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Classing your own clip

J Reilly

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Classing your own clip

Erratum
Should be in Volume 7 No 2. 4th Series 1966
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One of the most important activities in the Australian wool industry is the preparation of the clip for sale. Many growers class their own clips and due to this practice they can reduce production costs. Also through classing their own clips the growers’ wool knowledge is improved and they should then be able to cull and to select rams more efficiently.

The classing of farmers’ clips is a task that can be performed capably by growers who take an intelligent interest in their sheep and the wool they produce. It is not advisable to class without a reasonable knowledge of woolclassing.

Woolbuyers desire uniform classing. To ensure a fair degree of uniformity in clips presented for sale the Australian Wool Board has commenced a registration scheme. Woolclassers are to be registered as professional classers or

Merino wool—broad type. That on the left lacks style, that on the right shows good style
Owner classers. Certain standards of classing are required before an inspector recommends the registration of a classer. Through this means growers can become registered woolclassers and therefore the sale of their registered clips will be more likely to give a better return.

**SHEARING SHED FACILITIES**

A roomy, well-designed shed is essential if classing is to be carried out efficiently and expeditiously. Shed space must be laid out economically to ensure the most efficient handling of sheep and wool, and in planning the wool room it is necessary to aim at a quick, clean handling of the fleeces. It is a great advantage to have the wool travelling in the one direction towards the press.

**Lighting**

Good lighting is essential if the clip is to be classed to the best financial advantage, and in addition it enables the classing to be carried out quickly and easily. Although some improvement is noticeable in recent years, many shearing sheds in farming areas are still insufficiently lighted to class wool properly. Lighting is frequently overlooked or ignored by many growers when constructing their sheds or when arranging their sheds in preparation for shearing. They are not doing justice to their clips or their pockets in preparing their wool for market in a poor light and then subjecting it to the "acid test" of display and valuation under the excellent natural lighting of a wool showfloor.

Some methods of improving the lighting of shearing sheds are:

1. Installation of saw-tooth type of roofs.
Dodge quality doesn’t cost—It pays off... Handsomely!
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To compare is to buy Dodge. Your dealer will give you the facts and figures
(2) Installation of skylights.
(3) Whitewashing the inside walls and roofs of sheds.
(4) Temporary removal of a few sheets of iron from a suitable position during shearing—be careful to avoid sun-glare, however.
(5) Rearrangement of pens, wool bins, wool tables and shearing board, so that the available light can be used to the best advantage.
(6) Replacing the galvanised iron or board sides of wool bins with wirenetting or battens.

**Wool Bins**

It is necessary to have at least six bins in the average grower's flock of 1,000 to 1,500 sheep. In larger flocks, more bins are necessary and, in the rush of shearing, more bins mean better classing, more convenience, less work and less double handling.

**Wool Tables**

An adequate wool-rolling table is indispensable if the preparation of the fleece for classing is to be done efficiently and expeditiously. The work involved on the wool-rolling table is most important, because it is at this stage that the initial, and probably most serious faults occur in the "get-up" of the clip. Half the classing is done if the skirting, backing and rolling is correctly and quickly carried out.

Good work is possible only on a table of satisfactory dimensions, and wool-rolling tables should have sufficient length and width to accommodate a fleece that lies flat without it over-hanging the sides or ends of the table.

The minimum length and width of a wool-rolling table should be 10 ft. x 5 ft. with rollers spaced $\frac{1}{2}$ in. to 1 in. apart. It is definitely preferable to have a table a little on the large side than to have one on the small side. Tables 3 ft. high are ideal for persons of average height.

**THE PREPARATION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIAN WOOL CLIPS**

**Establishing the Lines**

The decision as to how the clip is to be classed, what lines to make, etc., has to be made during the first day's shearing, and the importance of the first day's work in setting the lines correctly—or laying the correct foundation on which to class—cannot be over-emphasised. The most difficult part of classing any clip is during the first day, when it is necessary to set out or match together a few fleeces into those lines or grades which are warranted and which are sufficient to cater for the whole clip. It is necessary for the fleeces in these grades to be sufficiently even so that they will blend profitably as a line, and the number of grades or lines must be few enough to enable reasonably big lines to be made in the clip.

