**The Minimum Standards and Recommendations**

In order to protect the breed, the Society, its members and potential buyers Council of the Southdown Sheep Society have agreed the following **minimum standards** should be used to guide veterinary inspection at its Official Sales. In addition, they have agreed **recommendations** that should help vendors prepare and buyers identify better sheep.

**When the Minimum Standards can be used**

These Minimum Standards may be used at its Official Sales\*, and at the discretion of the Society, at other events are held where sheep are eligible to participate

as being registered with the Society. Including \*Premier Sale at Worcester \*RBST Sale at Melton Mowbray

**How the Minimum Standards are to be used**

Each Standard and its associated information is to be used to inform the judgement of a Veterinary Surgeon as appointed by the Society.

Decisions are binding. The Society has procedures in place for handling complaints. At all times any conflicts of interest should be declared and avoided.

Sheep that do not meet the minimum standards cannot not be offered for sale at the Society’s Official Sales.

| Minimum Standards | Associated information |
| --- | --- |
| Identification | Sheep must be identified as required by animal identification legislation. |
| General Health | Sheep must be free from signs of disease, infectious or otherwise. Signs of previous disease/injury are acceptable if notified in advance and they do not affect the welfare or function of the sheep. If potential for doubt vendor advised to obtain Veterinary Certification beforehand. |
| Ewe - udder and external genitalia | Palpation and visual inspection of udder for evidence of two functional teats and significant damage or deformity to the external genitalia.  With prior declaration in the sale catalogue older ewes with damaged udders or teats may be admitted provided there is at least one functioning teat. |
| Ram - Testicles and external genitalia | Palpation and visual inspection of testes for evidence of two functional testicles and absence of evidence of significant damage or deformity to the external genitalia. |
| Teeth | Not under/overshot or misaligned permanent incisor teeth. |
| Feet | No lameness, and all feet in good condition, with no significant deformities |
| Tail | The Welfare of Livestock (Prohibited Operations) Regulations 1982/7 prohibit short-tail docking of sheep unless sufficient tail is retained to cover the vulva in the case of female sheep and the anus in the case of male sheep. If these conditions are found by the Society such sheep are not eligible for show or sale at Society events. Vendors and buyers should be mindful of their responsibilities under the Animal Welfare Acts, |
| Weight | Shearling Ram – 70kg Ram Lamb – 40kg Shearling Ewe – 50kg   Ewe Lamb – 29kg  To take account of weight loss in transit a discretionary 5% reduction in these weights can be used. |
| Condition | There should be a reason acceptable to Veterinary Surgeon as appointed by the Society if the condition score is under 1.5 or over 4.5. |

**How the Recommendations are to be used**

Each recommendation is a guidance on best practice, these recommendations can assist vendors and buyers to prepare and select better quality sheep.

| Recommendations | Associated information |
| --- | --- |
| Identification | In addition to legal animal identification marks, sheep tags may also carry a flock mark |
| General Health | Vendors are advised to provide information of recent vaccinations and treatments in the sale catalogue, and to offer buyers details of the animal’s full health history. Buyers are encouraged to obtain this information from the vendor. |
| Ewe - udder and external genitalia | Older ewes with damaged udders or teats can often successfully rear a pair of lambs however the buyer should discuss with the vendor their knowledge of the ewe. In some situations, it may be necessary to foster or hand rear a twin. Any decision to purchase ewe with a damaged udder is entirely that of the buyer.  Some ewes have brown urine staining of the wool around their backend, this is usually due to a misaligned vulva. Think carefully before purchasing these sheep as they may be more susceptible to fly strike |
| Ram - Testicles and external genitalia | The presence of two functional testicles and even the results from a recent fertility test do not guarantee the fertility of the ram. Many factors can affect ram fertility. If buyers experience problems with ram fertility within 3 months of purchase, then they should seek veterinary confirmation of the situation. Provided the ram is returned, vendors are likely to offer either a refund (including vet fees) or a replacement ram.  Testicle size: Industry guidance on the circumference for testicles of larger breeds is 30cm for ram lambs and 32cm for shearlings. The society is considering monitoring testicle size at its sales with a view to identifying if a different measurement is more suitable for a Southdown. |
| Teeth | As sheep age they can lose their teeth and become broken mouthed; this can have an impact on their performance but with sympathetic feeding and management many sheep continue to thrive with very few teeth. |
| Feet | It is important that feet are well shaped and that hooves not over-trimmed. Animals that are susceptible to foot rot should not be entered for sales and ought to be culled |
| Tail | Take extra care when rubber ringing lamb’s tails (to be done within 7 days of birth). Remove any faeces and allow at least three finger widths (>6cm) measured from the underside of the tail. |
| Weight | Shearling and lamb weights can vary depending on age, time of year, geography, rearing system and genetics. It is well established that there can be some weight loss in transit and if animals are not appropriately fed there can be further weight loss if staying overnight before the sale.  Vendors are strongly recommended to check animal weights well in advance of the sale to ensure there is sufficient time to address any potential shortfall in weight. |
| Condition | Generally, the Southdown will usually be in the range or condition score 2 or above to condition score of 3.5 for ewes, and 4 for rams. There will be variation depending on time of year, geography, and variations between years. <https://www.sruc.ac.uk/download/downloads/id/1592/tn658_condition_scoring_of_sheep.pdf> |