



North American Clun Forest Association

Selection Guide for Clun Forest Sheep

This is a detailed supplement to the Breed Standard. It was developed to assist Clun Forest breeders in selection of sound productive sheep to ensure the Breed's future in North America.

Date Adopted: February 18, 2023

Why Selection?

Careful use of production records and selection for the maternal characteristics of the Clun--including unassisted lambing, good mothering, and twinning--combined with good, careful, visual inspection of potential breeding stock ensures a solid future for our breed.

Today's improved breed bears little resemblance to its early 19th-century progenitors. However, it is from those animals that Cluns have inherited many of the traits we value so highly:

Hardiness and adaptability:

- the ability to survive on poor forage and prosper on good forage
- the strong bond between ewe and lamb
- the drive to survive that is shown by the lambs
- the ewe's capacity for heavy milking

The prominent eye so often seen in the Clun goes back to survival traits of the Welsh mountain sheep.

A lamb's continued survival depends to a large extent on rapid growth during the first two months of life and that is dependent on the ewe's maternal characteristics. The Clun is a maternal breed, first and foremost.

As breeders we need to value these traits and ensure their continuity as recognizable breed features. The Clun Forest has a distinctive look but without these traits, Cluns could as well be just lawn ornaments.

NACFA's Registry of Merit Program (ROM) is a benchmark of production for Clun Forest ewes.

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Breed Origins

The breed takes its name from the ancient market town of Clun, England. The beautiful Clun Valley is in the southwest corner of Shropshire near the county of Powys. The Clun Forest is a mountainous district, with peaks of 1,630 feet above sea level.

References back to 1837 note the many excellent qualities, such as hardiness and fertility, of the Clun sheep. The original predecessors of the Clun were tan faced and legged sheep of the Welsh mountains. They were crossed with local breeds such as the Longmynd, Radnor and Shropshire, resulting in the darker head coloring. The prominent eyes that are so often seen in the Cluns are also seen in the Welsh mountain sheep, which suggests the continued vitality of those ancient mountain genes in today's Cluns.

The Hill Breed traits are still evident in the breed today shown by its hardiness, fecundity, milking and mothering abilities, and ease of lambing due to a body frame which supports twins and promotes ease of birthing. The Clun is an efficient forager and feed converter which makes it very manageable, and well suited for grazing-based operations. The Clun is longer lived and thus more productive than some of the other breeds of sheep.

Introduction

As an aid to the careful selection of stock for breeding, this booklet with its pictorial references, sets out to define the breed characteristics for North American Clun Forest Sheep, and the points of a sheep in general. It also offers consideration of undesirable traits identified in the breed description. Selection of lambs for breeding can be difficult as they grow and change but with some basic guidance hopefully that task can be made easier and more successful.

Breeding programs are planned to combine and enhance desirable breed characteristics which will positively influence the future make up of a flock. However, careful visual selection cannot identify the genetic influence of a sheep and with each lamb crop a different undesirable trait or fault may be identified. Some faults are hard to eliminate while some with selective breeding can be eliminated relatively easily. It is only with experience and knowledge of breeding the sheep in question that one is able to identify and assess which may be which. A breeder may emphasize one acceptable trait over another in their flock which differs from another breeder, depending on the breeder's market.

Aspects of conformation which adversely affect the longevity or breeding capability of an animal make rejection an easy choice for both pedigree and commercial use, whereas a single undesirable trait, e.g. single dark skin patch, may not be sufficient reason to reject an otherwise acceptable animal that offers an important attribute lacking in your flock. Similarly, what may not be acceptable for the pedigree breeder may be deemed inconsequential for the commercial farmer. Smaller purebred Clun Forest flocks with niche markets for flavorful meat, and for wool and wool products are common. These flocks are valuable to our breed and require the same type of careful selection considerations.

First and foremost, the Clun Forest sheep is a maternal breed for the production of replacement ewe lambs when crossed with commercial rams. Clun Forest rams are desirable for breeding first time ewes for the commercial farmer. We must not forget as we breed for the best Clun Forest what our breed's purpose is in the sheep industry. We must embrace the Hill sheep that are the origins of the North American Clun Forest.

It is hoped that the information that follows will help guide careful selection.

Importance of Breed Standard relative to the chosen market

Not all “defects” have a negative effect on performance. What is deemed acceptable varies.

