



South African sheep breeds: Ronderib Afrikaner

SCOPE: This Info-pack provides a brief description of the Ronderib Afrikaner sheep breed.

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

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Type

Indigenous fat-tailed meat breed.

Photo: Tino Herselman



Origin of the breed

The Afrikaner sheep had their origin in the Middle East and North East Africa. They migrated southward with the Khoikhoen people, moving into South Africa between 400 and 600 AD and migrating down the west coast to the southern tip of the continent. At that stage, the sheep were multi-coloured and were commonly known as Cape fat-tailed sheep. In the 18th century, Cape Dutch farmers began selecting against coloured coats. These sheep formed the basis of the present day Afrikaner.

In 1937, 27 breeders formed a breeders' society and in 1960 the Blinkhaar Ronderib Afrikaner Breeders' Society was established.

Description

The name "Ronderib" is derived from the fact that the rib bones are oval in shape. There are two known varieties of this breed, namely, the Blinkhaar Ronderib Afrikaner that has soft, fine, shiny hair, and the Steekhaar Ronderib Afrikaner that has coarse hair. The latter was thought to be extinct.

However, twenty animals were found in 1995 on a farm near Upington.

The Ronderib Afrikaner is one of the larger breeds of indigenous sheep. The head is long and narrow with a concave profile and roman nose. The breed has typical hanging ears. Rams usually have amber coloured horns and ewes have small horns or none at all. Polled rams do occur and these are in demand for cross breeding. The legs are long and thin, the body is deep with an oval-shaped centrepiece. This conformation allows the animal to cover long distances in search of grazing and water.

The body is covered with a light cream fleece of soft wool with smooth, glossy hairs. The legs, chest, belly and face are covered with cream coloured, soft, glossy, short hairs. The body covering is shed during summer. The soft, shiny covering and round-ribbed (blinkhaar ronderib) appearance is typical of the breed and strict standards are maintained by the breed society.



Photo: Gretha Snyman

These tails generally weigh between 2 and 3 kg but can weigh as much as 5 kg. The tail has 3 sections. The wide main section hangs down from the rump and is as wide as the rump. This goes straight down to above the hocks. This narrows down to the second section turning upward for a third of the length of the first section. This section has no covering on the outside and forms a sharp point where the third section attaches. This is like a whip and is covered with short hairs, has no fat and hangs straight down the middle of the tail.

Production norms

The Ronderib Afrikaner ram is active all year round and make good teaser rams.

Age at first lambing: 8 months

Purebred lambs grow slowly and reach slaughter mass at 6 to 7 months but does not present a good grade carcass. Therefore they are rather marketed at 10 to 12 months.

Average mature weight rams: 60-65 kg
Average mature weight ewes: 50-55 kg.



Photo: Rarebreedsfarm.com.au

Products

- Meat - The carcass is regarded as a fat-tailed type and cannot compete for the highest grades.
- Fat tail - During the winter months the fat tail is quite in demand to be used with beef and game. The cubes of fat are firm and used for sausage making.

- Skins – Tanned skins are of superior quality. The skins are classified as glover skins.
- The skin with its shiny hair on is used for blankets - a value-added product.



Photo: Rarebreedsfarm.com.au

Role in breed development

The Blinkhaar Ronderib Afrikaner contributed to the development of the following local breeds:

- Vandor
- Van Rooy
- Afrino.

Normal production environment

Arid to semi-desert grassland.

Breed numbers

A few breeders are located around Richmond, Philipstown, De Aar and Loxton in the Northern Cape Province. The total number of Ronderib Afrikaner sheep in South Africa is unknown.

References

This info-pack was compiled from various sources of information.

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