

But one can not always cut and weigh the fleece (when a ram is bought for example), one should be able to appreciate the weight of the fleece by its density, extension and length of fiber.

1.—Length of wool. One can easily appreciate the length by pulling a lock or a fiber and measuring it after having stretched it. But it must be remembered that the fibers are not of the same length on the different parts of the body; it is very long on the shoulders and back and much shorter on the limbs. The time elapsed since the last shearing must also be taken into consideration.

2.—The density, that is its thickness, compactness, the larger the number of fibers to the square inch, the heavier and denser will be the fleece. The density is extraordinary for certain breeds. It is estimated, that the fleece of the Merinos contains 40,000 to 45,000 fibers to the square inch. Whatever breed is adopted, dense fleece must be looked for in the breeding stock, for density is in relation not only to weight but also fineness of fibers.

Density is appreciated by sight. One can easily notice a dense fleece by a good look; but a touch with the hand is still better. The fleece will be denser according to the greater resistance felt by the hand when laid flat on the back of the sheep.

3.—Surface of fleece. The fleece of the breeding stock will extend well under the body, the belly being well covered. It is evident that weight is in proportion to the surface covered by the fleece.

b) QUALITY

To make a perfect selection, as to quality of the wool, an old expert would be necessary. The choice will be sufficient, if the breeders look for the following qualities :

1.—The fineness of fibers, that is the tenuity of the fiber, small diameter.

The commercial experts use a micrometer to judge the fineness of diameter but one can easily judge it by laying it on a black cloth.