Registered Stock (producing future breeding stock)	Commercial Stock (producing prime lamb)
Strict selection criteria	Establish minimum selection standards and apply to females for retention
Pedigree breeding stock are representatives of the breed combining breed characteristics and good breeding performance. They maintain and influence the genetic pool and therefore the future characteristics of the breed.	Select rams to a high breed standard

Breed Standard

The North American Clun Forest Sheep standard adopted in 1994 is based on the British Clun Forest Sheep standard as adopted in 1928 at the Annual General Meeting of the Members of the British Clun Forest Sheep Society. The NACFA standard was modified in 2002.

Preface

The whole premise of the Clun Forest breed is based on performance: prolificacy, mothering, milking, ease of lambing, ease of handling, and longevity.

Head and Face

A clean open dark brown faced sheep; top of head nicely covered and free from dark wool

Ears

Not too long and carried high

Body

Strong, muscular neck, lengthy good back, deep rib, strong loin, good hock, deep and well-rounded thighs, good through heart, strong bone, standing square on its legs

Legs

Fairly free from wool from hock and knee down

Wool

A tight fleece, fine texture, free from kemp and dark or gray wool

Skin

A nice pink or red skin, free from black or blue spots

A sheep which meets you with a good head and a bold walk, that stands squarely on its legs, with plenty of heart girth and a good constitution.

■ ■ ■

Three faults disqualify from registration:

- 1) No ram lamb, bald from the ear line forward, by December of the year of his birth, will be registered (passed unanimously 1992).
- 2) No lambs with brockle faces will be registered (passed unanimously 1992).
- 3) No lamb with scurs will be registered (passed unanimously 1994).

Selection Criteria – Head & Face

The Ideal	Undesirable Traits
The head shape of the Clun Forest is not too broad for ease of lambing. It slightly tapers from the skull to a rounded muzzle giving a chiseled appearance.	Brockle Faces Scurs-horn stubs (bony protrusions) Extremes: Wide Heads may cause difficult birthing Too Narrow Muzzle may lead to bite problems and poor grazing
Ears Not too long and carried high	Ears carried low on head Flop ears Exaggerated ear size-too long
A clean open dark brown faced sheep; top of head nicely covered and free from dark wool	Lack of top knot of wool on head Dark wool on head Face wool (young lambs may exhibit face wool up to around 7 months of age). Light colored, tan faced sheep
Teeth should be even, upright and sit well on the pad, not protruding beyond the edge of the pad.	(Undershot jaw or bulldog mouth), or be set too far back (overshot or parrot mouth) Teeth faults may be hereditary.
Occasionally lamb birthing fluid will cause an entropion. Can be manually corrected in newborn lambs.	Entropion-congenital disorder in lambs characterized by the turning in of one or both lower eyelids. In-turned hairs rub on the cornea and cause irritation.

 <p>Head & Ears ✓</p>	 <p>Gray Spot on Nose-ok ✓</p>	 <p>Lacking Topknot & Ears Set Lateral on Head ✗</p>
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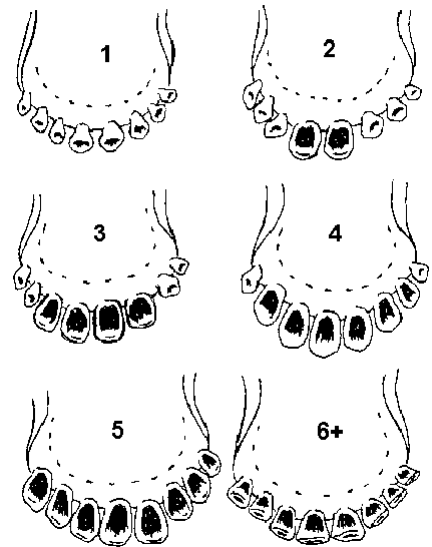


Long Narrow Head & Muzzle

Legs are Too Long ❌



Bite-Proper ✅



Age of Sheep

Under 1: no broad teeth

1 – 2 : 2 broad teeth

2 - 3 : 4 broad teeth

3 - 4 : 6 broad teeth

4 – 5 : 8 broad teeth

Over 6 : worn teeth



Undershot Jaw ❌



Overshot Jaw ❌



Face Wool on lamb up to about

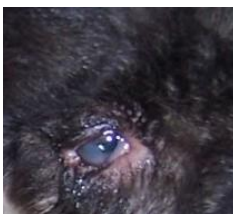
7 months of age ✅



Wool on Face ❌



Black Wool ❌



Entropion

Selection Criteria– Body

Strong, muscular neck, lengthy, good back, deep rib, strong loin, good hock, deep and well-rounded thighs, good through heart, strong bone, standing square on its legs.

