

## **BREED CHARACTERISTICS**

The Finnsheep breed is the only breed that lambs in litters, has a docile temperament and high quality wool.

In the United States, Finnsheep have been widely used for increasing the prolificacy and fertility of meat breeds.

With proper nutrition, purebred Finn ewes can feed 3-4 lambs unassisted. Spring-born lambs can reach market size in 6 months on grass.

Characteristic polled heads and short tails that require no docking simplify care.

The renewed interest in hand-spinning and other fiber crafts has focused attention on the luster and silkiness of Finnsheep wool.

Finnsheep are known for:

- **multiple births**
- **early sexual maturity**
- **lambing ease and vigor**
- **maternal attitude**
- **out of season lambing**
- **soft, lustrous wool**
- **mild flavored, tender meats**

## **THE ASSOCIATION**

In the United States, breeders have looked to the Finnsheep Breeders' Association for record keeping (registrations and transfers of Finnsheep in the USA) since 1971. The FBA is also a communication link between its members, prospective members and those interested in the breed, through a newsletter, brochure, online forum and webpage.

At the time of its inception, the primary goal of the association was to use the Finnsheep in crossbreeding programs to enhance commercial lamb production. Today this is still an important focus.

However, due to the docility and friendliness of the Finnsheep, as well as the popularity of the wool among hand spinners and knitters, Finnsheep have become a popular addition to the small farm.

For information regarding membership in the Finnsheep Breeders Association or for a list of breeders in your area, please visit the website  
<http://www.finnsheep.org>

## **FINNSHEEP A MULTIPURPOSE BREED**



photo courtesy of Nicole Heath, Veliraf Farm

## **FINNSHEEP BREEDERS ASSOCIATION**

<http://www.finnsheep.org>  
[FBASecretary@finnsheep.org](mailto:FBASecretary@finnsheep.org)

## HISTORY

Finnsheep or Finnish Landrace, as they are known in their native country of Finland, were first imported to North America by the University of Manitoba, Canada in 1966.

In 1968, Finnsheep were brought into the United States. In 1971 the Finnsheep Breeders' Association was incorporated.

In 1998, there was a new importation of semen including genetics from the rams at Pelso, the state-owned farm in northern Finland. This importation included some of Finland's top rams.

The Finnsheep breed developed as a "landrace" breed from stock that existed in Finland, which had remained unmixed with other breeds.

In 1918 the systematic improvement of the Finnsheep breed began with the inception of the Finnsheep Breeders Association in Finland.

Finnsheep are one of the Northern Short-Tailed breeds.

Finnsheep were used to create the Polypay breed (25% Finn), the Rideau Arcott (40% Finn) and the Outaouais (49% Finn) breeds.

## CROSSBREEDING

F-1, or first cross Finn ewes are a valuable addition to the bottom line in commercial flocks. F-1 ewes are more prolific than the other purebred breed making up the other half of the cross, and the weaning weights are considerably higher than that of the purebred Finn.

F-1 ewes produced the following return compared to purebred Dorsets in a study at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute:

	litter size	weaning weights
Dorsets	1.44	59.8
¼ Finn x ¾ Dorset	1.74	59.2
½ Finn x ½ Dorset	1.94	58.7

A similar study carried out by the U. S. Meat and Animal Research Center confirms that Finn cross market lambs have a growth rate equal to other purebred breeds. Prolificacy plus comparable weaning weights means Finnsheep add profit and increased yields to meat producers. Hybrid vigor pays off and is best attained by breeding purebred Finnsheep or F-1 half Finn rams to ewes with no Finnsheep ancestry.

## WOOL QUALITY

Finn wool has come into its own after being overshadowed by the breed's other excellent qualities. Hand-spinners, knitters and weavers seek it out because of its soft hand and luster. The current price of Finnsheep wool reflects its rarity.

Finn wool comes in a variety of natural colors: white, black, brown, gray, fawn and spotted. Finnsheep fleeces have a soft hand and luster. It is the combination of these two traits that make Finn wool so special. Luster is usually only found in the long woolled breeds, which tend to be coarse. Finnsheep combine these two desirable traits into one fleece.

The American Wool Council grades Finnsheep wool in the fine end of the medium wool spectrum with a staple length of 3 to 6 inches. The spinning count is in the 50's to 60's with a yield of up to 40% higher than most other breeds' fleeces due to the low levels of grease in the wool. Average micron counts range from 24 to 31 microns.

Ewes shear about five pounds and rams have somewhat heavier fleeces.