

Livestock Judging Guide



By

Neal Smith

Extension Area Specialist – 4-H

Module 6: Sheep



Judging Market Lambs

Judging Market Lambs



- ❧ Ideal market lamb:
 - ❧ Weighs approximately 110 to 120 lbs.
 - ❧ Fat covering extremely important:
 - ❧ Be able to detect lamb's backbone with light finger-tip pressure
 - ❧ Extremely definite and sharp backbone indicates not enough finish
 - ❧ Not able to feel backbone = too fat
 - ❧ Correctly finished = 0.10 to 0.20 inches of backfat

Judging Market Lambs



- ❧ Ideal market lamb:
 - ❧ Firm, hard finish is desirable
 - ❧ Abundance of muscling in hindsaddle
 - ❧ Heavy muscled leg and loin
 - ❧ Adequate size and scale
 - ❧ Bigger, longer, heavy-boned



Ideal Market Lamb



Legs placed wide apart

Judging Market Lambs



- ❧ Steps to Judging Sheep
 - ❧ Begin from the ground and work up
 - ❧ Then from rear to front
 - ❧ Rank based on traits of importance they possess
 - ❧ Put greatest emphasis on most valuable traits
 - ❧ Eliminate easy placings
 - ❧ Rank the remainder on bases of volume of important traits

Judging Market Lambs



- ☞ Ranking of Traits for Market Lambs
 - ☞ Degree of muscling
 - ☞ Degree of finish
 - ☞ Balance and style
 - ☞ Frame size
 - ☞ Soundness and structural correctness

Judging Market Lambs



☞ Evaluating Degree of Muscling

☞ First - evaluated through center of leg for thickness

☞ Second - Examine width between rear feet

☞ On the move

☞ Standing

☞ Compare base width to top width

☞ Heavy muscled lambs - base width = top width

☞ Don't be tricked by additional width due to fat cover

Judging Market Lambs



☞ Evaluating Degree of Muscling

☞ Other areas to evaluate degree of muscling:

☞ Length of hindsaddle (loin and leg)

☞ From last rib to dock

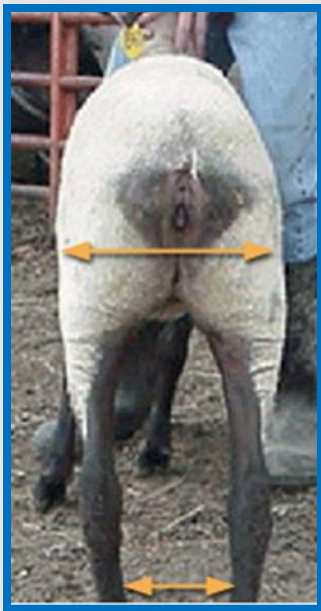
☞ Width & length of loin

☞ Shape over rack (grooves shape to the rack is desired)

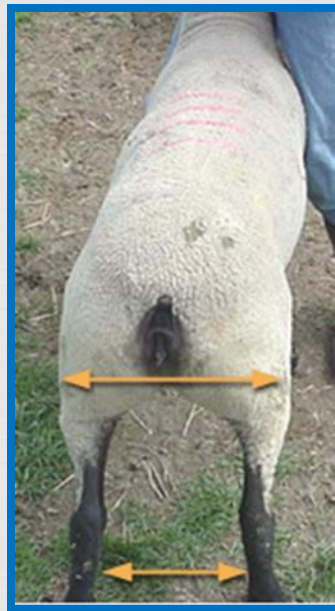
Judging Market Lambs



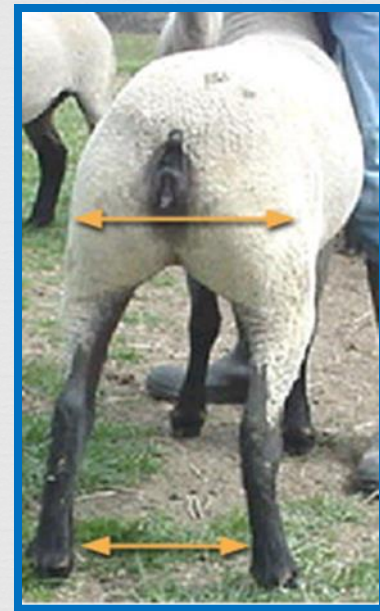
Center Leg and Base Width



Light muscled
(Narrow width)



