

## Using Conformation Scores

Visual Conformation Scores provide visual standards for the description of physical body and structural traits that influence the soundness and productivity of sheep and wool flocks.

These scores are designed for ram breeders and commercial producers who choose to class and select animals on one or more of these visual traits as part of their overall breeding objective.

This guide contains a set of Visual Conformation Scores of 1 to 5 for five traits. Importantly, the 'Score 1 is LEAST' and 'Score 5 is MOST' scoring scale does not apply to three conformation traits – jaw, feet/legs and shoulder/back.

In these cases, Score 1 depicts VERY GOOD expression, Score 3 depicts AVERAGE expression and Score 5 depicts VERY BAD expression of the trait.

A single score is recorded for all conformation traits. This includes 'combined' traits (feet/legs and shoulder/back), where the highest score of the multiple sites is recorded.

Data gathered on individual animals may also be submitted to Sheep Genetics with other pedigree and performance information to assist the sheep industry with the development of across-flock ASBVs for various conformation traits.

Visual Conformation Scores can be taken on both male and female sheep at various ages. It is essential to record the age of the animal when scores are taken, with the optimal age recommended in the table below.



Conformation Trait	Age	When
Jaw	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Over 4 months</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anytime after weaning, ideally at classing</li> </ul>
Legs/Feet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Over 4 months</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anytime after weaning, ideally at classing</li> </ul>
Shoulder/Back	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Over 4 months</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anytime after weaning, post-shearing recommended</li> </ul>
Face cover	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Over 4 months</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minimum 4 months wool</li> </ul>
Body wrinkle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Over 4 months</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anytime after weaning, post-shearing recommended</li> </ul>

For further information about the development or use of these Visual Conformation Scores contact:

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## Jaw

**Age:** Over 4 months.

**When:** Anytime, ideally at classing.

Jaw refers to the soundness of jaw structure, in particular the alignment of the lower jaw (and teeth) relative to the top jaw.

**How to score:** A single score of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5.

**Rule of thumb:** The upper and lower jaws of a Score 1 animal line up squarely at the teeth i.e. teeth rest 'on the pad', whereas a Score 5 animal has either a heavily 'undershot' **or** heavily 'overshot' jaw.

### Score 1:

Very Good: upper and lower jaws line up squarely at the teeth i.e. teeth rest 'on the pad'.

### Score 3:

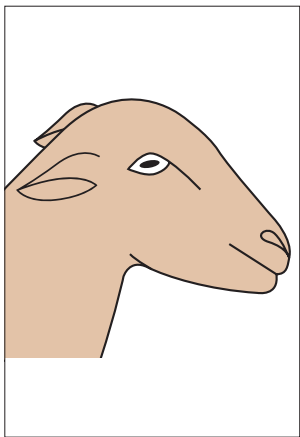
Average: jaw is marginally 'undershot' **or** 'overshot'; lower jaw is slightly shorter **or** longer than the upper jaw.

### Score 5:

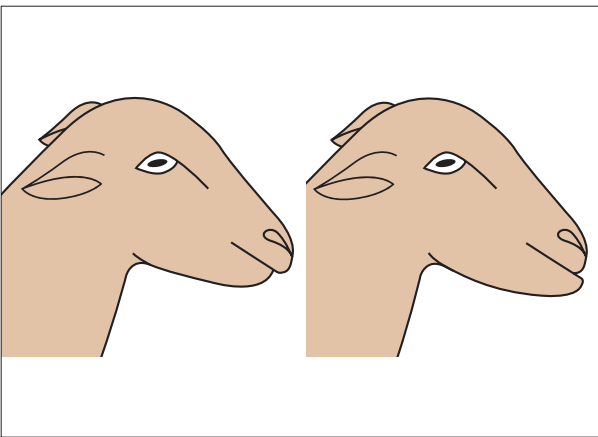
Very Poor: heavily 'undershot' **or** 'overshot' jaw; lower jaw is significantly shorter **or** longer than the upper jaw.



