

# Some popular breeds



Much on the information about breeds is based on, *Storey's Guide to Raising Sheep*, by Paula Simmons & Carol Ekarius (2001. Storey Publishing, North Adams, MA)

# Border Cheviot

- A mountain breed – Cheviot hills on the England-Scotland border
- Lack strong herding instinct but do well in small flocks
- Easy lambing, high twinning rate; hardy lambs; good meat quality/quantity
- Light weight, medium fleece – good for hand spinning
- Tend to be high strung; jump fences



# Border Leicester

(pronounced Lester)

- Popular English breed
- One of 3 Leicester breeds (Blue-Faced Leicester & Leicester Longwool)
- Prolific, good mothers, fast growing lambs
- Easy to manage
- Medium size; docile disposition
- Excellent wool



# Columbia

- Large breed, bred for rangeland by USDA & university researchers in 1912 (Lincoln ram + Rambouillet ewe)
- Excellent herding behavior; docile
- Provide large amounts of wool and meat
- Hardy lambs
- Do well on small operations as well as on rangeland



# Corriedale

- Very old wool breed (Merino+Lincoln+Leicester cross)
- Most in S. America; popular in the Hudson Valley
- Large frame; good wool; good meat
- Long-lived; good breeder
- Strong herding instinct



# Cotswold

- Large breed
- Long, lustrous, coarse wool
- Developed in the Cotswold Hills of Great Britain from Leicester Longwool foundational stock
- Imported to the US to cross with range sheep, but fell out of favor as interest shifted from wool to meat breeds
- Good breed for small flocks; docile, easily managed
- Needs 2 shearings/year



# Merino

- Several Merino breeds:
  - Delaine (Type C – least folding of skin) – most common breed in North America; low twinning rate
  - Booroola (Contains F-gene which increases multiple birth rate)
- Mid-size breed
- Excellent flocking instincts
- Breed all year long; slow lamb growth – not highly desirable for meat
- The most desirable wool in the industry; very soft



# Dorper

- Originally bred in South Africa from Horned Dorset and Blackhead Persian sheep
- Two types: black face; white face
- Fairly easy to handle
- Hair sheep – no need to shear, but will put on some wool in the winter
- Very weather-hardy; good herding instincts
- Extended lambing season
- Excellent meat



# Dorset

- Both horned and polled forms exist
- From England and Wales – a good dual purpose (meat & wool) breed
- Originally used as dairy sheep as well – good milk quantity
- Today, mostly used for meat (they can lamb twice a year)
- Pretty good wool (the breed was originally produced by crossing Merino with Welsh horned sheep)
- Popular in New York



# East Friesian

- Large breed from Holland & Germany
- Large milk volume; excellent for cheeses
- Good lambers and lambs grow fast
- Not particularly good meat; but good wool production



# Hampshire

- Large, English breed; short, medium wool, good meat
- Require very good pasture
- Good milk supply
- Lambs grow rapidly and carcass quality is generally considered quite good



# Icelandic Sheep

- Considered a primitive breed; brought to Iceland by Vikings 900 years ago – account for 25% of Iceland's agricultural output
- Used for meat, milk & wool; have an outer & soft, inner fleece – produces Lopi wool
- Aggressive, poor herders
- Lambs born small, but grow fast



# Jacob Sheep

- Old breed, of uncertain origin
- Piebold (dark-white mottling), lustrous fleece
- Relatively small size (100-120 lb)
- Lean carcass
- Not a docile breed



# Katahdin

- A medium size hair breed
- First produced in Maine, from crosses with breeds from the Caribbean and British Isles
- Good lambers; good mothers
- Produce lean, meaty carcasses
- Do well in a flock; fairly docile, though they can be a bit skittish



# Leicester Longwool

- Small-medium sized breed produced by Robert Bakewell in the 1750s
- Foundational breed for many others
- Nearly became extinct; being brought back by VA Tech and Colonial Williamsburg
- Originally bred for meat, but today breeders focus on wool
- Fairly docile and good herders
- Work well in a small operations



