

Florida Cracker

The Florida Cracker is a North American original, able to withstand the heat and humidity of the southeastern United States. As a landrace breed—which means one adapted to an environment, rather than to standardized production values—the fleece qualities and colors vary, within some predictability. Recent study, including DNA analysis, has established the Florida Cracker as a distinct population, separate from the Gulf Coast Native, with which it was previously grouped. Although some Gulf Coast sheep have colored wool, the presence of varied colors and patterns is more characteristic of the Florida breed.

Florida Crackers seem to have developed from the Spanish commoners' sheep, the *churro* or *churra*, introduced from the southeast edge of the continent by explorers, possibly as early as the 1500s. This stock has been augmented over the years by some finer-wooled strains, possibly including some



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Merino, Rambouillet, white-faced English breeds, and American Tunis. These latter infusions have strongly influenced the wool, which feels softer than its micron counts imply. It may have a slight crispness that will give it body and provide stitch definition in knitting or crochet.

With their pleasant and versatile

fiber, Florida Cracker fleeces warrant exploration for blankets as well as garments of many descriptions.



lock and yarn photos reproduced to the same scale



lower photos © Deborah Robson

These are just initial results from a handful of samples. More data are needed.

Fleece weight	3–3½ pounds (1.4–1.6 kg).
Staple length	2½–3 inches (6.5–7.5 cm).
Fiber diameters	Averaging in the vicinity of 24–34 microns.
Lock characteristics	Locks seem to be more puffy than well defined. There is quite a bit of crimp, more evident in single fibers than in the locks. There should not be any hair, although a bit sometimes occurs.
Natural colors	The breed society recognizes all colors, and a sheep's appearance is often mottled or tinged with non-white shades, while the bulk of the body, and the wool, may be consistently white.