

# Mts. Van Aken, Top Texel Breeding

## Dutch Texel sheep breeding: Quality meat production

### The breeding goal

The main objective of the Texel flock books is to improve the quality of the purebred Texel sheep as much as possible. To achieve this goal, the following requirements have to be met:

- at least two weaned lambs per litter;
- rapid growth of young lambs;
- maintaining good maternal characteristics;
- optimization of carcass quality



### Litter size

The length of the breeding season of mature Texel ewes is nearly 5 months. The Texel ewes comes in heat for the first time at about 7 months of age. Of importance is the total annual lamb production of the ewe, a combined effect of prolificacy and lambing frequency. Selection for litter size has resulted in a high rate of lamb production. The average litter size has resulted in a high rate of lamb production. The average litter size at birth of 1-year old Texel ewes is 1.3, for 2-year old ewes 1.7 and for older ewes 1.95 lambs, with a lambing percentage of 94.

These figures are expected to increase even further owing to more intensive selection within the breed. To obtain optimal results, proper attention during lambing is required.

#### Growth rate

Owing to the good milk yield of Texel ewes and their abilities for fast growth, lambs can gain an average of 250 grams per day. At weaning (12 weeks) the average weight of the lambs is 25 kg and their final weight at slaughter (24 weeks) is 44 kg on average.



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## Maternal characteristics

Increases in the litter size and rate of growth are possible only if the mothering abilities of the ewe are maintained at high levels. The milk yield of a Texel sheep is generally large enough for raising 2 lambs. With good quality feed and care, the Texel ewe's mothering capabilities are at their optimum. The Texel sheep is known for her good temperament. She needs little supervision during the suckling period and is, therefore, easy to manage.

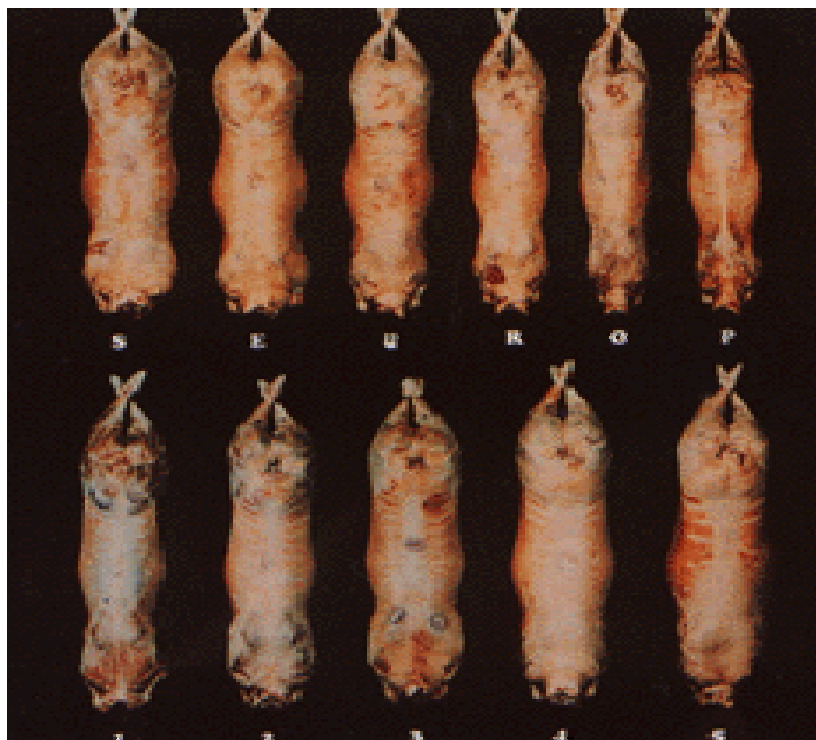
## Carcass quality

Slaughter lambs are classified according to the meat classification system S E U R O P. The letters stand for the different classes of meatiness:

S = superior  
E = excellent  
U = very good  
R = good  
O = moderate  
P = low

The classes are subdivided into 5 categories for fat covering, 1 to 5, which again are split up into 3 sub-classes: +, 0 and -. The lower the number, the less fat covering on the carcass. The advantages of the system are better prospects for selection and international comparison. The Texel breed is known for its real good carcass composition. The sheep are well-meated, with an excellent meat-bone ratio and only minor fat covering.

The killing-out percentages range from 55 to 60% and the cross-sectional area of the sirloin muscle is 12 cm<sup>2</sup> on average. Carcasses on average consist of 60% lean meat. The Texel sheep have an advantage over other breeds in having a comparatively little fat covering. Therefore the Texel slaughter lamb can be sold over a longer period without loss of slaughter quality.



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## Breeding and selection

Young promising rams of good conformation are selected as new entries of sires. The selection depends on the performance data of the ram in particular, the prolificacy index and the conformation scores of both parents. The next year the rams with the best progeny are selected for further breeding.



**We can deliver live stock, semen and embryos  
from the Texel breed**