The Ideal	Undesirable Traits
The neck should be well set onto the shoulders creating a smooth outline to the back.	A swan neck is undesirable.
The back should have good length, be level and strong from shoulders to rump.	Weakness behind the shoulder is suggestive of a weak back which could affect the longevity of a ram.
The shoulders should be well fleshed and level with the spine. They should not be narrow and pointed nor too heavy and coarse.	Shoulder blades which are close together are generally indicative of narrow chested animals with close front legs (like an A frame). This may adversely affect performance such as birthing.
When viewed from above, the ribs should spring out well from the sides of the spine to create a broad back ie. good through heart. The width should be carried through to the loin which should be strong, well fleshed (not fat) and then through to the hips.	If there is insufficient width, when viewed from behind the animal will look 'fish-backed' and narrow.
Good hock, deep and well-rounded thighs, strong bone, standing square on its legs. When viewed from behind, the ideal is more square IIII. Size: Medium. Adult ewes average 130-150 lbs. Adult rams average 175-200 lbs.	When viewed from behind, the undesired shape is “A” frame. This is a meat animal so a meaty build is desired.



Shoulders ✓



Neck-smooth to shoulder ✓



Strong Back ✓



Good hock, deep and well-rounded thighs, strong bone, standing square on its legs. ✓



Lacking Good Rear ✗



Spring of Rib
ie. good through heart ✓



View from above ✓




Roach Back-sway in middle of back ✗

Selection Criteria– Legs and Feet

Fairly free from wool from hock and knee down

The Ideal	Undesirable Traits
<p>The sheep should stand squarely, with a leg at each corner, on feet with good broad cleats.</p>	<p>Bodyweight which is not evenly distributed onto the feet can lead to the development of pastern faults which will be exacerbated if the cleats are narrow.</p>
<p>When viewed laterally the hock should be well defined but not too bent or too straight.</p>	<p>A straight hock can affect the ability of a ram to work.</p>
<p>When viewed from front and back, the legs should be vertical.</p>	<p>The legs should not go in or out at the knees, hocks or pasterns.</p>
<p>Pasterns should be strong and upright when viewed from all sides.</p>	<p>The breeding activities and longevity of a ram will be adversely affected if he has ‘flat pasterns’ ie. not upright. This is heritable.</p>
<p>A sheep which meets you with a good head and a bold walk, that stands squarely on its legs, with plenty of heart girth and a good constitution.</p>	<p>General Notes: All leg and foot faults should be regarded as heritable unless caused by accident/ foot rot. A tall and narrow body shape is incorrect for a Clun.</p>

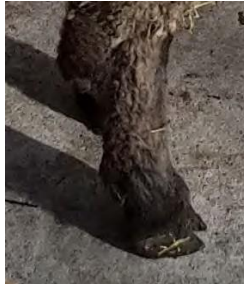
	Normal	Large Outside Claw and Curled Toe	Scissorclaw
Side			
Sole			
Front			



Feet ✓

Pasterns

Too Straight	Normal	Too Flat
Severe defect Cull rams and ewes	Slight defect Cull rams (?) Keep ewes	Slight defect Cull rams (?) Keep ewes



Pastern ✓



Flat Pastern ✗

Rear View

Correct Bow Legged Cow Hocked

Side View Rear Legs

Correct Sickie Hocked Post Legged

Front View


Correct Splay Footed Pigeon Toed Knock Kneed

Side View Front Legs

Correct Calf-kneed Buck-Kneed



Sickie Hocked ✗



Back Legs ✓



Knock Kneed ✗



Front Legs ✓
Note: Fairly free of wool



Buck-Kneed ✗

Selection Criteria– Skin and Wool

A nice pink or red skin, free from black or blue spots

The Ideal	Undesirable Traits
The skin should be a nice pink or red.	<p>Skin should not be discolored e.g. grey, black, or blue</p> <p>A dark skin color may be indicative of the future development of colored wool.</p>
A tight fleece, fine texture	A fleece which parts along the spine does not afford protection against inclement weather and allows rain penetration.
A good fleece will be free from kemp and dark or gray wool.	<p>As a rule pigmented wool growing from pigmented skin will not disappear.</p> <p>Note: lambs may exhibit soft brown wool in localized areas, or have mottled birth coats which grow out as the lamb matures.</p>
The wool quality should be consistent throughout the body.	<p>Wool quality should not deteriorate into hair-like, coarse wool around the rear end (britch).</p> <p>Note: Grey or black wool or hairs may be observed in the regrowth after shearing, particularly if the skin is damaged. This should grow out but may be an indication of possible future deterioration of wool quality as the animal ages.</p>



Black Spot ✘



Black Wool ✘



Black Patch ✘



Loose Fleece ✘



Tight Fleece ✔



White Skin Patch Face ✘

Mottling of wool on lamb is ok.