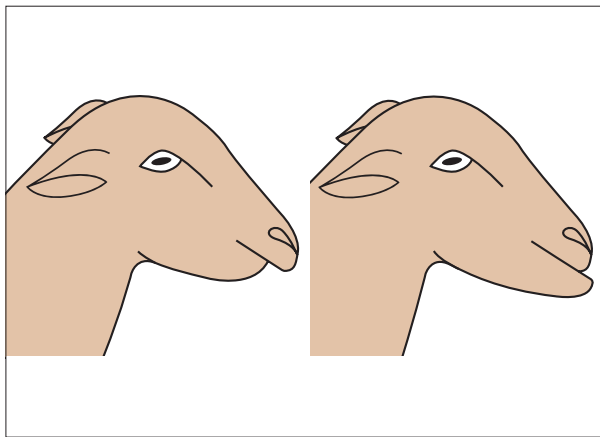
## Jaw



Score 1



Score 3



Score 5

## Legs/Feet

**Age:** Over 4 months.

**When:** Anytime, ideally at classing.

Legs/Feet is a combined trait. It refers to the overall soundness of the front and back leg and feet structure, in particular the *orientation* of the legs/feet and *angulation* of the hocks and pasterns in relation to the feet.

**How to score:** A single score of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5. The highest score across the leg and feet components of all **four legs** is recorded.

**Rule of thumb:** If the stance, hocks and pasterns of the back legs and feet are 'very good' (Score 1), but the pasterns of the front legs are 'very poor' (Score 5), then Score 5 is the overall score recorded for the trait.

### Score 1:

Very Good: good width of stance; straight legs that stand squarely over the feet; moderate hock and pastern angulation.

### Score 2:

Good.

### Score 3:

Average: significant hock angulation, **and/or** legs and feet orientating *slightly* inwards or outwards, **and/or** *slightly* 'weak' pasterns.

### Score 4:

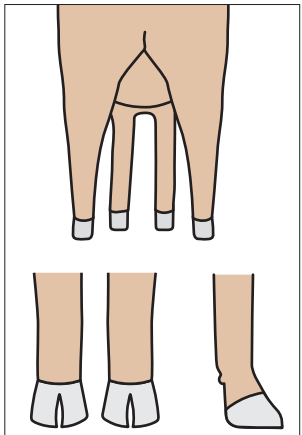
Poor.

### Score 5:

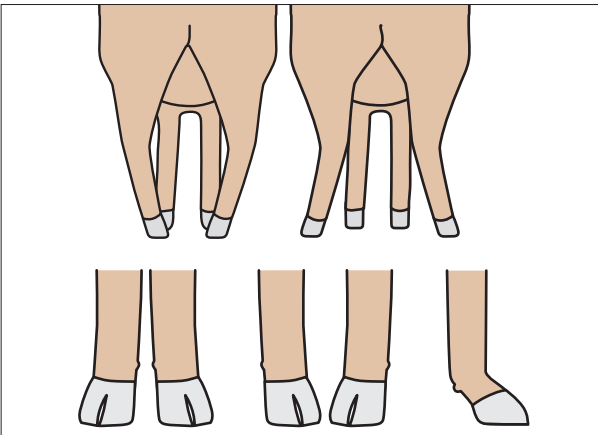
Very Poor: extreme angulation of hocks, **and/or** legs orientating inwards with hocks touching or 'bowed' outwards, **and/or** *very* 'weak' pasterns.



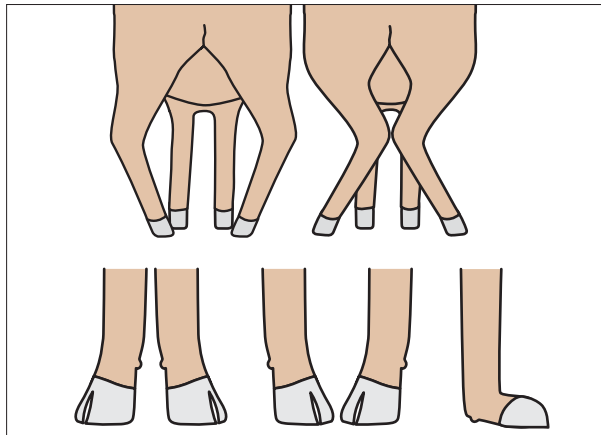
## Legs/Feet



Score 1



Score 3



Score 5

## Shoulder/Back

**Age:** Over 4 months.

**When:** Anytime after weaning, post-shearing recommended.

A combined trait, shoulder/back refers to the soundness of the shoulder blades and their positioning in relation to the neck and spine.

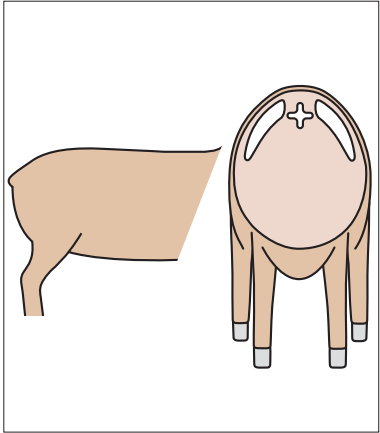
**How to score:** A single score of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5.

