

HISTORY OF THE SUFFOLK BREED

The Suffolk breed, an original English breed, was the result of crossing Southdown rams on Norfolk Horned ewes. The product of this cross was determined to be a great improvement over either one of the parents. Although the Suffolk was a recognized breed as early as 1810, the flock book was not closed until much later.

In 1930, Southdowns were described as large sheep without horns, dark faces and legs, fine bones and long small necks. They were gray to mouse brown on the face and legs. They were low set in front with high shoulders and light forequarters; however, their sides were good, rather broad in the loin and were full in the thigh and twist. Today's Suffolk derives its meatiness and wool quality from the old original British Southdown.

The Norfolk Horned sheep, now rare, were a wild and hardy breed. They were black faced, light fleeced sheep. Both sexes were horned. The upland regions of Suffolk, Norfolk and Cambridge on the southeastern coast of England are very rugged and forage is sparse. It was this dry, cold and windy area in which the Norfolk breed adapted itself to traveling great distances for food, thereby developing a superbly muscular body.

It was said at that time of the Norfolk Horned, "their limbs are long and muscular, their bodies are long and their general form betokens activity and strength." This breed and its crosses were valued highly both by farmers and butchers. However, sheepmen of that day did not like the long legs, flat sides, nor wild nature of the Norfolk Horned. They noted that Southdowns crossed with Norfolks produced a progeny that reduced most of the criticisms of both breeds.

In 1886, the English Suffolk Society was organized to provide registry service and to further develop the use of the breed. Through selection and careful breeding by many great English sheepmen, the Suffolk brought to this country retained the qualities for which they were originally mated.

The first Suffolks were brought to this country in 1888 by Mr. G.B. Streeter of Chazy, New York. During a visit to England the previous year, Mr. Streeter had been greatly impressed by Suffolk sheep. These prize breeding animals had belonged to Joseph Smith of Hasketon, and one 21 month old ewe weighed exactly 200 pounds when she came off the ship. A nine month old ram weighed 195 pounds and in the spring of 1890, a seven week old twin weighed 85 pounds. That spring Streeter had a 200% lamb crop.

The Suffolk did not make its appearance in the western states until 1919. Three ewes and two rams had been donated by the English Suffolk Sheep Society to the University of Idaho. One of the rams was to be sold at auction at the National Ram Sale in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Several leading sheepmen saw these sheep at the sale and they liked what they saw. After several rounds of bidding, the ram was finally sold to Laidlaw and Brockie (developers of the Panama breed) of Muldoon, Idaho, for \$500. These men were so impressed with the offspring from their Suffolk ram that they made several importations and were consistent buyers at the National Ram Sale.