Average muscled
(Average width)



Heavy muscled
(Wide based)

Square,
wide top
shape

Judging Market Lambs



- Width and Length of Loin
 - Long, wide loin is desirable

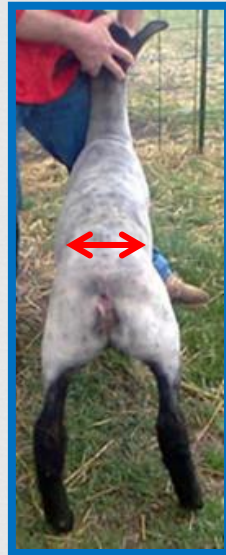


Areas to evaluate in determining width and length of loin

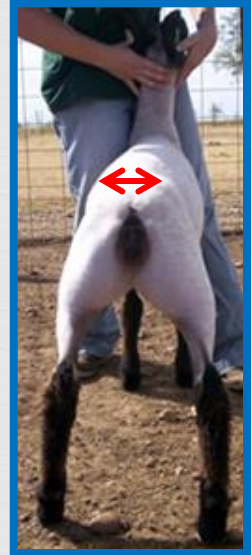
Judging Market Lambs



Long, wide loin



Short, narrow loin



Judging Market Lambs



Length of Hindsaddle

Contains most valuable cuts

Should be greater in length & weight than foresaddle



Judging Market Lambs



☞ Shape Over Rack

☞ Fairly high-priced cut

☞ Grooved shape over rack indicates high degree of muscling

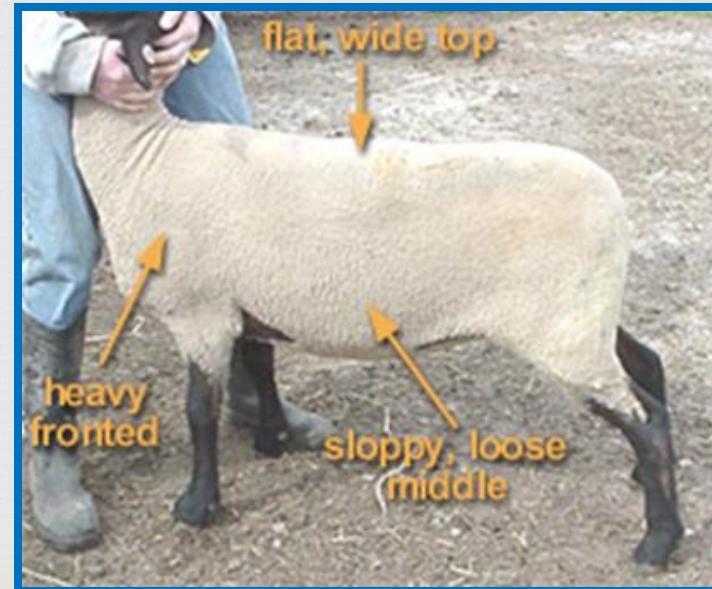


Judging Market Lambs



❧ Evaluating Degree of Finish

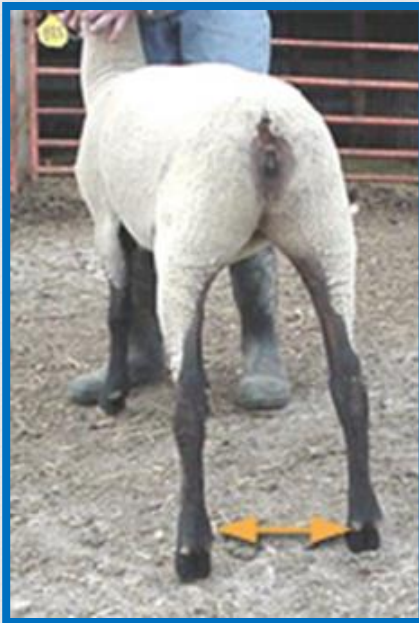
- ❧ Should be lean with 0.15 to 0.20 inches of backfat thickness
- ❧ Degree of finish is influenced by:
 - ❧ Amount of muscling
 - ❧ Frame size
 - ❧ Stage of maturity
- ❧ Fat sheep will be widest over their top



