



## South African sheep breeds: Ile De France

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

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

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### Type

Meat breed.



Photo: lledefrance.co.za

### Origin of the breed

The Ile de France has been bred in France since 1822. The first Ile de France sheep arrived in South Africa in 1903. It was a present from a madame Arnaud Ginchard to the "boere" of South Africa. These sheep were from the stud of the famous French breeder, Delacour of Gouzangrez.

During the 1930s and 1970s, sheep were imported for research purposes, but again these had no effect on the local sheep population. The first commercial Ile de France sheep were imported in 1972 by private breeders. Further imports founded the breed in South Africa. The Ile de France Breeders' Society was established in 1980.

### Description

The Ile de France is a large, smooth-bodied, polled mutton sheep. It produces strong white wool of acceptable quality, free from coloured fibres.

### Production norms

Age at first lambing: 23 months

42-day weight: 19 – 22 kg

100-day weight: 34 – 41 kg

Adult ewes: 70 – 90 kg

Fleece weight of ewes: 3 – 4.5 kg

Fibre diameter: 23 – 27  $\mu$ m.



Photo: Wool.ca

### Products

- Meat – Early maturity ensures a slaughter lamb ready for market at an early age which produces a quality carcass at 100 days.
- Wool – Strong white wool, free of kemp and coloured fibres.
- Crossbred lambs - Used as sire line for cross breeding. Crossbred lambs are heavier with a better fat distribution. The breed is recommended for cross breeding with the Merino for slaughter lamb production because it is a white wool breed, free from kemp and coloured fibres.

### Normal production environment

Ile De France breeders are found in the Free State, Western Cape, Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal provinces.

### Breed numbers

There are currently 70 Ile De France breeders who are members of the breeders' society. There are about 8 000 ewes and 2 600 rams registered with the breeders' society. The total number of Ile De France sheep in South Africa is unknown.