

Master

AN CORMO SHEEP ASSOCIATION

18106 WOODGATE ROAD
MONTROSE, COLORADO 81401

303-249-9594

"THE NEW BREED"
for
LAMBS AND WOOL

May 4, 1982

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ASSOCIATE
MEMBER:
NATIONAL
WOOL GROWERS
ASSOCIATION

THE AUSTRALIAN CORMO

Cormo sheep were introduced into the United States in 1976 when Mr. Travis Jones, Montrose, Colorado imported 12 bred ewes and 2 stud rams from Mr. I.K. Downie, Tasmania, Australia. A second importation was made in 1978 consisting of 54 bred ewes and 5 stud rams and went to sheep breeders in Colorado, Montana and Oregon. The first Cormo ram lamb sold in the U.S. was sold at auction at The National Ram Sale, Salt Lake City, Utah in 1977. It was sold for \$2900.00, which set a new National record price paid for a ram lamb.

The Cormo sheep breed was initially developed as an economic improvement for a large commercial sheep operation running 30,000 head of wool type sheep. The key guideline (as a result of the operation owning its own land) was to produce the most pounds of wool and lamb per acre. Thus, the Cormo is a scientifically bred sheep based solely on measured production and economics. The Cormo is not being promoted as a show type sheep in the U.S., but rather one that is of economic value.

The average fineness of Cormo wool in Australia is 22 microns (low 64's). However, the sheep selected for importation to the United States have been 64's, 70's, 80's and a few 90's. The average fleece yield in Australia runs in excess of 70%, and the Cormo in the U.S. runs between 69 and 72%. Without question, the Cormo breed has the highest yielding fleece in the United States regardless of feed or environment. The Cormo in Colorado is averaging 8.4 pounds clean basis. At \$2.40 per pound clean equals \$20.16 per ewe. The fleece is long stapled and extremely clean, exceptionally white.

The Cormo sheep is smaller than the Columbia or Rambouillet with mature rams weighing an average of 180 to 220 pounds. Mature ewes weigh an average of 140 to 160 pounds. It should be emphasized that the Cormo produces a meaty loin and leg, with the meat fine grained.

Open range, unassisted lambing in Australia averages 105 to 110% lamb crop. Experience in Colorado, using controlled shed lambing has resulted in an 180 to 185% lamb crop.

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AGRICULTURE
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Cormo ewes are noted for fertility-twinning ability, heavy milking with first class mothering instincts. Herding instincts rank high in grazing, moving or working the sheep. They possess open, clean faces and are bred for vigour and hardiness. Cormos appear to adapt well to different climatic conditions and are suitable for range or farm flock with one exception. Cormos do poorly when placed in feed lot type conditions, and absolutely do not tolerate high intensive grain feeding. Grain fed Cormos grow too fat to breed, and ewes with lambs at their sides will likely develop udder problems when fed grain. Under grazing conditions, the udders are without problems and of exceptional quality. The Cormo develops (reaches maturity) slower than the Columbia or Rambouillet breeds.

The Cormo is an "easy keeper", requiring approximately 40% less feed than the larger breeds. For such a young, new breed of sheep, the popularity is soaring. China imported 40 top producing ewes and 10 nucleus rams in 1975 after an exhibition of 2 Cormo rams at the Pekin Trade Fair in 1974. Argentina has an artificial insemination program utilizing Cormo semen for a ram breeding flock which provides sires for 65,000 breeding ewes, and Italy has imported Cormos.

Cormo numbers in the U.S. are limited and the breeders have endeavored to retain most of their ewes in order to increase their flocks. However, ewes are often available from various breeders and rams almost always are offered for sale. Future importations of Cormos are not likely in that the cost has become excessive. Total cost per ewe in the 1978 importation was in excess of \$1,000.00. Three rams imported in May, 1984 cost almost \$4,000.00 per ram due to increased air freight, U.S. Quarantine, etc.. Cormo breeders have an exceptionally large investment in their sheep which expresses their enthusiasm for the new breed.

The Cormo has been successfully crossed on the Columbia and Rambouillet, with the off-spring rams in demand by commercial operations. Reportedly, the crossbred rams come in off the range after breeding in a state of superb condition. Attributes of crossing Cormos on other breeds has satisfied breeders with increased milking ability in ewes, increased wool yield and staple length and opening up faces in the off-spring. Twinning characteristics have also resulted. Utah State University has a Cormo and Cormo cross breeding program under the direction of Dr. Lyle McNeal.

Cormo wool fleeces won Grand Champion Sweepstakes over all other breeds exhibited in the California National Wool Show in 1983 and 1984. The California National Wool Show is the largest in the United States with hundreds of fleeces entered each year. Cormo wool is in demand by hand spinners to such an extent that spinners are more than willing to pay \$5.00 to \$20.00 per pound for a select fleece.

The reason the Cormo is not being promoted as a show type sheep is due to the desired effort to keep the breed as pure as possible. Unfortunately, show ring often encourages crossbreeding by a few individuals who are anxious to win for the present and not too concerned about the breed in the future. The Cormo is not being deemed as "the perfect sheep", but it is a sheep with desirable economic merit and potential.