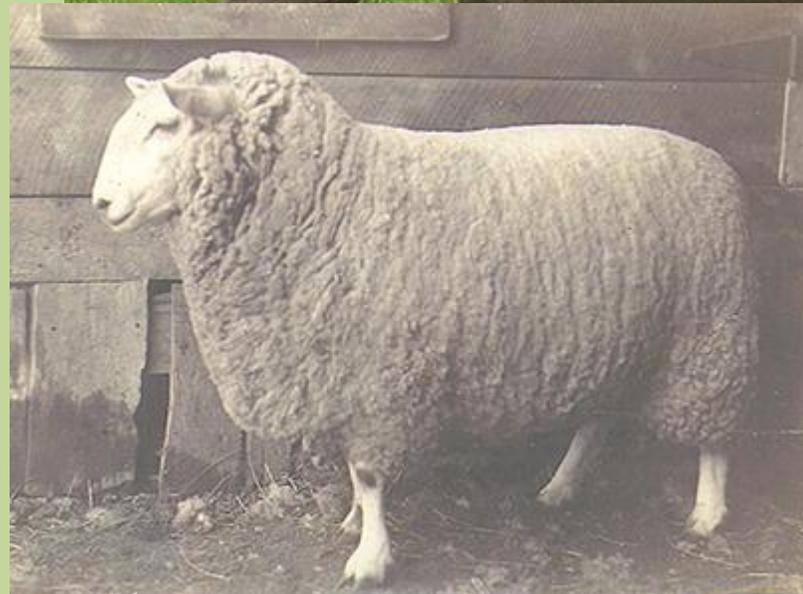
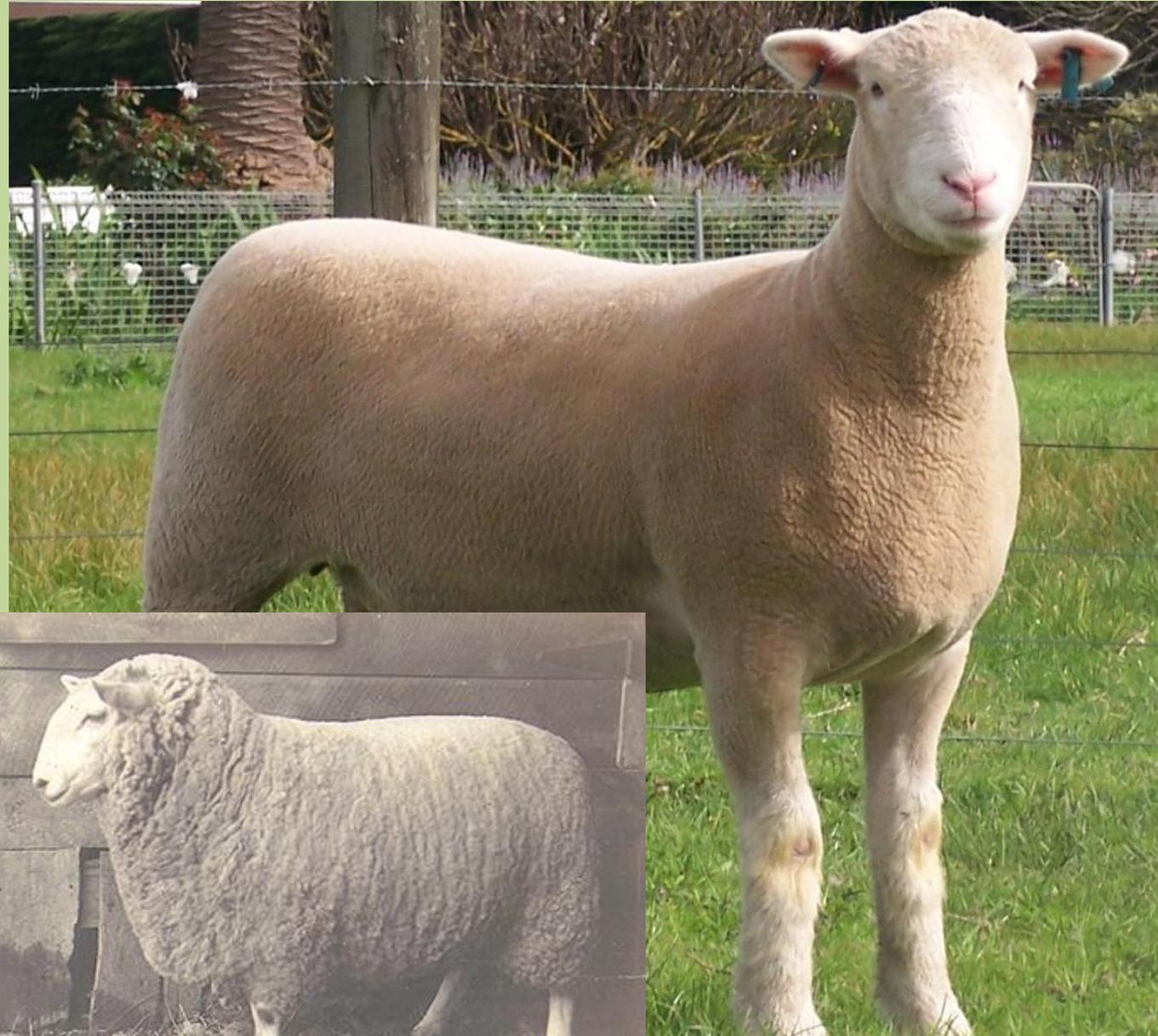
# Lincoln Longwool