It is recommended that the main objective during the first day's shearing should be "to get the eye in" to enable the correct setting-up of the lines to be made. Time spent in this direction is well spent and will eliminate irregular and unprofitable classing as shearing progresses.
Some Samples showing comparisons of wool types

AAAM Fine and medium quality, sound, good length, light.

BBB Broad quality 60’s, sound, good length, light.

AA M Fine and medium quality, sound, but shorter and heavier.

BB Broad quality 60’s, shorter and heavier.

A M Fine and medium quality short, black-tipped, fatty and heavy

“Doggy” wool.

Journal of Agriculture, Vol 7 No 2 1966
for length, quality, colour, soundness, etc., examining them and moving from one to another until the picture of the main lines is clearly in mind. Having established the major lines the others come more easily.

Matching

Woolclassing is only another name for matching into lines those fleeces that are similar in length, quality, condition and soundness, and naturally fleeces that are similar in these characteristics will go together. Matching will be carried out more quickly and more accurately if the classer observes the “Golden rule” of all wool work, and remembers that first impressions are the best.

Quality

Quality refers to the thickness of the fibre (counts). Merino qualities or counts used are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fine</td>
<td>70's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>64's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad</td>
<td>60's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra broad</td>
<td>58's</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do not be concerned with the figures or counts when classing, but be guided by the crimp formation and general appearance and think and class in terms of fine, medium, broad and extra broad wool. Narrow crimping denotes fineness and broad crimping, broad, or thicker fibres.

Extra broad fleeces should be kept out of the broad lines. If there is not enough for a bale or line, these types should be baled with other “outsort” fleeces into a mixed bale and sent to a broker for bulk classing.

Doggy Fleeces

Doggy wool is illustrated on page 55. This objectionable and nondescript type of wool is straight-fibred, characterless and shiny.

Keep doggy fleeces out of all fleece lines and include with other outsort fleeces in a mixed bale for bulk classing.

Outsort Fleeces

Outsort fleeces embrace all irregular, inferior and odd fleeces which will not match the main lines; the value of which is lowered if they are put in. Outsort fleeces include matted, very discoloured, doggy, heavy black-tipped, rotten, extra broad, heavy and fatty, very short types, etc.

All outsort fleeces should be baled together and sent to brokers for bulk classing.

Bulk Classing

The bulk classing departments in brokers’ stores are designed to handle outsort fleeces to the best financial advantage. Bulk classing was instituted principally to deal with mixed bales, light-weights and bags, which previously were bought by dealers, usually at a discount.

Many bins are used in order to cover all types and colours of wool and, from a mixed bale, possibly a dozen different sorts are made—the owner being credited with the weight which has gone into each of the different bins.

Large lines of bulk-classed wool meet with good competition at sales and provide the medium for growers’ small and irregular lots to enjoy full competition and realise full value.

Length

This refers to the average length of the staple and when classing Merino wool it is necessary to think and class in terms of:

- Good length.
- Medium length.
- Short.

In years when seasonal conditions are good, good length top lines naturally will be plentiful. However, when the clip is not well grown all the wool will be correspondingly shorter in staple and good to medium length would be the main top line.

Condition

This refers to the amount of yolk, etc., in the wool and it is necessary to differentiate between light, medium and heavy variations in condition. When classing, it is necessary to lift the fleece off the classing table to arrive at a reliable estimation of its condition. Do not be misled by colour when estimating condition. A bright fleece is not always light-conditioned and a fleece that is “off colour”
(not bright) is not always heavy-conditioned.

All fleeces with a pronounced heavy black tip and heavy fatty fleeces must be kept separate and not included in the medium-conditioned lines.

When wool buyers estimate the amount of condition they give the line a "yield"—so much percentage clean wool after extraction of grease, dust, etc. To give buyers the opportunity to base the yield correctly exclude all over-conditioned wools from the main lines.

