

Judging of Lambs' Wool

How to receive the best result

The exhibitor

We would always lamb in April/May, and shear in September of which some of the best lambs wool were kept aside and shown the following year. Although I always felt it was better straight off the lambs to be shown.

My father said if you give the ewes and lambs plenty of room it was a big help along with an early Autumn break.

We would wean the ewes prior to shearing, if they were still with their mothers they tended to put into their bodies rather than the wool which my father described as heavy condition.

It is a big help if you have good numbers of lambs to chose from, I found it very helpful if I could pick out the best lambs and put them aside to shear last. When I did this I put those samples aside until I had time to put into preparing them for show.

Of course working with one shearer to get the lambs wool right was a great help, although at times we have 4 shearers and at one time we shore 1099 lambs in the one day!

When preparing the sample I would shake the sample to get rid of any second cuts, pick any skin pieces out and any pen stain that may have found its way in. I then went and weighed each sample to the required weight of 500 grams. When I was selecting



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my samples I would look for the best white sample, with good character, a clean butt to tip ratio and a good yielding sample that is very important in lambs wool. The sample was just longer than 2 inches which was good length for Merino lambs, or if they were a stronger lamb then a touch longer is better.

Of course, tipping lambswool is not allowed.

I always tried to get the sample I was going to show from one lamb, there is no points for weight but I always felt a bigger sample looked better.

Of course, always try to shear before you get any grass seed and dust, but I always thought it was best to shear on a sunny day when the wool looked better!

Doug Hopkins

The judge

I have been judging at the show for over 10 years now, I first began as a steward to Mr Ken Woodful who was the Lambs wool judge for many years. I spent many years under Ken's guidance and advice and after some years he handed me the reins of being the Senior Judge for this category.

It has always been a passion of mine to judge this area of the Fleece Competition, as I have been a major buyer of lambs wool for many clients overseas for many years, and I tend to look at the lambs presented to me in a similar manner as a judge and as buyer. I am fortunate the company I work for United Wool Company is now the major sponsor of the Lambs wool category, and still allows me to be part of this great day.

In the buying of lambs wool one main area I look at is the preparation of the wool being presented for sale, the time taken to prepare the line and most importantly the amount of skin present. Skin is a big issue in lamb types, always has been and all of our clients are always asking for us to be careful and avoid any lambs wool that is presented with skin in them.

I take this same approach when I am judging, of course the samples presented to me can be from more than one lamb but I am always on the lookout for the same factors as above.

1. Is the lambs presented in a well prepared line?
2. Is there any skin present in the sample?
3. Has all efforts been made to have a uniform, even and bright sample presented?
4. Does the sample meet all the criteria of being a lambs wool?

If all above is met in the first instance, then it comes down to the extra small contributing factors that can make it stand out from the rest.

Of course not a lot of sample is needed as Doug mentioned 500 grams, but that small amount of sample that is well prepared and stands out from the rest could make you the overall winner of your section.

I say to all the growers out there, get involved as Doug will tell you he has been awarded the overall winner on many occasions and it is a great feeling

Paul Ferronato