- Large breed that requires good pasture
- Not especially hardy in cold and/or wet climates
- Strong, dense, heavy, lustrous wool that is good for hand spinning and weaving



# Montadale

- Bred in 1932 by E.H. Mattingly, who crossed a Columbia ram with Cheviot ewes
- Intent was to bring together the open range capabilities of western sheep, with the quality meat production of Midwestern breeds
- Mattingly produced a large, range-capable breed that can lamb easily, produce excellent wool and meat
- Can be “scrappy”; my border collie trainer bred these for a while but has given up on them



# Oxford

- Large breed developed in Britain in the 1830s
- Used primarily for meat; excellent carcasses
- Short fleece
- Often used as a sire breed (rams weigh up to 300 lbs.)
- Docile; do well on farms
- Small head makes for easy lambing



# Rambouillet

- Developed by French King Louis XVI in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century - Cross between Spanish Merino and regional sheep
- Very large, stocky, hearty breed
- Excellent, low shrinkage fleece; good meat
- Excellent herding characteristics
- Resist parasites but they have white hooves leads to some concern about adaptability on damp soils



# Romney

- One of the world's most popular breeds
- Resist foot rot and parasites typical of damp environments
- Ewes up to 225 lbs.; rams to 275 lbs.
- Do well in the Hudson Valley; not in hot environments
- Good quality, long wool – excellent for handspinning
- Good carcasses – meat has delicate flavor
- Docile; easy to manage



# Scottish Blackface

- Horned breed
- Hardy mountain breed; do well in cool, wet climates
- Long, course wool; used in Harris tweed
- Excellent meat
- Good mothers



# Shetland

- Small, hardy, primitive breed from the Shetland Islands
- Was in danger of extinction; came to the US in the 1980s
- Ewes are polled; rams are horned
- Fine but strong fleece; 11 different colors – highly prized
- Meat: chops and legs are small
- There is a large variation in personality from docile to skittish



# Southdown

- Old and popular meat breed
- Moderate size carcass
- Medium wool; short staple
- Good in a variety of climates and terrains



# Suffolk

- British breed produced by crossing Southdown rams with Norfolk ewes
- Hardy, prolific, fast growing, very efficient with feed
- Good on open range
- Among the most popular breeds in the US
- Produce high quality meat
- Not used for wool



# Texel

- Bred in northern Europe, especially Holland; brought to the US by USDA in 1985
- Hardy, adapt well to many climates and terrains
- Good foragers but poor herding instincts – not a very good choice for the open range
- Tend to have a high rate of twinning and tripletting



# Tunis

- Breed developed in the US, ca. 1799, from Tunisian Barbary sheep
  - Thomas Jefferson had a flock and George Washington had a Tunis ram
- Widely used in the Southeast and other warm climates but can be used almost anywhere – after the Civil War they were raised in New England & Great Lakes region
- Medium size (ewes up to 160 lbs; rams to 225 lbs), hardy, docile
- Can breed out of season; Good mothers
- Medium wool



# Hybrid Vigor

- Unless you are selling a specific kind of breeding stock you may do better crossing breeds
- Get the attributes best suited to your land and operational goals
- Increase genetic diversity of your flock
- Genetic diversity creates
  - Health
  - Faster growth