Soundness

This refers to the tensile strength of the fibre which is subjected to tension during the combing process. This strain is about equal to a 7 lb. tension on the average staple of wool. Sound wool will withstand this approximate 7 lb. pressure when applied by hand. Unsound or tender wool will give or break under the strain. Inconsistency and errors of judgment will occur when testing wool for soundness, unless the same tension is applied to the same thickness of staple for each fleece.

To test for soundness, grasp the tip of staple between the thumb and forefinger on the left hand and the butt of the staple between the same fingers of the right hand, being careful not to hold over a break and apply a steady pressure of about 7 lb. Keep all tender fleeces out of the main sound lines. If there are not enough tender fleeces out of a fleece, make a mixed bale with other "outsort" fleeces for the bulk class.

If the big majority of the fleeces in a clip are tender, ignore this factor and class on quality, length and condition.

Picking Up and Throwing

If the fleeces are picked up and thrown correctly, the whole "get-up" will benefit because the fleeces can be skirted much more efficiently and expeditiously when they are thrown so that they lie flat on the table.

A little time and trouble spent by the picker-up in this important aspect of shed work is reflected in better work and better classing throughout the shed. A little attention to straightening and disentangling the points of a fleece as the shearer is finishing the last few blows can, and does often, mean the difference between good and bad throwing, and consequently good and bad skirting and backing.

Frequent use of the broom should be made by the picker-up to avoid dags, second cuts, sweaty ends, etc., from the previously shorn sheep being gathered into the fleece as it is picked up.

A fleece should not be thrown too vigorously onto the wool table, but rather easily propelled or "floated" on. A little practice in good throwing (floating) does away with troublesome broken fleece.

Skirting and Backing

Maximum returns are dependent upon efficient skirting and it is essential that fleeces are carefully skirted for sweat, stain, seed and burr, and also any rough breech pieces. Discretion must be used as to the depth or amount of skirting necessary. The volume of skirtings removed can vary with seasonal conditions, which govern the amount of seed and/or burr, dust and foreign matter in a fleece.

Careless or faulty work at the wool-rolling table can result in overskirting, which is definitely unprofitable. Over-skirting builds up the piece lines at the
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expense of the more valuable fleece lines—in other words, it increases the quantity of lower-priced wool and decreases the quantity of higher-priced wool.

When skirting, it is recommended that all breech skirtings be thrown in a basket handy at the end of the table; separate from the rest of the skirtings. This will facilitate piece-picking, in that any rough breech skirts and stains are automatically separated from the rest of the pieces.

Those portions of the back and neck wool which are too thin, short, dusty, etc., to match the rest of the fleece, should be removed, an inspection on the rolling table with the tip side up is essential to determine the degree of backing necessary. Indiscriminate removal of backs and necks is unprofitable and results in much top line wool being relegated to lines of lower value.

When backs are removed and a line is made, this wool must be kept separate and branded MO. (See page 63.)

Wool-Rolling

Neat, compact, well-rolled fleeces with the shoulder wool wrapped around the fleece have definite advantages lacking in slovenly and carelessly-rolled fleeces. These advantages are:

1. The wool opens up more attractively on the showfloor.
2. Handling is facilitated when carrying to the bin and when pressing.
3. A greater degree of consistency and evenness in the classing and better distinction between the lines is facilitated.

Rolling should be done by folding in one-third of the fleece lengthways, then fold the doubled portion to the outer edge. Then roll firmly but not too tightly from the breech to the neck.

Pieces and Bellies

Pieces and belly lines in all clips should be free of urine stains, second cuts and locks. It is not necessary to make more than one line of pieces in small clips, but in larger clips two lines or more are essential. The major factor to be evenness of length followed by evenness in quality.

In large clips bellies should be skirted and two lines made. Avoid mixing belly-wool and pieces.

Very heavily seeded pieces and matted jowls should be kept out of all piece lines. Pieces should be shaken thoroughly to eliminate locks and second cuts. Piece lines that are locky will go down in type, yield and value.