Black Skin ✘



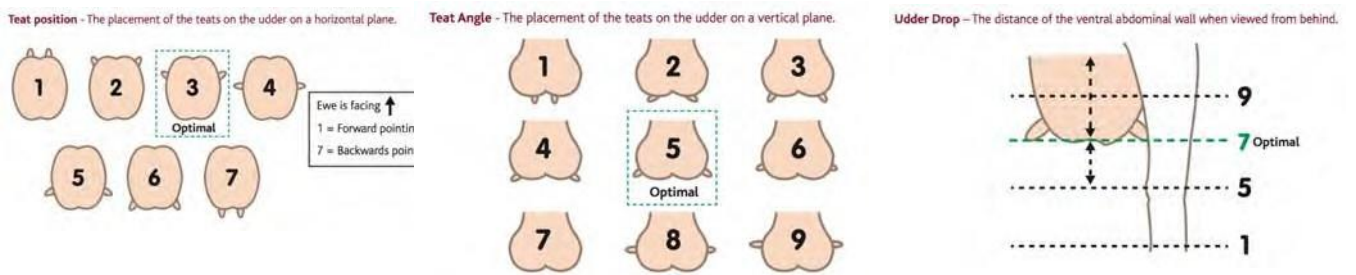
Grey Skin ✘



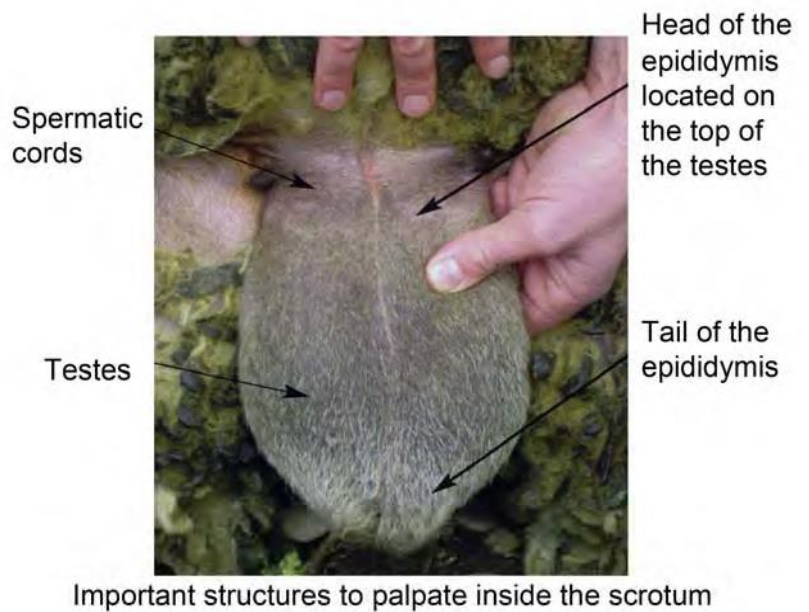
Pink Skin ✔

Selection Criteria – Udder and Testicles

The Ideal	Undesirable Traits
<p><u>Udder & Teats</u></p> <p>There should be two teats and the udder should be free of lumps and hard areas.</p>	<p>Supernumerary teats should not condemn an animal if they do not interfere with the main teats. Hard areas in the udder could lead to future problems and reduced milk production.</p>
<p><u>Testicles</u></p> <p>Tone- testicles should be firm and springy (like a flexed bicep). The epididymus should be very firm and the testicles should move freely within the scrotum</p> <p>Size- testicles should be about as large as a medium to large baking potato and of equal size. The tail of the epididymus should be prominent.</p>	<p>The testicles should not be hard, soft or spongy.</p> <p>Lumps- there should be no lumps in the testicles, the epididymis or spermatic cord. There should be no lesions to the scrotum</p> <p>Small, unequal sized or soft testicles are associated with reduced fertility.</p>



