



**CLYNTON COLLETT**  
~ superior genetics ~

## **THE BIRTH OF THE MEATMASTER BREED**

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## INTRODUCTION

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The immediate question always asked is does South Africa need another Sheep Breed? Is there a place in the market for it as we already have so many Sheep Breeds? On closer examination of these questions we realize that there are five prominent wool Sheep Breeds in South Africa: Merino's, Dohne Merino, SA Mutton Merino, Letels and Afrino's. Two of these Breeds have moved very close as regards breed standards but the other three each have a very distinct role to play in the breeding of Wool Sheep.

Secondly we have a number of British Breeds and numerous others. They are all mainly meat Breeds but have the disadvantage of having to be shorn and are also mainly seasonal Breeders.

Thirdly there are the hardy hair Breeds of mainly long, fat tail type or fat rumped type. In this market we find Breeds such as Black Head Persians, Van Rooy's, Blinkhaar Afrikaners, Karakuls and Damara sheep. Here again two Breeds are fairly similar but the other three all have very distinct characteristics of their own and suit various markets or climatic conditions.

Our fourth group of Sheep Breeds is made up of the hairy Breeds bred solely for meat production of non-fat tail type. This is a huge market in South Africa and its needs have been met by virtually only one Sheep Breed namely the Dorper and White Dorper.

It is in this market that the Meatmaster will compete and offer Farmers an alternative with distinct characteristics of its own. On examining these characteristics we will soon realize that the Meatmaster is not just something new to offer competition but its unique characteristics selected for are what many South African Sheep Breeders have been looking for over the years.



## **COMPOSITION OF BLOOD TYPE AND DEVELOPMENT OF MEATMASTERS**

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At the first meeting of Meatmaster Breeders it was unanimously agreed that Meatmasters must be the one breed bred with only one thing in mind and that is profitability. We have thus attracted Breeders and intend attracting further Breeders that are open minded enough and have a broad enough vision not to lay down laws and Breed standards that only suit themselves, but will set standards that will allow the Breed to grow and develop so that it can achieve maximum profitability under as wide a range of conditions as possible.

The decision was thus taken that the Meatmaster must just have a percentage of Damara blood in it and that the rest can be that of any other Sheep Breed. The insistence of Damara blood in the Meatmaster is due to the fact that two of our most important selection criteria namely a strong herd instinct and a hair covering with a underlying coat of fluffy like Wool with natural shedding ability to keep Sheep neat and healthy will only be achieved by having enough Damara blood in the Meatmasters.

At this stage most Meatmasters were developed by crossing Damaras with Dorpers with the White Dorper cross probably giving the best result. Some Breeders also used Van Rooys, SA Mutton Merino's and some others. Dorper and other Breeders sharing our vision both as regards breed standards and norms of selection but not wanting to do away with their ewes that have been selected over a long period for fertility and other important traits can breed Meatmasters and join our group by simply buying F2 or F3 Meat Master Rams and putting them to their ewes.

No matter what way you intend breeding your Meatmasters, it is vitally important to at all times bear in mind the breed standards and selection norms of the Meatmaster as these will have to be adhered to strictly as they form the basis for the breed. The Meatmaster sets the Breed standard and how you intend to achieve it as a breeder is up to you.



## **BREED STANDARDS**

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### **A. COAT COLOR AND SKIN PIGMENT**

Any color or combination of colors is acceptable. Good skin pigmentation around the eyes and over the ears is however essential.

### **B. HEAD AND HORNS**

Ewes must be feminine tending to be polled. Rams must be masculine however also tending to be polled. Horns in both sexes are however acceptable.

### **C. COAT COVERING**

Mainly short shiny hair with an underlying blanket of fluffy fine wool. The Breed must never be shorn thus natural shedding ability of coat is essential.

### **D. CONFORMATION AND LEGS**

The Sheep must be of average size with a functional efficient body conformation and well placed legs with excellent walking ability.

### **E. TAIL**

The tail must have a good attachment, preferably not be longer than the hock and have a neat wedge shape with only a moderate amount of fat. It must never be necessary to have the tail taken off.

### **F. HERD INSTINCT**

The Breed must have a strong herd instinct. This is vital for better management in rugged bush or mountainous regions. It prevents small groups wandering away on their own and going through fences. It also helps for the group to protect themselves and their Lambs from predators.

A quick glance at the above Breed standards confirms the fact that there is no Breed, not even the Dorper that at present dominates this category that has remotely the same breed standard. Take note of the fact that in total contrast to other Breeds, it is nowhere stated what the ears must look like, what the neck and the shoulder attachment must be or for that matter the shape of the fore quarter, hind quarter, or any other body part. We simply state a good functional efficient body conformation. We are determined once and for all to breed a profitable Sheep, then learn to love and like what we have bred and not just to try and breed another Sheep pleasing to the eye.



## **AIMS OF BREEDING AND SELECTION**

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MEATMASTERS WILL BE SELECTED TO ACHIEVE THE FOLLOWING:

- a) Highly fertile Sheep.
- b) Good mothers that rear their Lambs adequately.
- c) Virile Rams with excellent serving ability.
- d) Sheep with a good walking ability.
- e) Lambs that will reach a slaughter mass of 15-25kg as soon as possible.
- f) An average grading of A3 must be achieved at above slaughter masses.
- g) In all aspects it must be an easy care Sheep. No shearing, tail cutting, minimum dosing, inoculation and dipping.

## **PERFORMANCE TESTING**

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We intend establishing the Meatmaster on as broad as possible genetic base with the greatest possible amount of Sheep. It is thus recommended to participate in performance testing but it is not compulsory during the process of upgrading. Various forms of stud breeding will be allowed but fully registered Sheep will have to be performance tested.

The aim of performance testing will be to evaluate the income per Sheep based on the reproduction and production of the sheep over its entire lifetime. Various methods of calculating a selection index based on the aim above will be used for selection purposes.

## **SHOWS AND SALES**

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To promote the Meatmasters and to help prospective Breeders to get to know the Breed better showing will be allowed but only with a complete new concept. No competition between sheep will be allowed but Breeders can exhibit their Sheep and discussions can held on each individual Sheep. Each exhibitor can be given the chance to say why he decided to bring a specific Sheep along to show to fellow Breeders. Performance figures and numerous other outstanding traits of the Sheep can be pointed out to fellow Breeders or other interested parties.

It is intended that all ram sales will be veldt Ram sales of performance tested animals.



## CONCLUSION

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The slogan of the Meatmaster is NATURE'S MONEYMAKER. We are prepared to work hard to make it precisely that. If you were dubious about the Meatmaster when you started reading this article, I trust that you now agree that the Meatmaster is not just new but that it is also entirely different. Different in looks, different in performance and very different as regards breeding strategy.

We have 19 Breeders that have contacted us and that are busy breeding Meatmasters. We have also heard of many more that would like to join us and are starting with the Breed. Taken that we are just starting and that this is the very first article on Meatmasters, the response and participation has been overwhelming and this is proof that the Breed has a bright future. Some Breeders have now been breeding Meatmasters for 10 years and all reports indicate that everyone is extremely impressed by the performance of the Meatmasters.

The Meatmasters are managed by the Damara Breed Society (Tell: 051 4489347). And if you are a broad minded Breeder not intent on just making a quick buck which indeed you may, but rather a diligent Sheep Breeder willing to invest in a Sheep Breed capable of dominating Sheep meat production in the future, you are invited to join us.

The development of a Sheep Breed like the Meatmaster is long over due and a study of South African Sheep Breeds and those in Australia, has convinced us that the Meatmaster will not only be a success in South Africa but also is a potential world-beater.