



South African sheep breeds: Suffolk

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

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

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Type

Meat breed.



Photo: Theselfsufficientliving.com

Origin of the breed

The Suffolk breed originated almost 200 years ago on the rugged southeastern coast of England, the result of crossing Southdown rams and Norfolk Horn ewes. A British major, who lived in the Orange Free State, first imported Suffolk sheep to South Africa around 1896. Soon after the Anglo Boer War, major Kitty Apthorp brought Suffolk sheep to his farm.

In the years between 1900 and 1959, the breed suffered various ups and downs. In 1928, the first breeders' society was constituted. Unfortunately the Society did not survive and all registrations were again taken over by the Stud Book Association.

The inaugural meeting of the present society was held in Bloemfontein on the 5th of September 1959. In October 1960, the society was properly constituted and the certificate of incorporation was issued by SA Studbook Association.

Description

It is a large, white medium wool, meat breed with a distinctive all-black head and legs that are free of wool. Both rams and ewes are polled. Suffolk lambs grow fast and yield heavy, high cutability carcasses of the type demanded by today's health conscience consumers.

Production norms

8 week weight: 32 kg
21 week weight: 70 kg
Adult ewes: 80 – 100 kg
Fleece weight of ewes: 2.2 - 3.6 kg
Fibre diameter: 25 – 33 μ m
Staple length: 5 – 8.5 cm.

Suffolk cross lambs could achieve 40 kg weights at 15 to 16 weeks with the ideal 3 mm back fat.



Photo: Glenhoandbaileys.com

Products

- Meat – Early maturity ensures a slaughter lamb ready for market at an early age. The meat contains a high proportion of lean meat to fat.

- Wool – It is renowned for durability and is ideal for home spinners and contains no kemp.
- Crossbred lambs - Used as sire line for cross breeding. Crossbred lambs are easily identified by their black heads and hoofs. Under favourable conditions Suffolk lambs mature for market as early as 9 to 12 weeks, or can be carried on to heavy weights.



Photo: Meadowrig.com



Photo: Bib.ge

Normal production environment

Suitable for crossbreeding in any climatic conditions.



Photo: Suffolksheep.org

Breed numbers

At present, the breed society has 15 members. The total number of Suffolk sheep in South Africa is unknown.



Photo: Highfieldhousefarm.co.uk

References

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

www.suffolk.co.za