Judging Market Lambs

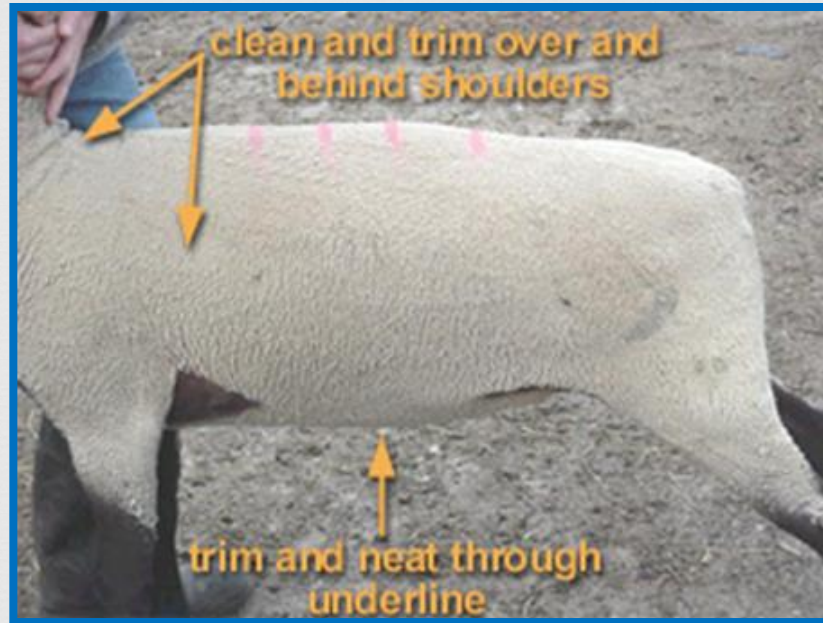


Ideal Finish



Very trim, with base width at least as wide as top

Ideal Finish



Very clean and trim over & behind the shoulder, extremely trim & neat through underline

Judging Market Lambs



☞ Evaluating Balance and Style

☞ Equal portions of:

☞ Width

☞ Depth

☞ Length (special emphasis)

☞ Should be wide and deep through rear (leg)

☞ Tight and trim through front end

☞ Majority of the weight is in back half

Judging Market Lambs



Proper Balance



Proper Balance

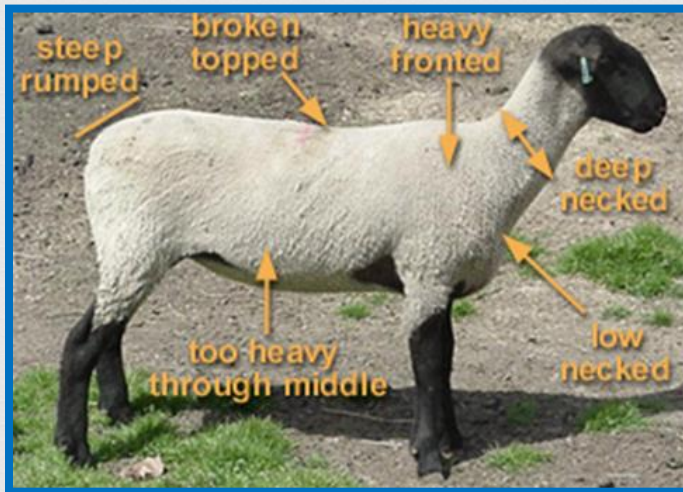


“Christmas Tree” Shape, when viewed from Side & Rear,
with majority of weight in the back half

Judging Market Lambs



Poorly Balance



Heavy-fronted, deep and low necked, broken topped, too heavy through middle & steep rumped

Lacks Balance



Straight and stylish, but lacks balance, wrong "Christmas tree" shape, too heavy-fronted

Judging Market Lambs



☞ Evaluating Balance and Style

☞ Style deals with:

- ☞ Correctness of structure
- ☞ Straightness of design

☞ Sheep should have:

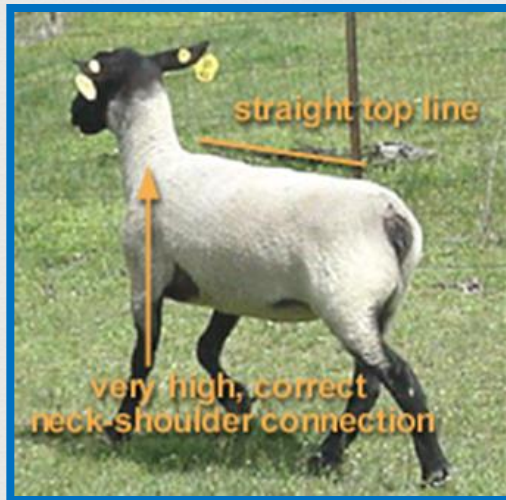
- ☞ Straight top line
- ☞ Neat shoulder that blends smoothly into neck and ribs



