

Heritage Sheep Breed FIBER PROFILE



THE LIVESTOCK
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Dorset Horn

Sheep names can be confusing, and the Dorsets are at the top of the confusion list. There are three distinct Dorset breeds, all with English origins. Two are white-faced—the Dorset Horn and the Poll Dorset*—and one has a colored face and legs, the Dorset Down. Two are rare—the Dorset Horn and the Dorset Down. We only have the white-faced types, the Dorset Horn and Poll Dorset, in North America.

Dorset Horn sheep are seriously good-looking animals that grow mid-grade wool most often in white but also occasionally in a deep natural, near-black. Regardless of color, the fibers spin into yarns with remarkable bounce. The amount of elasticity can be surprising.

Woolen preparation and spinning are traditional for this type of wool, and will maximize the insu-



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lating qualities, and thus warmth. For greater durability (and stitch definition), it can be prepared and spun worsted.

The crimp patterns are moderate to intense, and can vary rather a lot from sheep to sheep. The lock shown in the photo below falls on the looser side of the Dorset Horn crimp spectrum; the crimp is often tighter. Regardless, it's a adaptable, long-wearing wool.

* Poll or polled means "without horns." The Poll Dorset, Polled Dorset, also known as Dorset Poll, was developed from the older Dorset Horn breed, and is most frequently just referred to as Dorset. It's the second most common breed in North America (after the Suffolk), and thus far from rare.

Fleece weight	4½–9 pounds (2–4 kg).
Staple length	2½–5 inches (6.5–12.5 cm).
Fiber diameters	26–33 microns; U.S. breed standard calls for 26–32 microns.
Lock characteristics	Dense locks; strong but irregular crimp evident in fibers and in staples.
Natural colors	Most is white, although some are colored. Colored fibers or kemp will disqualify animals from some breed societies.



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