

# Barbados Blackbelly Sheep Association International



<http://www.blackbellysheep.org>

## BREED STANDARDS—AMERICAN BLACKBELLY

- GENERAL APPEARANCE** The American Blackbelly sheep is unique among hair sheep because of its exotic look and black facial bars. The breed displays the demeanor of a noble animal, which is strong, alert, well muscled, and clean cut. Along with being badger-faced, they exhibit the black markings of the on the face, legs, belly, inguinal region, chin and chest. They have an average height at their withers from 24 to 28 inches in the ewes and 30 to 32 inches in the rams. The rams are known for their massive rack of horns, with curls of 30 inches or larger in the more mature animal. Many of the characteristics and traits will not be fully recognizable until they mature.
- HEAD** The head is medium size and proportioned to the neck and body. It will be noble with a typical “roman” nose. The head of the ram is distinctly masculine and that of the ewe is feminine. The muzzle is wide and strong with firm lips. The lower jaw is colored black. The incisor teeth must meet the dental pad.
- EARS** The ears are pointed and when alert stick out from the side of the head parallel to the ground. The inside of the ear is black. Some variation in the size of the ears is permitted. Floppy ears and half ears or less (“elf” ears) are a disqualifying characteristic.
- EYES** The eyes are brown in color and almond shaped. A wide black mark runs from above the eye to the base of the crown. Inverted eyelids are disqualifying traits.
- HORNS** The rams, depending on their maturity and heritage, will have differently shaped and sized horns. Most horns are acceptable as long as they clear the face and do not hinder, or impair the animal’s quality of life. Acceptable horn shapes include: tight horn curls; large horns that sweep out and curve behind the neck; heart- shaped horns; and horns that sweep outward in a spiral. Overall, they should be well-balanced and symmetrical. Rams with loose scurs and horn buds at maturity will be disqualified. Ewes may be polled or horned and loose scurs and horn buds are permissible.
- NECK** The neck is strong and muscular, clean cut without loose folds of skin. Mature rams have a neckpiece of long hair, up to 6 inches, which extends down the neck to the brisket. An armor of coarse hair covers the entire neck. Occasionally, wattles are found, but they will be a disqualifying trait.
- FOREQUARTERS** The shoulders are laid on flat and both the upper arm and the shoulder blade are well muscled. The forelegs viewed from the side are straight. The pasterns (between the fetlock and the hoof) are strong and springy; these sheep are known for their ability to jump. The forelegs are black on the front from the knees down.
- HINDQUARTERS** The hindquarters should be muscular with a long sloping croup (rump). The hind legs viewed from behind should be straight. Any tendency to cow hock (pulled together as if tied together) should be discouraged.
- LEGS** The legs should be well-muscled and sturdy. The legs are long and trim, while generally considered to be well-set to the body. Weak or fragile legs are disqualifying traits.
- FEET** The hooves should be black and well-formed.

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| <b>BODY CAPACITY</b>       | Body capacity should be relatively large in relation to the size of the animal. The average weight for a mature ewe will be 75 to 95 pounds; the average weight of a mature ram is 110 to 140 pounds. The body of both should be deep and wide with well-sprung ribs.   |
| <b>TOPLINE</b>             | The withers are higher than and sloping into a level back. The loin viewed from the top should be broad and strong.   |
| <b>TAIL</b>                | The tail should be long, reaching to the top of the hocks as the sheep is walking. The color should blend in, with the exception of a distinct white tip of no more than 1 ½ inches being permissible. The tail should not be docked.   |
| <b>COAT</b>                | The coat is a complete covering of medium to thick hair, with minor wooliness to be tolerated. A wooly coat that is not shed in the spring of the year is a disqualifying trait. The sheep should not require shearing.   |
| <b>COLOR</b>               | The color of the animal is highlighted with contrasting black underparts, extending down the inside of the legs. Black markings on the nose, forehead, and inside of the ears are typical of the breed. The main body color can vary from light fawn through brown to reddish brown to dark mahogany red. White, other than in the tip of the tail, is a disqualifying trait. |
| <b>KEY CHARACTERISTICS</b> | Slick hair with smooth blending colors; strong bones and overall soundness; well-muscled legs and backs; stock that reproduces the desired qualities; stock that is parasite resistant; and stock that reaches early puberty.   |

**GOALS FOR IMPROVING THE BREED**

**Ewes:** A larger body capacity to support multiple fetal deliveries and larger lambs; an adequate udder; a larger pelvis for ease in birth; non-seasonal estrus and quick breed-back; good maternal instinct; and black on the back of the udder all the way up and on the underside of the tail.

**Rams:** A black mane all the way down the front of the throat; the ability to hold his head high when alert; and the ability to have significant horn growth at an early age.

**Common Faults:** Cow hocks; rams with scurs or horn buds at maturity; elf ears; patches of white coloring on the body; and a wool undercoat that fails to shed in the spring.