Locks and Stains

The stained piece line should take only urine and dung stains from the breech end of fleeces, together with belly pizzle stains. Dry all stains before pressing. If the stained content is heavy due to lack of crutching, lush season, etc., breech skirtings should be trimmed carefully, because the presence of over much clean wool in stained piece lines is unprofitable, and, conversely, clean piece lines containing stains will be reduced in value as a result of this fault.

Locks should be shaken in order to eliminate dags and pieces. The inclusion of dags results in the paying of freight on something that is worthless and the pieces will bring more money if included in the piece line.

Lambs

Only one line minus belly and leg trimmings should be made in small clips, but where warranted, two lines or more can be made for larger clips—grading lambs for length and aiming at a good distinction. Remove all urine and dung stains.

Downs Type of Wool

As most of the Downs wool types carry brown, black or grey fibres, it is important that it is not mixed with any other wool. Wool of this type should be branded according to breed and bagged if there is insufficient for a bale. Where growers of fat lambs of the Downs breeds have a number of unfinished lambs left on their hands that are shorn at the general shearing, the wool when shorn should be kept strictly apart from other wool, and placed into bales or bags without skirting.

Number Of Lines To Make

The number of lines made is dependent upon the size of the flock and the amount of wool to be handled. Lines as big as
possible should be made and overclassing should be avoided. Experience indicates that big lines of fleece wool that are reasonably even, are more profitable than a number of small lines.

To receive full advantage of classing in this manner, however, great care must be taken to keep out of the lines fleeces that do not match.

When setting or establishing the lines, do not set the standard of the top lines too high, set the standard according to the wool before you and not on the previous year's clip and have a good distinction between the tops and seconds.

The average price per lb. over all is more important than the individual price per lb. for various lines, and it is the important factor as far as total cash returns are concerned.

**Borderline Fleeces**

While a big top line is very desirable, growers often force odd "too-broad-for-the-line" fleeces up into their medium-fine top line thus detracting from the value of their otherwise good work. The offending fleeces are usually quite attractive ones but of broad quality and because of this their inclusion in the top line would lower its value, while if put into the BBB will raise that line's value.

**Big, Inter and Star Lots**

Brokers' showfloors are arranged in several sections and five and over bales of any one line constitute a "big lot" and will be offered as a complete line in the "big lot" section. The "interlot" section is for a line that is under five bales and is suitable to combine with a line of similar type wool from other growers making up a sizable offering. A "star lot" is a line of under five bales, that cannot be matched for interlotting and so is placed in the "star lot" section as an individual offering.

**Premature Shorn Clips**

Clips of six months growth, or suitable staple length should be classed and described as usual.

Here is a detailed guide to assist in the preparation, classing and description of the lines.
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(f) Backs
(g) Sweepings
(h) Black
(i) Mixed bales, including bales for reclassing, bulk classing, blending or pooling by a repacking store, or a department of a broker's store.
(j) Any bale containing any two of these descriptions, e.g., stained and crutchings.
(k) Any bale containing one of these descriptions and a description from another category, e.g., bellies and locks, locks and pieces, stained pieces, stained lambs.

CLASSER'S REPORT

The classer's report is a most important item and it is essential to the broker that the classer or grower send a progressive report with each consignment giving details of any "split" in a line or lines, stating specifically the bale number where "split" occurs. A "split" is brought about by a number of reasons the most common one being the changeover from wethers to ewes, but other causes not so widely known but of great significance are:

Change in Colour

A line of wool must be one colour only. This is a particularly troublesome wool-classing error which occurs more often than expected.

Where an owner has a property which includes red and grey country the wool from these two areas should on no account be mixed.

Another example is that of bought-in sheep whose wool often does not match in colour with those on the property and if this is so then no attempt should be made to blend them.

Mixing Vegetable Fault

Heavy burr or seed is another reason for keeping wool separate. Wool containing heavy vegetable fault should not be mixed with free or nearly free wool. Again this could be occasioned by bought-in sheep.

