

Valais Blacknose Sheep Breed Standards & Judging Guidelines



The **Valais Blacknose Sheep Association of North America (VBSANA)**, **Valais Blacknose Sheep Society (VBSS)**, and the **Valais Blacknose International Sheep Breeder Association & Registry (VBISBAR)** support this breed standard information and judging guidelines, consistent with the Swiss Breed Standard.

With this new breed of sheep coming into show rings across America, we are providing a guideline from the Swiss judges. The sheep originated in Switzerland, and ***it is very important to the Swiss heritage of this breed to maintain the characteristics they were originally bred for.*** This is primarily a wool breed.

Please take these breed standards into consideration when these sheep enter the ring. If you would like more information about the breed, please contact the breed association.

Full horns, full wool and tails are important. Sheep can be washed but not fitted/clipped/blocked for shows. Ideally, wool should be 5-6", but can be shown with less.

TRADITIONAL BREED CHARACTERISTICS

The characteristics of the Blacknose sheep fall into three areas:

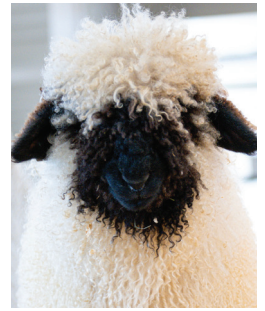
1. *Appearance*
2. *Conformation*
3. *Wool*



1. APPEARANCE

Color Features

- No brown or grayish color.
- Black nose to the center of the head.
- Black encompassing the eye area connecting with the black of the nose, no gap.
- Black ears – black should meet the white of the head
- Black hooves and ankle area ('black socks').
- Black spots on knees and hocks (spots can be non-symmetrical). Knee spots need a white line of separation between knee spots and ankle area. Presence is important, not the size.
- Females are to have a black spot under the tail. There must be at least a pencil-width gap of white on the visual side of the tail (see photo).
- Females missing a marking feature (i.e. knee spot) would receive a deduction.
- Males must not have a black spot under their tail.



- Males' scrotum may be black, but the black must not spread upward above the scrotum. Belly can be black, just not above the "Skirt or Belly Line" (see photo on page 2).

Head & Neck

- Well proportioned, compact head.
- Roman nose, wide mouth, broad forehead
- Pronounced, regal head shape in ram. Mature rams often develop protuberance behind horn base.
- Short, straight well-muscled neck.

Horns

- Spiral outward from head, horizontally away from cheeks. (You should always be able to fit a flat hand comfortably between the horn and cheek.)
- Black stripes in the horns are acceptable, just no black wool at base.
- Male horns are thicker, spiral forward, down, and then curl out to the side.
- Female horns are thinner, spiral slightly down, and then curl out to the side.



Chest, Shoulder & Withers

- Wide, deep, chest area.
- Shoulders line naturally with neck and chest.
- Well-spaced, wide withers.
- Rib cage curvature is well proportioned and rounded.

Back & Loin

- Long, straight top line.
- Wide back and loin.

Pelvis, Abdomen & Hindquarters

- Medium sized belly with small belly hollows/pits.
- Wide and medium-length pelvis.
- Well-muscled hindquarters.

Withers (from two years)

- Female: 23.3-30.7in
- Male: 29.5-32.7in

Weight (over two years)

- Female: 150-200lb
- Male: 175-275lb

2. CONFORMATION

Limbs

- Strong, sure footed.
- Solid hoof deportment.
- Legs are not bow legged.
- Legs are not knock-kneed.
- Legs are to be more under the sheep than to the side.



Foundations

- Slight hock angulations.
- Short, strong pasterns (45-degree angle).
- Solid bone structure.
- Joints should be straight and sound.

Gait

- Spacious, sure footed and wide legged.
- Doesn't sway or waver.
- Even and stable movement.
- Mobile with ease.

3. WOOL

- Fleece in lambs is soft to touch but becomes coarser as the sheep matures. The Swiss grade approximately equates to 28-38 microns depending on age and gender. Fiber diameter is generally finest in lambs and coarsest in adult males.
- Staple length is 4-6 inches based on approximately six months' growth. (Recommended to be shorn twice a year. Approximate fleece weight when shorn: Lambs 2.2-3.3lbs; Ewes 2.5-6.6lbs; Rams 5.5-6lbs. Based on six months of growth.)
- Wool on legs is thick and full.
- Wool on head is natural and long.
- Some black hairs/fibers are tolerated on the neck area. (Females only. In males up to 18 months of age this is a fault.)
- Wool is double coated

FITTING

This look is not permitted and considered a disqualification. No blocking. Leg wool should be similar to the length with body. Whole body should be sheared at same time as legs. No docking of tails shorter than three fingers above hocks (evaluation is needed on animal's tail spot).

Walking Sheep

It is recommended handlers hand walk their Valais Blacknose sheep or may use a collar & lead. Halters are not permitted as they do not fit the roman nose. Halters pose a safety risk as they may slide down the roman nose and restrict the nostrils/airway. Have exhibitor remove any halters if entering the ring with them.

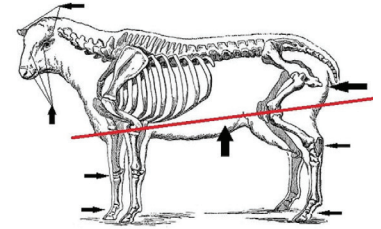
MAJOR FLAWS

Anatomy

- Incisor teeth not in contact or correct position with dental pad i.e. overbite or under bite up to 18 months of age.
- Weak and/or fallen pasterns.
- Stunted growth.
- Only one testicle present.
- Scrotal hernia.

Markings on Males

- Black body spots on the main body area. (Black is allowed below the **Red** line on the diagram.)
- Black spots under the tail on males
- Markings missing from knees, hocks or head



Spitti (Multi-Color)

On occasion a purebred Valais Blacknose may produce offspring marked in reverse color/markings which are referred to as 'Spitti' (a name from Swiss Blacknose breeders). Sheep with slight extra black, are overmarked sheep. No Spitti should place above a correctly marked sheep unless conformation is not correct on correctly marked sheep.

- Spitti and over-marked sheep should be in a class of their own or natural colored wool classes.
- Spitti rams should not be kept for breeding.



Wool

- Kemp and/or tender fibers: kemp fibers are short, medullated (hollow) fibers with pointed tips that may be found within fleece.
- Kemp is undesirable in fleece because it does not take up dye and is coarse, brittle, weak, and 'prickly'. Tender or 'hunger-fine' fibers are thinned and break easily, and may occur due to malnutrition, disease and/or scarring.
- Excessive number of guard hairs: i.e. long, coarse, stiff, outer-coat hairs which may be present. They cause the same difficulties to the processing as kemp fibers and are easy to recognize in the fleece because they are typically much longer than the actual wool fibers
- Large amounts of felting within the wool.