



National Romeldale CVM Conservancy

Romeldale CVM Sheep Breed Description

DESCRIPTION

Romeldale/CVM sheep are a multi-purpose sheep breed used for both their fine wool and mild tasting meat. Romeldale sheep are white and natural colors; their CVM derivatives come in a wide range of natural colors. Romeldale sheep are a composite sheep breed, developed in Gerber, California in the early 1900s. To create this breed A.T. Spencer crossed New Zealand Marsh Romney rams over Rambouillet ewes. J.K. Sexton and his family further established the Romeldale sheep breed, and it was within their flock that the first CVM (California Variegated Mutant) sheep were born. In subsequent years, Glen Eidman, a partner of the Sexton family, developed the CVM derivative of the Romeldale sheep. Romeldale/CVM sheep are long-lived, have docile and alert personalities, and are an intelligent sheep breed.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Adaptive Traits

Romeldale/CVM sheep have an adaptive foraging ability that served them well in the harsh environment in which they were developed. In order to survive in this environment, they also developed heat tolerance and resistance to both hoof rot and gastrointestinal parasites. They flock well and are easily managed.

Size

Romeldale/CVM sheep are a medium sized sheep. Mature ewes weigh approximately 140-190 lbs. Mature rams weigh approximately 200-250 lbs. This size makes them large enough to be productive while also nimble, walking well and navigating difficult environments.

Body, Hindquarters and Legs

Romeldale/CVM sheep have well-placed, graceful necks positioned above deep, wide chests with well-sprung, wide and deep ribs. They have strong, broad, medium-length backs leading to a broad rump. The body should be deep, as a large body capacity provides for good feed conversion and plenty of room for lambs as they develop. From the rear view, the depth of body is reflected in the distance from the tail to scrotum or udder. The inside of the hind legs has good muscling, indicating good meat-producing ability. The tail is set slightly low, which assures good movement as well as easy lambing. The underbelly should have a covering of very short belly wool, and legs are clean of wool, with the lower legs covered in fine hair, allowing the sheep to forage and move about without the hassle and dangers of stickers and vegetative matter collecting in their fleece. The legs should be sturdy, well-positioned, of medium length, and have good bone. While the legs should be well-centered from the shoulder and should be straight to the hooves, a mild degree of “kneeing in” from the shoulder to the knee is allowed, as this is an adaptive trait developed for walking on narrow paths in rough terrain. However, the angle from the knee to the upright pastern should be straight and not appear “knock-kneed.” Similarly, there should be no evidence of low (“soft” or sagging) pasterns, an extremely steep and upright hoof structure (“club” or “goat foot”), or splayed feet (splayed toes). There should also be no evidence of leg faults (“over at the knee”, “calf knee”, “pigeon toed”, “toed out”, “cow hocked”, etc.). Leg, fetlock, and pastern conformation is an important indicator of overall strength, leading to good longevity. Hooves may be either black, brown or white. White hooves may have striping in black or brown. Neck and shoulders should largely be free of skin folds, which provides for easier shearing, less variability in wool grade, and less susceptibility to fly strike.

Head and Face

Romeldale/CVM sheep have clean faces free of wool (preventing wool-blindness) and covered with fine hair. Wool may be found on the forehead. They should be broad between the eyes, with large nostrils. From the profile view, the chin is level with the tail. Muzzles are broad and full and may be either white, black or brown. Length of head and muzzle is in balance with the rest of the body. The mouth should be sound, with incisor teeth meeting the pad and not protruding beyond it. This provides for good forage ability over a long life. Romeldale/CVM sheep may be either polled or horned. Ram horns are heavy and spiral out, down and forward, while ewe horns are light, curving down and forward neatly at the tips. Horns of both sexes should be wide apart at the base with spirals that do not crowd the neck or jaws. Horns should be well-developed with distinct corrugations and varying in color depending on sheep color.

Romeldale/CVM sheep have clear, bright eyes with no evidence of corneal ulceration. Their eye orbits are large, wide apart, and clean of wool to avoid wool blindness.

Romeldale/CVM sheep have medium-length, alert ears positioned straight out of the head, and pointing slightly forward. Their ears are covered with fine hair and are curved along the back and dip inward just before the tip, giving the ear tip a sculpted, fluted appearance.

Sexual Characteristics

Romeldale/CVM rams are active breeders with a strong libido. Testicles should be well-developed and hang down a distance from the body depending on temperature. The scrotum is covered in fine hairs and non-split. The epididymis should be free of swelling, firmness, or other signs of previous infection.

Romeldale/CVM ewes are non-seasonal, prolific breeders with ease of lambing and high rates of twinning. They have well-placed, well-formed udders that provide support for multiple lambs. Udders should be symmetrical and free of firm areas or other irregularities. Romeldale/CVM ewes are attentive, strong mothers.

Fleece

Romeldale/CVM sheep have a fine, soft, pliable, and elastic fleece with a tight, even crimp. The fleece has uniform structure and is uniform in grade over the entire fleece. This dense fleece does not part down the back and is found only on the body and forehead of the sheep. Unlike those of some other breeds of sheep, this fleece grows softer with age, and it can become darker with age in the colored derivatives of these sheep. Romeldale/CVM rams produce a fleece weighing 6-12 lbs. Ewe fleeces will weigh 6-10 lbs.

Fleeces have staple lengths of 3-6 inches, with fiber diameters between 20-25 microns (Bradford counts of 60-64). Historically, this narrow range was closely guarded, making the breed a reliable producer of this specific type of wool.

Romeldale sheep are traditionally white, with black, brown, or pink pigment only on their face, ears, and legs. Their CVM derivatives include those Romeldale/CVM sheep with badger markings on the face, a dark muzzle, striping down the sides of the face, dark underbelly, dark legs with black and/or brown and may have white markings, dark chest from the chin all the way to the underbelly, a dark area around the tail, and are lighter bodied with a clear bifurcation (separation) in color between the dorsal (back) and ventral (abdomen) portions of the body. Natural Colored Romeldale sheep include all other sheep that are solid or patterned natural colors ranging from white to brown or black, and they may or may not have spotting or striping.