In bales containing mixed colours or mixed vegetable fault difficulty is experienced in assessing the amount of the different types of wool in the bale.

Your classing report assists brokers considerably in displaying and cataloguing clips to the best advantage before sale.
STANDARD BALE MARKINGS

DESCRIPTIONS as recommended and approved by this Department and all wool organisations. The new branding system has been well received and practically all growers have used the new descriptions.

To assist classers in general the new and old markings are shown opposite each other.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Marking</th>
<th>Old Marking</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAA M</td>
<td>AAA COM</td>
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<tr>
<td>AA M</td>
<td>AA COM</td>
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<td>COM</td>
<td>COM</td>
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<tr>
<td>AAA MO</td>
<td>AAA BKS</td>
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<tr>
<td>AAA NKS</td>
<td>AAA NKS</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

A COM

Very short, sound, heavier in condition, medium quality of clip.

BBB

Good length, sound, light condition, broad quality of clip. (Exclude extra broad, straight-fibred and doggy fleeces.)

BB

Shorter, sound, heavier in condition, broad quality of clip. (Exclude extra broad, straight-fibred and doggy fleeces.)

BBB COM

Attractive fleeces of extra broad quality. (Keep straight-fibred and doggy fleeces out.)

BB COM

Shorter, sound, heavier in condition, extra broad quality. (Exclude straight-fibred and doggy fleeces.)

B COM

Rough and doggy fleeces if sufficient to make a bale otherwise into COM B/C.

AAA FLC

Tender, average to good length, medium and fine quality. (Extra broad, straight-fibred and doggy out to COM B/C.)

AA FLC

Tender, shorter and heavier, medium and fine quality. (Extra broad, straight-fibred and doggy out to COM B/C.)

BBB FLC

Tender, broad quality. (Exclude doggy fleeces.)

COM B/C

Takes all inferior and irregular fleeces that will not match the main lines. (See notes on outsort lines.) Bale fleeces together into a mixed bale and consign to broker for bulk classing. Most of these fleeces will come from culls and it will make classing easier if the culls are drafted off and shorn separately. (It is essential to make this line in every clip.)

AAA MO

Fine and medium quality backs fairly free of vegetable fault.

AA MO

Seconds to above (if warranted.)

DESCRIPTION OF LINES FOR MERINO FLOCKS OF OVER 1,500 GROWN SHEEP

Lines can be made from the following descriptions:

Because a description is shown it does not necessarily follow that every clip has wool, or wool in sufficient quantity, to fit this description, and it can therefore be eliminated if considered advisable.

Brand—

AAA M

Good length, sound, light condition, finest quality of clip.

AA M

Shorter, sound, heavier in condition, finest quality of clip.

A M

Very short and heavy in condition, finest quality of clip.

AAA COM

Good length, sound, light condition, medium quality of clip.

AA COM

Shorter, sound, heavier in condition, medium quality of clip.

AAA MO

Very short, sound, heavier in condition, medium quality of clip.

AA MO

Second to above (if warranted.)

63
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   Another style £241 0 0 £159 10 0

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BBB MO (If warranted.) Broad quality backs, fairly free.

AAA NKS Fine and medium quality necks containing vegetable fault.

BBB NKS (If warranted.) Broad quality necks containing vegetable fault.

AAA PCS Longest and lightest pieces. Stains removed. Keep heavily seeded pieces and matted jowls out and brand A PCS. Keep locks and shanks out of pieces.

AA PCS Shorter and heavier.

BBB PCS Broad quality pieces.

STD PCS One line. Dags removed. Contains only urine and dung-stained pieces. Dry before pressing.

AAA LKS Lightest and brightest (table locks) dags and stains removed. Keep out pieces.

AA LKS Board locks (if warranted) Dags and stains removed. Keep pieces out of locks.

AAA BLS Longest and lightest. Remove pizzle and surrounding stains and trim lightly.

AA BLS Shorter and heavier. Remove pizzle and surrounding stains.