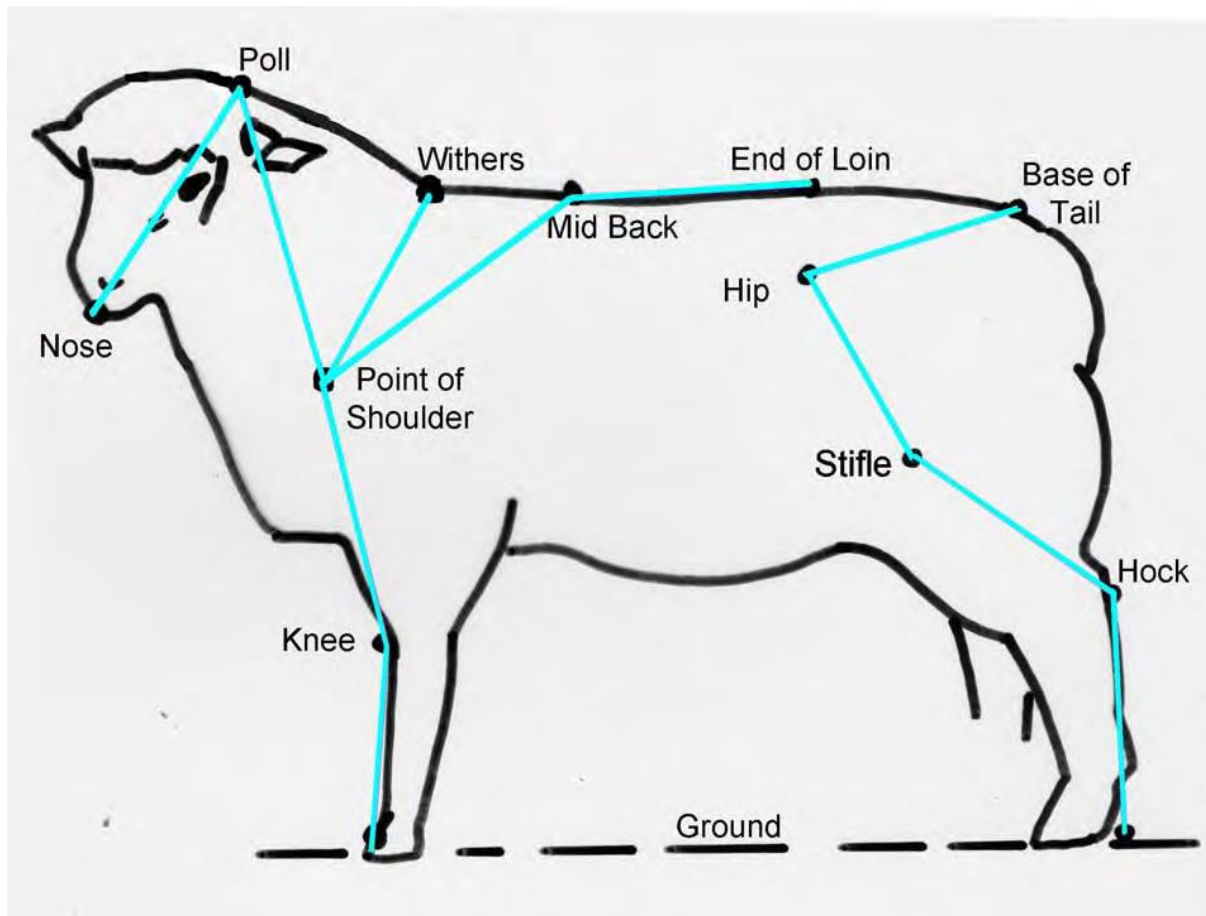
In most ewes, udder and teat conformation is good, particularly in young ewes and conformation remains reasonable as ewes age. There are some conformations that are particularly susceptible to mastitis, these are pendulous udders, long, thick teats, teats pointing very forward and teats angled vertically.



Uneven Testes ✗

Conformation and Locomotion

A good sheep has a leg at each corner and when it moves, its back foot should follow behind the front, in a straight line from the knee and hock downwards. Back feet should be seen to be lifted. Sheep which fail to lift their hind legs and are seen to 'shuffle' suggest a narrow pelvis. A lifted walk is desirable and indicates a wide pelvis, which in turn should make for easier lambing.