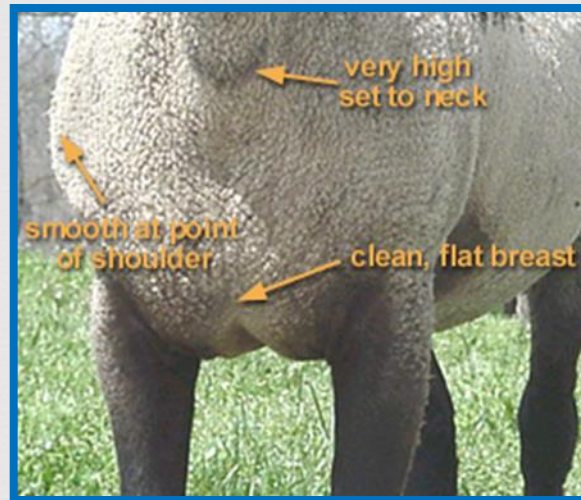
Judging Market Lambs



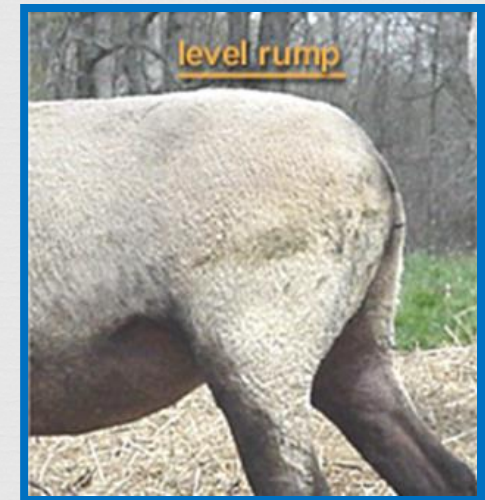
Examples of Proper Style



Straight top line, high & correct neck-shoulder connection



Neat front, smooth at point of shoulder, clean, flat breast area and very high neck set

