

The following is a summary of our guidelines for choosing breeder ewes and rams, in the order of importance to us. Some of these are almost identical in order of rank.

1) General health and worm resistance. As an organic farm, it is especially important to us to breed only the most hardy and sound animals. Parasite resistance is essential. Any rams or ewes that need more than our herbal dewormers are not candidates for breeding here, and must be culled.

2) Conformation, including general "meatiness" of the ram or ewe. I have studied correct conformation of the Icelandic Sheep breed with AI professionals from Iceland. This class really spelled out for me what we as Icelandic Sheep breeders should be looking for as far as conformation in breeding stock. Included in conformation for us is good horns on the rams. Fiddling and trimming rams' horns is not something we want to do.

3) Good mothering and milkiness of ewe. We want our lambs to be fast gainers, so good mothering is important to us. We also need our ewes to be easy lambers, so we think about ease of lambing in this category too.

4) a) Temperament b) Fleece quality and quantity c) Color and pattern. These three criteria are of equal value to us. They are all considered when choosing breeding matches, but none of them are first and foremost in our decisions. We are looking for the best fleeces possible, as this is what our farm chooses as our most important product. But, we do not keep a poorly conformed ewe, even one with a wonderful fleece. Color and pattern are fun things to think about when choosing breeding partners, but these do not drive our decisions.