**Rule of thumb:** An animal with Score 1 has angular shoulders and a perfectly straight back between the top of the shoulder blades and hips. A Score 5 animal has shoulder blades that sit well above (or well below) the spine to create an extremely 'dipped' backline.

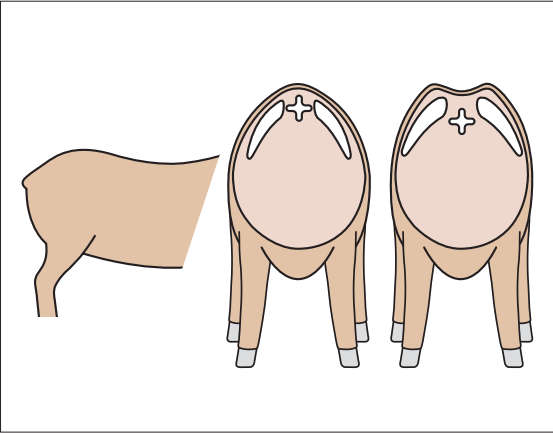
Score 1:	Score 2:	Score 3:	Score 4:	Score 5:
Very Good: shoulder blades sit squarely either side of the spine i.e. no trough or ridge between the shoulders; back straight between shoulders and hips.	Good.	Average: shoulders positioned below the spine to create a 'ridge' or above the spine to create a 'trough' between the shoulder blades; back dips <i>slightly</i> behind the shoulders.	Poor.	Very Poor: extremely high and wide shoulder blades that create a deep 'trough' above the spine or extremely low and narrow shoulder blades that create a sharp 'ridge' above the spine; back dips <i>severely</i> behind the shoulders.



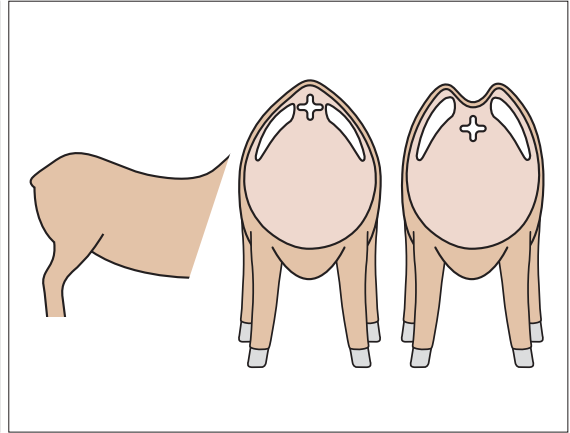
## Shoulder/Back



Score 1



Score 3



Score 5

## Face cover

**Age:** Over 4 months.

**When:** Minimum of 4 months wool.

Face cover refers to the degree of wool cover on the face, including the top of head and jowl.

**How to score:** A single score of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5.

**Rule of thumb:** An animal with Score 1 has an open face with no wool on the jowls or top of the head. A Score 5 animal has wool covering its entire face, commonly referred to as 'wool blind'.

### Score 1:

Open face with no wool in front of the ears and topknot, or on the jowls.

### Score 2:

Wool cover over the top of head; some on the side of muzzle, but not joined between the ears and eyes.

### Score 3:

Wool cover over the top of head and on the side of muzzle; wool joined between the ears and eyes.

