



## South African sheep breeds: Dormer

**SCOPE:** This Info-pack provides a brief description of the Dormer sheep breed.

**KEY WORDS:** Type, Origin, Description, Production, Products, Distribution, Numbers.

**Recommended citation:** Snyman, M.A., 2014. South African sheep breeds : Dormer sheep. Info-pack ref. 2014/016. Grootfontein Agricultural Development Institute.

### Type

Locally developed composite dual purpose meat and white wool breed.

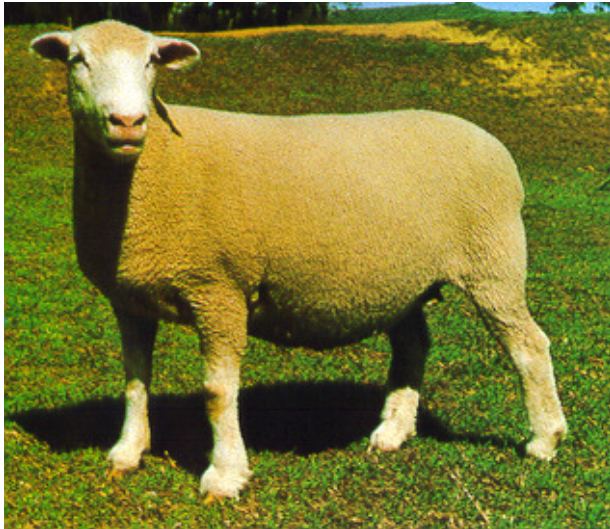


Photo: Dormer breeders

### Origin of the breed

The Dormer breed derives from a cross between Dorset Horn rams and German Merino ewes. It was a direct consequence of a series of extensive slaughter lamb experiments carried out at the Elsenburg Research Station of the Department of Agriculture since 1927 over a period of more than 10 years. The main purpose with the development of the Dormer was to breed a mutton breed which could adapt to conditions in the winter rainfall area of South Africa (cold and wet) and from which suitable rams could be produced for cross breeding purposes. The aim was a slaughter lamb breed, which could produce meat rapidly and economically.

The first annual sale of Dormer rams was held at Elsenburg in 1947. Apart from the Elsenburg flock, Dormers were also bred by private farmers. Through participation in the cooperative experiments, farmers took part in the breed's

development since 1937. Since 1947 these farmers upgraded their flocks with Dormer rams from Elsenburg.

A Dormer Breed Society was established in 1965 and the breed was recognised as a developing breed in 1970.



Photo: [Studbook.co.za/Society/dormer](http://Studbook.co.za/Society/dormer)

### Description

The Dormer is a smooth bodied, white wool, polled sheep with good muscling. White wool free of kemp and coloured fibre makes cross breeding with other white wool breeds acceptable. They have a soft white covering on both ears and face. A clear trait of Dormer ewes is that they do not lose the wool on their bellies during lactation.

### Production norms

Elsenburg Dormer stud

Trait	Average
Birth weight (kg)	3.9
Weaning weight (kg)	29.0
Number of lambs born per parity	1.49
Number of lambs weaned per parity	1.22

Age at first lambing: 18 months  
Adult weight ewes: 75 kg  
Fleece weight: 3.5 – 5 kg  
Fibre diameter: 27 micron.



Photo: [Studbook.co.za/Society/dormer](http://Studbook.co.za/Society/dormer)

### Products

- Meat – Early maturity ensures a slaughter lamb ready for market at an early age which produces a quality carcass of 16 - 22 kg at 3 months.
- Wool – Strong white wool, free of kemp and coloured fibres.
- Crossbred lambs - Used as sire line for cross breeding. This breed is recommended by experts for cross breeding with the Merino for slaughter lamb production because it is a white wool breed, free from kemp and coloured fibre. Early maturity is also sought after where cross breeding is done for slaughter lamb production with late maturing breeds such as the Merino.



Photo: [Studbook.co.za/Society/dormer](http://Studbook.co.za/Society/dormer)

### Normal production environment

- Winter rainfall areas.
- Natural and planted pastures in temperate climates.
- Developed for the climatic and grazing conditions of the Western Cape.
- As a temperate climate breed, it is fairly widely distributed in the Free State and Gauteng Provinces.

A few large flocks are still being run in the Western and Southern Cape, but the majority of Dormer breeders are currently found in the Free State and Gauteng.



Photo: [Studbook.co.za/Society/dormer](http://Studbook.co.za/Society/dormer)

### Breed numbers

Currently, the breed society has 134 members. There are 20 600 ewes and 7 400 Dormer rams registered with the breeders' society. The total number of Dormer sheep in South Africa is unknown.

### References

This info-pack was compiled from various sources of information. The text may contain extracts from the following:

[www.studbook.co.za/Society/dormer](http://www.studbook.co.za/Society/dormer)