

= Polled Dorset =

The Polled Dorset is a breed of sheep developed for meat at the North Carolina State University Small Ruminant Unit in 1956 . The name refers to the fact that it is a hornless variation of the Horned Dorset breed . The Polled Dorset is the result of a genetic mutation by which some of the offspring of a certain ram grew no horns . After some years of breeding work , a strain of Dorset was developed which had lost the characteristic horns and which bred true .

Polled Dorsets are an all @-@ white , medium @-@ sized sheep , prolific and able to breed out of season . The carcasses are muscular with good conformation and the adults produce a thick fleece , which is free from dark fibers . Since its development , the number of Polled Dorsets registered in the United States has grown to exceed the number of Horned Dorsets . Without horns the sheep are easier to handle and there is much less risk of the rams hurting themselves or others by butting . The Polled Dorset is sometimes confused with the Australian Poll Dorset , but that breed did not start as a genetic mutation but resulted from the introduction of Corriedale and Ryeland blood into the Dorset breeding program .

= = History = =

In 1949 , four hornless lambs were sired from a Horned Dorset on a farm at North Carolina State University in Raleigh , North Carolina . Over the next five years , as part of their normal breeding program , those four ewes and the other ewes on the farm were bred to the Horned Dorset . Eventually , a ewe gave birth to twin rams . NCSU 401 was a regular horned Dorset , but his brother , " NCSU 402 " , was born polled , without horns , due to a genetic mutation . Thus , the Polled Dorset was born . NCSU 402 was the official name given to the first true Polled Dorset sheep . It was named in accordance with the naming system that has been used at the NCSU Small Ruminant Unit since it started its breeding program .

After research and testing were done to confirm that the Polled Dorset carried the same characteristics as the Horned Dorset and was able to pass on these traits , the Continental Dorset Club , formed in 1898 , registered the very first Polled Dorset sheep in 1956 . Livestock scientists , the late Dr. Lemuel Goode and the late Sam Buchanan , are credited with identifying and developing the hornless sheep . The offspring of NCSU 402 were bought by other breeders and within twenty years , seventy percent of all registered Dorsets were polled . The success of the Polled Dorset has made it considered to be the second most popular sheep breed in the United States . A polled strain of Dorsets were also developed in Australia in the 1900s , however , these were not as a result of a genetic mutation but resulted from the introduction of Corriedale and Ryeland blood into the Dorset Horn .

= = Conformation = =

Polled Dorsets are a medium @-@ sized sheep that are long lived and prolific , heavy milkers . They produce hardy lambs with moderate growth and maturity that yield heavily muscled carcasses . Their fleece is very white , strong , close , free from dark fiber and extends down the legs . When shorn , fleece averages between five and nine pounds (2 @. @ 23 to 4 kg) in ewes and fifty to seventy percent of their fleece can be used . The staple length ranges from 2 @. @ 5 to 4 inches (6 to 10 cm) with a numeric count of 46 's @-@ 58 's . The fiber diameter ranges from 27 @. @ 0 to 33 @. @ 0 microns . At maturity , ewes weigh between 150 and 200 pounds (67 to 91 kg) , some weighing more in show condition . Mature rams range in weight from 225 to 275 pounds (102 to 125 kg) . Dorsets are noted for their ability to be bred more than once per year and are commonly used in crossbreeding to produce females for out @-@ of @-@ season breeding . They are one of the few breeds that have this characteristic . Multiple births are common and they work well in commercial operations , including programs where rams are specifically used to sire lambs for slaughter . These rams are known as terminal sires since their genetics are more suitable for slaughter than breeding purposes .

Since the breed first became commercial , it has spread to Canada and become a major contributor in the commercial lamb industry . The breed adapts well to confinement and is readily used in accelerated crossbreeding programs . Polled Dorsets thrive under grass @-@ based and feedlot conditions and are more suitable on small farms that are intensely managed .

= = Polled versus Horned Dorsets = =

The Dorset is an ancient breed that was most likely developed from horned sheep that lived in the valleys and pastures of southwestern England . Dorset Horn sheep were imported into the United States in 1860 , and the first U.S. national flock book was formed in 1891 . Today , the Dorset is found in two varieties globally , Horned and Polled . In the Horn variety , both ewes and rams have horns , while the polled variety have no horns at all . Polled Dorsets are ideal for commercial settings because they do not have horns that can get caught in fencing or cause damage when they butt .

Polled Dorsets are the most popular white @-@ faced breed in North America , while the much less @-@ common Dorset Horn is listed as " threatened " by The Livestock Conservancy in the United States . In essence , the difference between the two breeds is that one has horns and the other does not .