therefore produces a high quality carcass with a very favourable mutton to bone ratio and a carcass with a high percentage of good quality meat.

The sensory attributes of the meat were tested by a professional tasting panel for intensity of aroma, tenderness and ease of bite. The scale varied from 1 = none, to 8 = extremely. The rating for intensity of aroma was 6.2, for tenderness 6.3 and for ease of bite 6.3. From these results it is clear that Dorper mutton is well above average as far as tastiness and juiciness are concerned.

DORPER SKINS

The Dorper skin is the most sought after sheepskin in the world and is marketed under the name of Cape Glovers. The skin comprises a high percentage of the income (20%) of the total carcass value.

UNLIMITED BREEDING SEASON

The Dorper is, thanks to the prepotency of its Blackhead Persian mother, one of the most fertile sheep breeds in the Republic of South Africa. An unrestricted breeding season and good mothering qualities are other important attributes of the Blackhead Persian which were transmitted to the Dorper.

In good veld conditions the Dorper can be mated at any time of the year. With management ingenuity the farmer can organise his breeding programme to drop a lamb crop every 8 months. An 8 month lambing interval has various advantages, of which greater selection possibilities and the sale of a larger number of lambs, which are not taken up in the flock, are the most important.

MATING PRACTICES

A mating period of 6 weeks is normally sufficient and because multiple births often occur, a lambing percentage of 150 can be attained if conditions and management are good. Under extensive conditions 100% lambs can be expected.

Average  **3 points**

Poor or below average  **2 points**

Very poor with cull points  **1 point**

The following comprises the Standard of Excellence.

1. Conformation: represented by the symbol B

- **Head:**

Strong and long, with large eyes, widely spaced and protectively placed. Strong nose, strong well-shaped mouth with well-fitted deep jaws. The forehead must not be dished. The size of the ears must be in relation to the head. A developed horn base or small horns are the ideal. Heavy horns are undesirable but permissible. The head must be covered with short, dullish black hair in the Dorper and dull, white hair in the White Dorper. The head must be dry i.e. without indications of fat localisation.

- **Fore-quarter and neck:**

The neck should be of medium length, well-fleshed and broad and well-coupled to the forequarters. Shoulders should be firm, broad and strong. A moderate protrusion of the brisket beyond the shoulders, moderate width and good depth are the ideal. Forelegs must be strong, straight and well-placed with strong pasterns and hoofs not too widely split. Weak pasterns and X legs must be discriminated against according to degree. Shoulders which appear loose, a brisket which slants up too sharply with no projection beyond the shoulders, crooked legs and weak walking ability, are faulty.

- **Barrel:**

The ideal is a long, deep wide body, ribs well sprung, loin broad and full. The sheep must have a long straight back and not a "devil's grip". A slight dip behind the shoulders is permissible.

- **Hind-quarter:**

A long and wide rump is the ideal. The inner and outer twist to be well fleshed and deep in adult animals. The hind legs must be strong and well-placed, with sturdy feet and strong pasterns. Faulty pasterns must be discriminated against according to degree. The hocks must be strong without a tendency to turn in or out. Sickle, bandy or perpendicular hocks are culling faults.

- **Udder and sex organs:**

A well-developed udder and sex organs are essential in the ewe. The scrotum of the ram should not be too long and the testicles should be of equal size and not too small. A split scrotum is undesirable.

- **General appearance:**

The sheep should be symmetrical and well-proportioned. A calm temperament with a vigorous appearance is the ideal.



2. **Size or growth rate: represented by the symbol G.**

A sheep with a good weight for its age is the ideal.

Discrimination against extremely small or extremely big animals must be exercised.

3. **Distribution of fat: represented by the symbol D.**

Too much localisation of fat on any part of the body is undesirable. An even distribution of a thin layer of fat over the carcass and between the muscle-fibres is the ideal. The sheep must be firm and muscular when handled.

4. **Colour pattern: represented by the symbol P**

Dorpers: A white sheep with black confined to the head and neck is the ideal. Black spots, to a limited extent on the body and legs are permissible, but an entirely white sheep or a sheep predominantly black is undesirable. Brown hair around the eyes, white teats, white under the tail and white hoofs are undesirable. White Dorpers: A white sheep, fully pigmented around the

eyes, under the tail, on the udder and the teats is the ideal. A limited number of other coloured spots is permissible on the ears and underline.

5. Cover or Fleece: represented by the symbol H.

The ideal is a short, loose, light covering of hair and wool with wool predominating on fore quarter and with a natural clean kemp underline. Too much wool or hair is undesirable. Exclusively wool or hair is a fault. Manes are a disqualifier.



6. Type: represented by the symbol T.

Type is judged according to the degree to which the sheep conforms to the general requirements of the breed. Emphasis is placed on conformation. Size and fat distribution when determining type, while colour and covering are of secondary importance.

(For pointing details, refer to Dorper Sheep Breeders' Society of South Africa

Average weights of Dorper ram lambs and rams as well as ewe lambs and ewes in good condition		
note: some of the ewes might have been pregnant.		
AGE	RAMS AND RAM LAMBS	EWES AND EWE LAMBS
6 Teeth +	105.5 kg	95.0 kg
4 Teeth	102.2 kg	84.3 kg
2 Teeth	92.8 kg	70.9 kg
11 months	80.0 kg	65.2 kg
9 Months	69.5 kg	54.8 kg
6 months	54.6 kg	47.8 kg

Make money with Mutton Sheep - Dr QP Campbell (Price = R50 postage included in South Africa)

ORGANISATION

The Dorper Sheep Breeders' Society of South Africa was founded in 1950 and now has 600 members throughout South Africa and Namibia.

Three National Sales are held annually and a National Championship Show is held every second year.

Dorper courses are held throughout South Africa and a Judges' Panel is made up of people who have passed a Junior Course, two Senior Courses and a Judges' Examination. Inspectors who are also members of the Society, are appointed from this panel.

CONCLUSION

The Dorper has already been distributed worldwide and has proved itself a world beater. In South Africa, Dorper numbers are still increasing rapidly.

South Africa is proud to share the DORPER breed with the rest of the world.



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION REFER TO:

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