

IMPROVEMENT OF SHEEP THROUGH THE SELECTION OF PERFORMANCE-TESTED AND PROGENY-TESTED BREEDING ANIMALS

2007-2008 Texas A&M Central Ram Performance Test Results

The 2007-2008 Ram Performance Test was completed with a final weigh day on February 13, final shearing on Feb. 14, and a Field Day on March 14. The tested rams came from 11 flocks. A total of 81 rams completed the test.

The rams were delivered to the test station in mid-September and after a two-week warm-up period were shorn on September 25 and weighed on September 26. Side and britch fiber diameter measurements were obtained from samples collected on January 2. Staple length was measured on February 11.

The average daily gain (ADG) was calculated and reported for the 140-day test period. The column marked ADG-Body was calculated by subtracting the daily grease fleece weight from ADG. The fleece growth period was 142 days. The fleece weights and staple length measurements were converted to a 365-day basis. In order to account for shearing stubble, 1/8 inch was subtracted from the staple length measurements. Fleece yields, and thus clean fleece weights, were determined from 32 core samples removed from the entire fleece after shearing. The fleece core samples were evaluated for average fiber diameter (**AFD**) and coefficient of variation (**CV**). Comfort factor, the percent of fibers finer than or equal to 30 microns, was also calculated from the core samples. Lower values for AFD and CV are more desirable.

The rams were scored for face covering, belly wool and skin folds by a committee of 3 people on February 11. The range in scores is 0 to 4. Belly wool score is an indicator of how much belly wool was present on the side of the animal (1 = no belly wool above the belly, to 4 = belly wool far up the side). Lower values are more desirable for belly wool and skin folds. Face cover scores above 2.7 are undesirable because of the potential for wool blindness.

The scrotal circumference measurements reported in centimeters were determined by measuring the circumference of the scrotum at the widest point. Fat thickness measurements (inches) and ribeye area measurements (square inches) were taken by ultrasound between the 12th and 13th ribs on February 14. Greater ribeye area and lower fat depth are indicators of more desirable carcass composition or carcass value.

A table with average performance values for many of the measurements of the Fall and Spring test groups is included in this report. Along with the averages are the minimums and maximums of each trait. The column marked 'STD' is the standard deviation calculated from all animals.

The ROM (Registry of Merit) Index was calculated as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}
 I = & 60 \quad \times \quad [\text{average daily body weight gain in pounds}] \\
 & + 4 \quad \times \quad [365\text{-day staple length in inches}] \text{ (with no credit above 5.5 inches)} \\
 & + 4 \quad \times \quad [365\text{-day clean fleece weight in pounds}] \\
 & - 3 \quad \times \quad [\text{fiber diameter in microns } (\mu\text{m}) - 22.9] \text{ (no additional credit for} \\
 & \quad \quad \quad \text{being finer than 19.9 microns or coarser than 24.9 microns)} \\
 & + 1.25 \times [22.0 - \text{CV}] \text{ (with a maximum increase or decrease of 5 points)}
 \end{aligned}$$

The fiber diameter value and coefficient of variation (**CV**) were obtained from measurements on a core sample of the entire fleece.

The method of calculating the ROM index has changed over the years. In order to make comparisons across years, a value known as **index ratio** was calculated as follows:

$$\text{Index ratio} = \frac{\text{Actual index value}}{\text{Average index value (within age group)}} \times 100$$

An index ratio permits ranking of animals around a mean with above-average animals having values greater than 100 and vice versa.

As an example, the index for test number **51** was 119.52 and was calculated as follows:

60 x .95493	= +57.30	ADG (body) in pounds
4 x 5.099	= +20.39	365-day Staple Length in inches (max=5.5)
4 x 8.572	= +34.29	365-day Clean fleece weight
-3 x -3.0	= +9.00	Fiber Diameter of core sample (19.9*-22.9=-3.00)
1.25 x -1.17	= -1.46	Fiber Uniformity (CV of core) (22.0-23.17=-1.17)
Index	119.52	(values rounded to the nearest .01)
*no additional credit for being finer than 19.9 microns		

Registered rams that are in the top 30% on Index are eligible for the Certified Ram Classification. The top 30% was calculated independently for the fall and spring groups with January 1 being the dividing date.

In addition to the above requirements, a Certified ram must have:

- gained at least 0.55 pounds per day on test,
- produced a minimum of 9.00 pounds of clean wool (365-day basis),
- produced a minimum of 4.0 inches staple length (365-day basis),
- wool not coarser than 60s (24.94 μm) on the side or 56s (27.84 μm) on the britch,
- wool not coarser than 23.77 μm from the fleece core sample,
- a face covering score less than 2.7,
- weighed at least 100 lbs at the start of the test (Spring lambs),
- " " " 135 " " " " " " " (Fall lambs),
- weighed more than 200 pounds at the end of the test,
- passed inspection by a sifting committee before and after shearing,
- have at least one 'R' allele at codon 171.

Animals considered unsound from the standpoint of **breed type**, amount of **skin folds**, or from **anatomical weakness** and **wool defects**, were sifted from the sale list.

All animals completing the performance test tested negative for *Brucella ovis* at the beginning of the test.

The following ration was fed free-choice as a pelleted feed. This ration specification has been used each year since the 1995-1996 test.

Ration ingredients:	Percent (as fed)
Cottonseed hulls	23.37
Alfalfa, dehy., 17%	28.24
Grain Sorghum	24.34
Cottonseed meal	7.30
Soybean meal, 44%	7.30
Molasses, cane	4.87
Binder	2.43
Trace mineral salt	0.97
Calcium carbonate	0.49
Ammonium chloride	0.49
Aurofac 10	0.15
Vitamin A	<u>0.05</u>
TOTAL MIX	100.00

The trace mineral salt mixture was formulated for use in complete feeds for sheep. It added a minimum of 20 ppm of both manganese and zinc but contained no copper. The Vitamin A premix provided a minimum of 1,000 IU of Vitamin A per pound of feed.

Feed was purchased from Angelo Pellets, San Angelo, TX.

Breeder Contact Phone Numbers:

BP Ranch Co., Robert Pfluger	325-949-8654
Gainer Ranch	325-396-2434
J.W. Jennings	325-396-4974
Bill Karnes	325 387-5758
Kerr Brothers	325-835-7106
C & S Menzies	325-224-0343
James L Powell	325-653-1688
James Schunke	325-648-3130
Texas Rambouillet Superior Genetics (TRSG)	325-732-4376
Texas Sheep Company, Travis Jones	830-997-8060
Texas Agric. Exp. Station	325-387-3168

This report and other information about the Texas A&M Ram Test can be read using the internet. The URL is: <http://sanangelo.tamu.edu/genetics/ramtest.htm>

This report was compiled by D.F. Waldron and C.J. Lupton, Texas AgriLIFE Research, 7887 US Highway 87 N, San Angelo, TX 76901.