### Score 4:

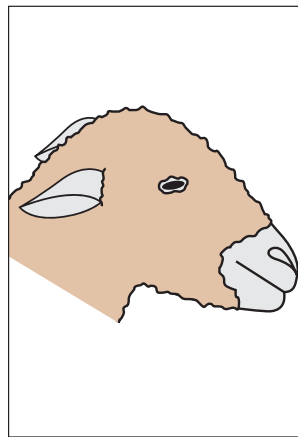
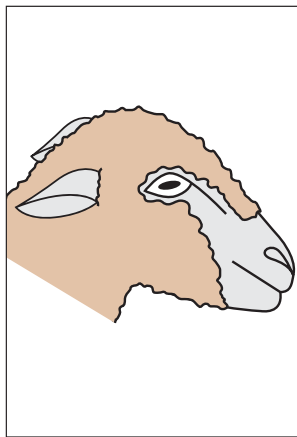
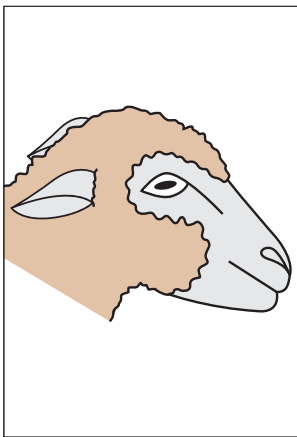
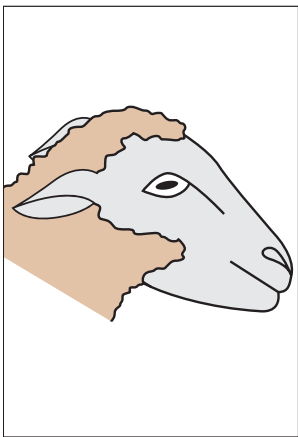
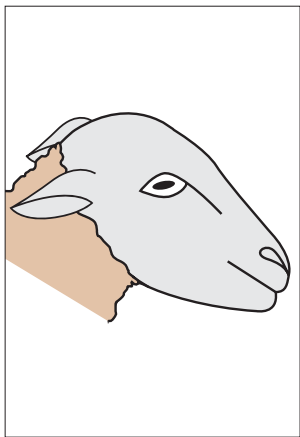
Wool cover from the top of the head down the muzzle; clear channel remains between the eye and the mouth.

### Score 5:

Heavy wool growth over the entire face; wool from the top and side of the muzzle joining.



## Face cover



Score 1

Score 2

Score 3

Score 4

Score 5

## Body wrinkle

**Age:** Over 4 months.

**When:** Anytime after weaning, post-shearing recommended.

Body wrinkle refers to the degree and quantity of wrinkle on the body. Neck wrinkle is highly related to body wrinkle, hence a single score for body wrinkle will provide a reliable visual description for both traits.

**How to score:** A single score of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5.

**Rule of thumb:** An animal with Score 1 has a plain body with no wrinkles. A Score 5 animal has extensive wrinkles and heavy folds of skin over its entire body.

### Score 1:

Plain-bodied animal with no body wrinkle.

### Score 2:

Plain body type with a few small wrinkles over the shoulders and hip region.

### Score 3:

Slight wrinkling over the length of the body.

### Score 4:

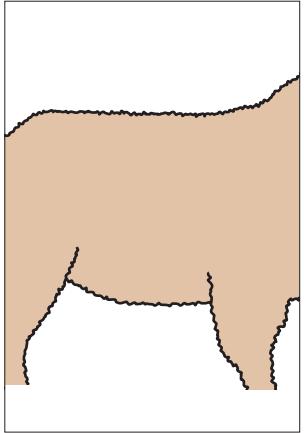
Heavy wrinkling over the entire body.

### Score 5:

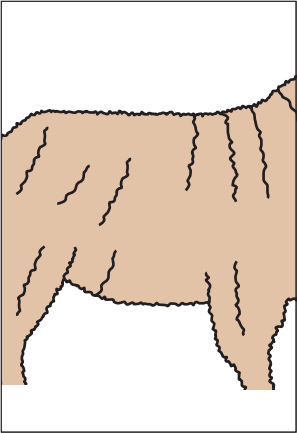
Extensive wrinkling and heavy folds of skin over entire body.



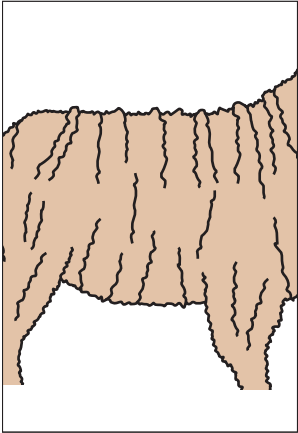
## Body wrinkle



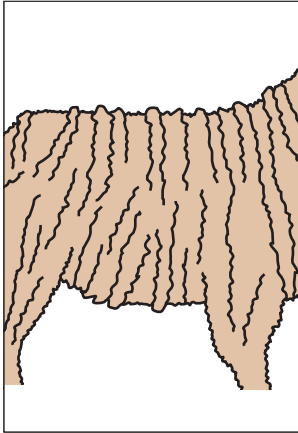
Score 1



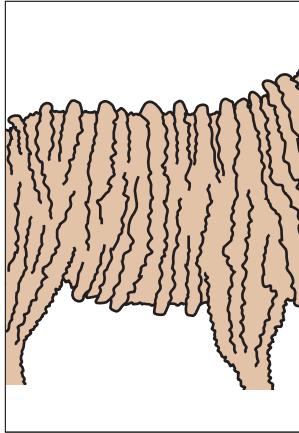
Score 2



Score 3



Score 4



Score 5