

Selection

1. Eye appeal

- The lamb will usually have something going for it, including balance and correctness.
- Stand back and watch from a distance.

2. The top of the lamb

- The shape from the shoulder to the hip should be like an upside down V or wedge.
- The shoulders should be tightly set leading into a firm, wide rack that gets wider into and through the hip.
- The hip should be full and square.

3. The legs (looking at the side)

- The leg should be full through the stifle.
- The leg should carry a good amount of volume through the twist and extending down towards the hock.
- The leg should tie deep into the legs of the lamb.

4. Profile

- Look for a long percentaging lamb.
- Look for a level top, which should be smooth through out.
- The top should lead into a level hip and dock.
- The lamb should be pretty parallel in its lines.

You will want the lamb to break into 3 parts. 1/3 front, 2/3 hindsaddle, which would be 1/3 loin and 1/3 hindquarters.

5. The front

- The lamb should have a feminine front end.
- A clean brisket.
- A clean neck juncture, trying into a long neck.
- The neck should tie cleanly into the shoulders.
- The lamb on the walk should carry its head high, and preferably, have a feminine head as well.

6. Structure

- The lamb should walk smoothly and briskly.
- It should bounce along lightly.
- The lamb should have plenty of thickness of bone.
- If evaluating younger lambs look at the cannon bone, it's the best indicator of the growth potential, how big it will be, and how elevated.
- The skin should be tight without any wrinkles.
- It should be thin and tight to the touch.
- Really tight hided lambs won't have very many wrinkles; they will be bald or will not have much hair on their ears, head or around the eyes.
- Tight hided lambs may also lose wool around their bellies or shoulders.

Selection

Hands off

- Eye appeal (usually if a lamb has eye appeal it has something going for it; balance, correctness, etc.)
- "V" shaped – Narrow at the front (not so narrow that the front legs smack together when walking) and wide at the back. Look at this by standing in front of the lamb.
- Distention (bulging) in forearm (Indication of the type of top the lamb will have. Muscular forearm = muscular, wide top.)
- Wide hind leg(s) with good volume, tying deep into the legs.
- Level top
- Long lamb – You want most of your length in the hind end, 1/3 front, 2/3 hindsaddle (1/3 loin, 1/3 hindquarters).
- Top and belly lines should be parallel (belly may have a little more capacity).
- You don't want a deep chest floor (indicates an easy finishing lamb which will be hard to get lean).
- Lamb should walk and brace as though "standing up hill".
- Feminine, athletic front end (head, neck and chest).
- Long neck that ties cleanly into shoulders (it should not dip in front of the shoulders).
- When walking, the lamb should carry its head high and level.
- Look at the structure of the lamb (is it cow hocked, sickle hocked, down at pasterns, etc?).
- Does the lamb walk smoothly and briskly? Bounce along lightly? (That is how you want them).
- Thick bone? (You don't want a fine boned, "pencil legged" lamb. Thick forearm = large LEA).
- Length of cannon bone (You want a long cannon bone, indicator of growth potential of lamb, how big it will be, how elevated it will be).
- Tight skin (Really tight lambs have limited wrinkles where the neck meets the shoulders and will have little to no hair on their ears, head, and around the eyes. In super tight hided sheep they may lose their hair around the belly or shoulders).
- Does the hip (from hip bone to pin bone) look level or does it roll, like a horse? (You want a square hind end, not a "rolling" one).
- When walking does the lamb stop "wide"? (Wide is what you want, indication of the necessary thickness and width for a large inside leg muscle).

Hands on

- Catch the lamb and pull the neck up out of the shoulder (you're looking for no separation of the top and shoulder).
- With fingers held together gently roll your hand over the ribs (ribs should have a distinct separation between each one). Does each individual rib feel wide or narrow? (You want a wide rib).
- Running a hand over the ribs again, look for fat coverage (if slight fat cover is felt the lamb will get too fat over the rib for competition – if looking at young lambs).
- From the top of the shoulder run your finger down the backbone (you should be looking for natural top muscle, the more you feel and the wider it is the better).
- Again, take your thumb and run it down the backbone toward the loin (see how far the top extends toward the loin, the longer the better). If no top is felt check the forearm again, if it is flat or devoid of muscle the lamb will never have much top if the forearm is flat.
- Measure width of loin at the last rib, and again right in front of the hip bone (it should be ½-1 inch wider at the hip bones versus the last rib).
- Measure length of loin with an outstretched hand (if you have to pull your hand back in it indicates lack of length in the loin; the loin should be long).
- With your middle finger held in front of the hip bone measure the length of the hip (it should be longer than your hand).
- With your thumb at the top of the dock and your middle finger between the rear legs measure the depth of the twist (the twist should be deep).
- Standing to the side of the lamb take your index finger and place it between the pin bones (anal opening will be covered with your finger, if finger has to be turned on it's edge the lamb will not have enough thickness of body to put adequate muscle. Narrowness is a sign of early maturity.) Hopefully the width between the pin bones will be 1 ½ - 2 fingers wide.
*Note: You can compare male lambs to male lambs and female lambs to female lambs, but not females to males because females are naturally wider due to the width of the female reproductive tract.