For perfect conformation in a sheep, cow, dog or cat, the symmetry should be right. This is how it was described by a top Friesian breeder. Measure your animal, the following inter-point distance should be of equal length:-

- Tip of nose to the top of the poll
- Poll to point of shoulder
- Point of shoulder to middle of back
- Middle of back to the front end of the loin
- Base of tail to hip joint
- Hip joint to stifle joint
- Stifle joint to the point of the hock
- Point of the hock to the ground
- Point of withers to the point of the shoulder
- Point of shoulder to middle of knee joint
- Middle of knee joint to the ground

The measure should be the same through all of the points. When handling the top of the sheep, it should be level all the way, no dipping in on the sides just past the shoulder.

An animal made correctly should be balanced. From the Breed Standard: “A sheep which meets you with a good head and a bold walk, that stands squarely on its legs.”



Disqualifying Faults

Three faults disqualify from registration:

- 1) No ram lamb, bald from the ear line forward, by December of the year of his birth, will be registered (passed unanimously 1992).
- 2) No lambs with brockle faces will be registered (passed unanimously 1992).



- 3) No lamb with scurs will be registered (passed unanimously 1994).

A “scur” is a horny growth on the skin and not attached firmly to the skull.

Selecting Flock Replacements/Breeding Stock

The process of selecting flock replacements should start when the lamb is born, whether you are keeping the replacement yourself or planning to sell it to another flock. To produce an easily managed and productive flock, replacements should be born preferably unaided to fit, healthy ewes with a good supply of colostrum and good mothering ability. If these lambs suckle well in the first few hours of life, and have a plentiful supply of milk in the coming weeks, they should grow well and have good resistance to disease.

Do not select replacements from lambs that were weakly at birth, or have not grown well, or pet lambs unless these have performed in line with the best of the flock.

Keep good flock records and weigh lambs regularly: at 8 weeks as an indication of the ewes' performance, and then regularly every 3-4 weeks, which will indicate the lambs' own genetic potential.

Bear in mind that single lambs are generally larger and grow faster than twins. Twins often catch up by the time they are 12 months old. Twins are, however, more likely to produce twins. This is especially so if their dams were also twins. Selecting lambs also born from Registry of Merit dams or ROM lines emphasizes dam performance traits that one should strive for in their flock.

Once the potential replacements are identified then the real selection process starts. Lambs should have good conformation: a long strong broad back with no dip behind the shoulder. Lambs should have good legs, not turning in or out, with the hind legs not too straight, and short pasterns strong enough to support the sheep. The feet should have two evenly sized toes, which are not cracked or deformed. Select lambs with full rounded hind-quarters.

Lambs should conform to the Breed Characteristics as described in the Breed Standard. These are the true flock type and must be adhered to by custodians of the breed.

If you are buying replacements always talk to the breeder and if possible visit the farm to see the flock in its surroundings. Find out if lambs are grass reared or have been creep fed. Are they singles or twins and what time of year were they born? Will they fit with your flock management? Sheep reared intensively may not thrive under harsher conditions.

Consider the health status of the sheep. Are they Maedi Visna (OPP tested) or Scrapie Monitored? Does the flock carry out any screening tests for other diseases? Are FAMACHA checks done, and what deworming protocols are used? Have the sheep been vaccinated against clostridial diseases? Is there a flock history of lamb premature deaths or abortions? A good veterinarian/owner relationship and fellow shepherds are valuable resources, in general.

The National Sheep Improvement Program (www.nsip.org) can be used as a flock tool for improvement. Estimated breeding values (EBV's) for certain traits are measured.

Inbreeding Coefficients should be monitored. See Table.

Relationship	COI
Father/daughter	25%
Mother/son	
Brother/sister	
Grandfather/granddaughter	12.5%
Grandmother/grandson	
Half-brother/half-sister	12.5%
Uncle/niece	12.5%
Aunt/nephew	
Great-grandfather/great-granddaughter	6.25%
Great-grandmother/great-grandson'	
Half-uncle/niece	6.25%
Half-aunt/nephew	
First cousins	6.25%
First cousins once removed	3.125%
Half-first cousins	
Second cousins	1.5625%
First cousins twice removed	
Second cousins once removed	0.78125%
Half-second cousins	
Third cousins	0.390625%
Second cousins twice removed	
Third cousins once removed	0.195%
Half-third cousins	

In breeding North American Clun Forest sheep, keep only the best to improve your flock. The rest will all taste very good!



This Selection Guide was compiled by NACFA Committee for use by the North American Clun Forest Association.

Approved by Committee: February 18, 2023

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www.clunforestsheep.org