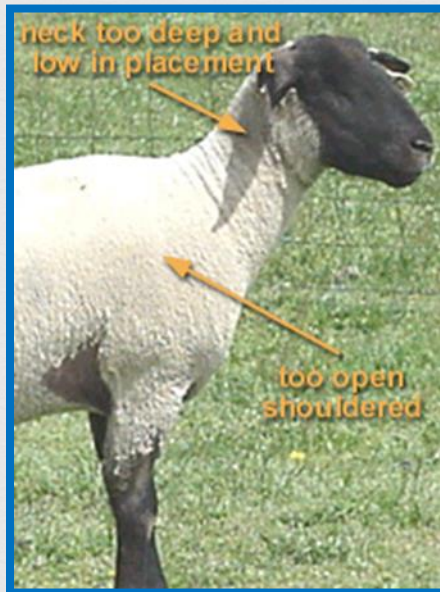


Level rump structure that is desired in sheep

Judging Market Lambs

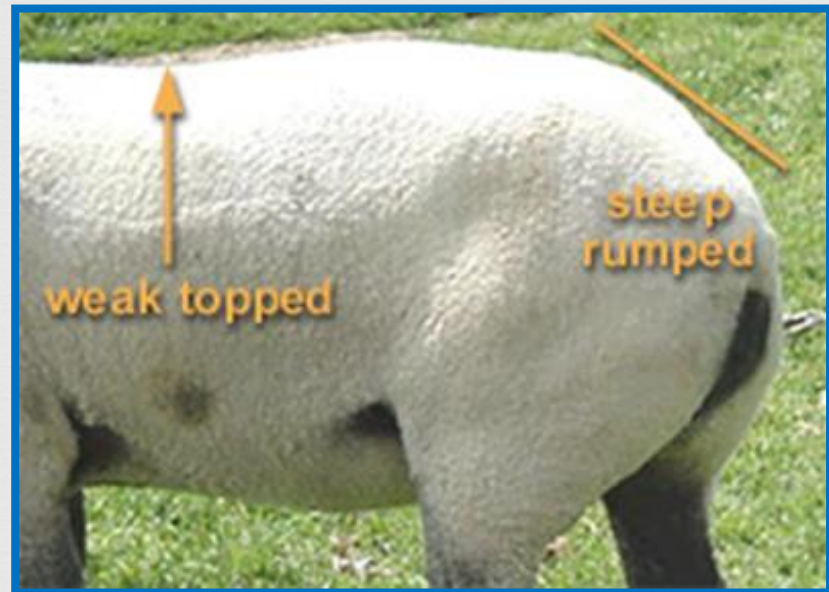


Lacks Style



Too deep necked, too low in neck placement & too opened shouldered

Lacks Style



Weak topped & too steep in its rump

Judging Market Lambs



œ Evaluating Soundness

- œ Correct set or angle to feet, legs & joints are extremely important to:
 - œ Production (growth)
 - œ Longevity (soundness)
- œ Evaluate soundness by observing:
 - œ Feet and Pasterns
 - œ Hocks
 - œ Knees
 - œ Rump
 - œ Shoulders

Judging Market Lambs



Feet and Pasterns

- Strong with slight angle
- Provides cushion for joints

Correct



Big feet with even toes, set flat on surface and square with animal's body

Correct

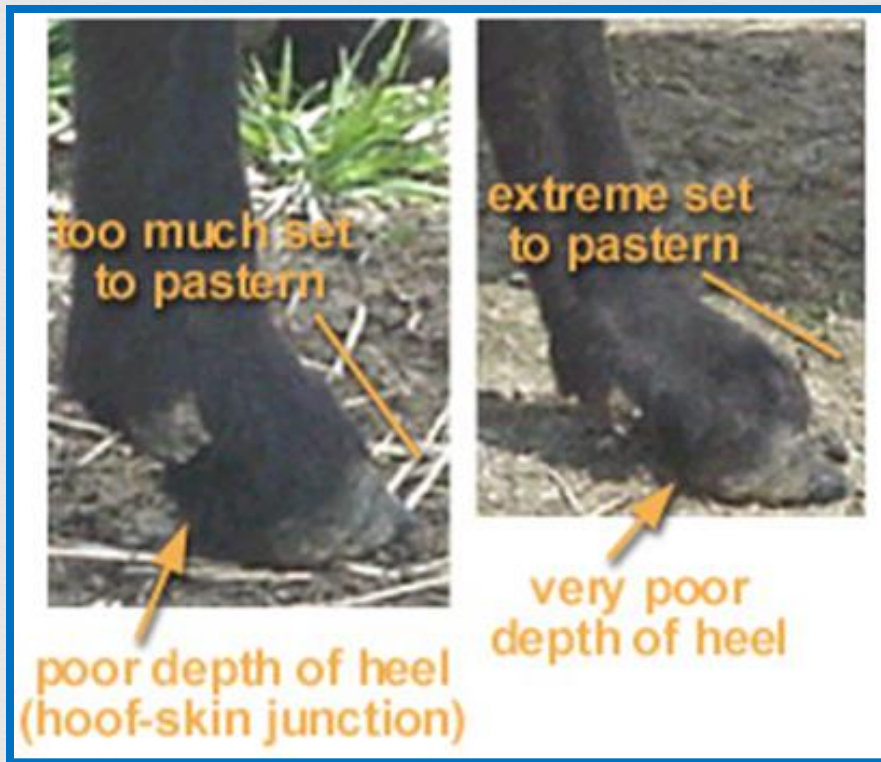


Correct set to pastern, good depth of heel and big foot setting flat & even

Judging Market Lambs



Incorrect Structure



Judging Market Lambs



∞ Hocks

- ∞ Correct structure is critical to:
 - ∞ Mobility
 - ∞ Longevity
- ∞ Should have 20 degree of set or angle
- ∞ Should be clean, flat & free of swelling
- ∞ Gives flex & power on the move
- ∞ Good measure of correctness:
 - ∞ Ability to get rear leg beyond the dock when walking



Correct set to hocks

Judging Market Lambs



Sickle-hocked



Too much set to the hocks

Judging Market Lambs



☞ **Knees** should be:

- ☞ Square with the body when viewed from the front
- ☞ Slightly set back when viewed from the side