AAA LBS Longest and lightest. Stains removed.

AA LBS Shorter and heavier. Stains removed.

A LBS Very short and inferior.

AAA CRT Longest and lightest crutchings. Remove stains and dags. Do not mix with crutchings held over from previous crutching.

AA CRT Shorter and heavier crutchings. Remove dags.

**Brand—**

AAA M Good length, sound, light condition, fine to medium quality.

AA M Shorter, sound, heavier in condition fine to medium quality.

BBB Good length, sound, light to medium condition, broad quality. (Exclude extra broad, straight-fibred and doggy fleeces.)

AAA FLC Tender. Contains all fleeces out of previous three lines that are tender. (Exclude extra broad, straight-fibred and doggy fleeces.)

COM B/C Takes all inferior and irregular fleeces that will not match the previous four lines. (See notes on outsort fleeces.) Bale fleeces together into a mixed bale and consign to broker for bulk classing. Most of these fleeces will come from culls and it will make classing easier if the culls are drafted off and shorn separately.

(It is essential to make this line in every clip.)

AAA MO Best of backs fairly free of vegetable fault.

AAA NKS (Only if warranted.) Similar to above but containing heavy vegetable fault.

AAA PCS Longest and lightest pieces. Stains removed. Keep heavily seeded pieces and matted jowls out and brand A PCS. Keep locks and shanks out of pieces.

AA PCS Shorter and heavier.

AAA BLS One line. Pizzle and surrounding stains removed.

STD PCS One line. Dags removed. Contains only urine and dung-stained pieces. Dry before pressing.

LKS One line. Dags removed. Keep pieces out of locks.

AAA LBS Longest and lightest. Stains removed.

AA LBS Shorter and heavier. Stains removed.

CRT Crutchings. One line minus dags. Do not mix with crutchings held over from previous crutching.

**MERINO FLOCKS OF UP TO 1,500 GROWN SHEEP**

Lines can be made from the following descriptions:—

Because a description is shown it does not necessarily follow that every clip has wool, or wool in sufficient quantity, to fit this description, and it can therefore be eliminated if considered advisable. Extra lines can be made where warranted—Depending upon size of flock (see descriptions for over 1,500 grown sheep).
COMEBACK AND CROSSBRED FLOCKS

It is stressed that in classing crossbred wool, quality or fibre thickness, is the most important factor to keep in mind.

Crossbreds are graded and described as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Brand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comeback</td>
<td>CBK (Finest)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Crossbred</td>
<td>F XB (Fine crossbred)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Crossbred</td>
<td>M XB (Medium crossbred)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coarse Crossbred</td>
<td>C XB (Coarse crossbred)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In mixed flocks, i.e., crossbred and merino, classing will be more efficient and made much easier if the sheep are drafted in the yards before shearing and shorn separately.

Lines can be made from the following descriptions:

Because a description is shown it does not necessarily follow that every clip has wool, or wool in sufficient quantity, to fit this description and it can therefore be eliminated if considered advisable.

Brand—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brand</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAA CBK</td>
<td>Good length, light to medium condition, comeback (finest) wool.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AA CBK</td>
<td>Shorter and heavier in condition, comeback (finest) wool.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAA FXB</td>
<td>Good length, light to medium condition, fine crossbred wool.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AA FXB</td>
<td>Shorter and heavier fine crossbred wool.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAA MXB</td>
<td>Good length, light to medium condition, medium crossbred wool.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AA MXB</td>
<td>Shorter and heavier, medium crossbred wool.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CXB</td>
<td>Good length, light to medium condition, all coarse crossbred wool and long British breeds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XB B/C</td>
<td>All cotty, discoloured and cast fleeces into a mixed bale for bulk classing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAA CBK FLC</td>
<td>Tender comebacks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAA XB FLC</td>
<td>Tender crossbreds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBK PCS</td>
<td>Comeback and fine crossbred pieces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XB PCS</td>
<td>Medium and coarse crossbred pieces.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DAY OLD CHICKS


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