Buck-kneed



Knee “bucked over”, lacks cushion & will restrict movement

Knock-kneed



Knee bowed slightly inward

Judging Market Lambs



☞ Rump

☞ Ideal rump is:

- ☞ Average to above average in length
- ☞ Very slightly sloping from front to back

Short, steep
rump



Long, level
rump



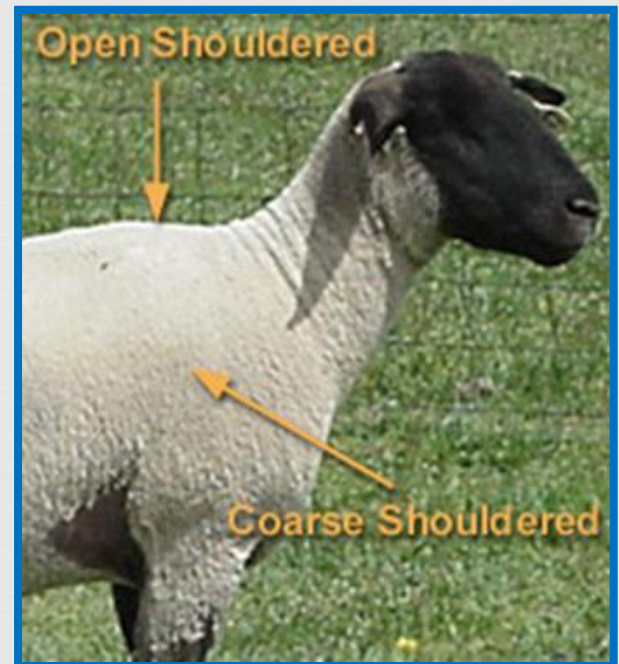
Judging Market Lambs



☞ Shoulders

- ☞ Proper shoulder angle is critical for good length of stride
- ☞ Shape & tightness of front end is important for proper balance
- ☞ Point of shoulder should be trim & smooth

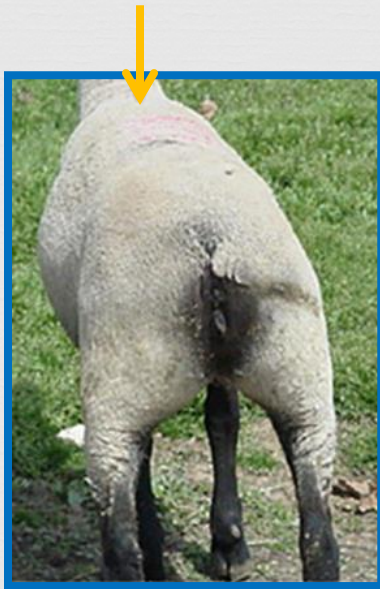
Incorrect shoulder structure



Judging Market Lambs



Examples of correct shoulder structure



Desired tight shape at the top of the shoulder



Shoulder blends smoothly into neck & forerib

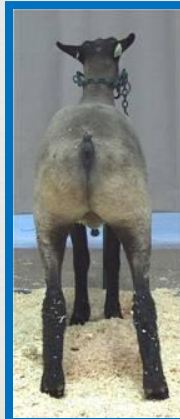
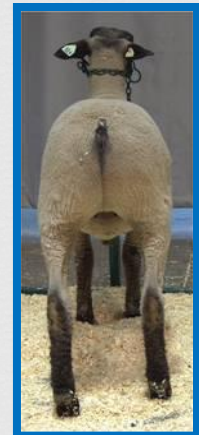
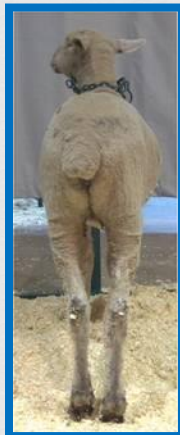


Desired smoothness at the point of the shoulder

Test Your Skills



Place this class of market lambs



Official Placing



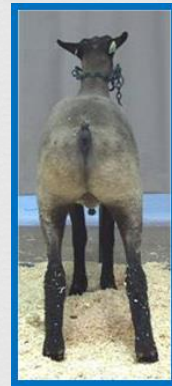
Official Placing: 2 - 3 - 4 - 1

Cuts: 2 - 4 - 5

1st



2nd



3rd



4th

